

1. How does the OHIP authorization actually work?

The procedure is as follows:

- Client presents Ontario health card to pharmacist.
- Pharmacist validates coverage via the Health Network System (HNS) and processes prescription claim.
- There is a Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) to Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) interface containing social assistance client eligibility information (including client health card numbers recorded in SAMS). The information is then uploaded to the HNS.
- The interface is updated daily (new and terminated cases) and monthly (entire social assistance caseload).
- If the HNS responds with an error code related to client eligibility such as:
 - health card number error
 - service provided before effective date
 - coverage expired before service
 - no record of beneficiary
 - patient not covered by this plan, pharmacists will be instructed to call the Social Assistance Verification HelpLine to confirm client is a social assistance recipient and is eligible for drug coverage.
- Errors may occur because of mismatched client information, such as health card number, or because of lag time with data transmission and the processing steps taken by MOHLTC to enter the required information into the HNS. This can result in delays in updated information in HNS upwards of 72 hours.
- If client eligibility is confirmed, pharmacists can dispense the prescription drugs to clients.

2. What happens if someone's assistance is cancelled/suspended?

When a pharmacist processes a prescription and attempts to validate the client's coverage via the HNS, the pharmacist will receive an error code for rejected claims and they will need to call the Social Assistance Verification HelpLine to confirm client eligibility.

The helpline agent will check SAMS to verify eligibility for the period in question and inform the pharmacist.

3. Does the ODSP worker have the authority to enter this information on someone's health card?

ODSP staff do not enter any information on client health cards.



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4. Does the drug coverage end immediately upon the suspension?

Drug coverage will end on the last day of the month, prior to the effective month of suspension. For example, if a caseworker enters a suspension in SAMS on October 14, drug coverage would continue to October 31, and the case would be suspended effective November 1.

Currently, an ODSP client whose case is suspended, or terminated, will receive a drug card for the month following the last month of eligibility. For example, if a case is suspended or terminated effective November 1, the client will still receive a drug card for November, even though there is no eligibility. This is because ODSP issues income support retroactively at the end of the month, and the drug and dental cards are also issued at the end of the month but for the following month.

In contrast, Ontario Works currently issues both financial support and benefit cards at the beginning of the month, for that month. There is no change to the way Ontario Works cases will be treated.

The benefits of enabling clients to use their Health Card include:

- equitable treatment of ODSP and Ontario Works cases, as ODSP clients currently receive drug coverage in months for which they are not eligible, and
- improved program integrity since drug benefit coverage will more accurately align with program eligibility.

5. If there is an appeal, how does the drug coverage get reinstated during the appeal if interim assistance is granted?

The caseworker would indicate in SAMS that interim assistance has been granted and drug coverage would be reinstated along with the case. The change would be reflected in the SAMS to MOHLTC ODB interface, which would subsequently provide data to the HNS.

6. If someone loses their OHIP card, how quickly can a paper drug card be issued?

If necessary, ODSP/Ontario Works staff can issue a manual paper drug card right away and it can be faxed to the pharmacy, per the current process.

7. If someone travels and needs to use their health card, does their social assistance status then become known? Does their travel become known by ODSP/Ontario Works?

The HNS is an Ontario-wide computer network system that links Ontario pharmacies and some doctors to the MOHLTC. If a client is travelling within Ontario, then the client can use his/her Ontario health card anywhere in the province to access prescribed drugs without having to pay and pharmacists can see that the client is eligible for ODB. If the HNS responds with an error code, pharmacists have to contact the Social Assistance Verification HelpLine to verify the client is in receipt of social assistance for the period in question.

Clients cannot access Ontario health coverage using their Ontario health card or social assistance drug eligibility card outside of the province of Ontario. There is also no access to the HNS for pharmacists outside Ontario.

ODSP/Ontario Works staff do not track the usage of the Ontario health card as a way to monitor travel.

If the client needs assistance with medical travel, he/she will need to obtain prior approval from their caseworker by completing a Mandatory Special Necessities Form.



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8. Have pharmacies been informed? Will they inform recipients?

Representatives from the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) have been engaged in planning the solution and have shared information about the initiative with their members.

Pharmacists should be aware of the changes, as we have been working with the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) to develop and communicate the changes.

The OPA released details (a pharmacist information sheet (attached), user guide and process work flow diagram) of the initiative on August 23rd and MOHLTC issued a notice to all pharmacists on August 30th. Materials are also available to pharmacists on the OPA website and MOHLTC's Executive Officer (EO) Communications webpage and pharmacists have been informed that they can send questions to the Ministry of Community and Social Services by e-mail, at SASM-Q&A@ontario.ca.

ODSP and Ontario Works clients were informed via a cheque insert included with their monthly statement at the end of August and beginning of September, respectively. Another cheque insert will be sent in October/November, to remind clients of the changes.

9. How will the paperless drug card implementation impact CCAC coverage?

The Paperless Drug Card initiative is not changing social assistance client coverage. It is merely phasing out the use of the paper drug card to enable clients to access drug coverage with their Ontario health card.

10. If a client comes into our pharmacy on September 1st without their monthly drug card and we use their health card number to bill their medication, are we still required to identify whether they are part of the Plan C or D Program? In other words, do we need to know this information in order to be able to bill?

There has been no change to the way pharmacists process claims in the HNS. Therefore, regardless of whether a client presents an Ontario Health Card or a paper drug, it is necessary to identify the plan code. If the client does not know the plan code, they may be able to tell you the social assistance program he/she is on. The plan codes are as follows:

- Plan C is for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD) Program,
- Plan D is for the Temporary Care Assistance (TCA) Program, and the Ontario Works Program (OW).

If a pharmacist is unable to determine the plan code for a client, a toll free Help Line (1-888-284-3928) is available to help pharmacists confirm client eligibility and/or the plan code.

11. How quickly will the pharmacists be able to know that someone is on social assistance when a drug is being picked up? For example, if our Case Manager grants a client today and the client needs their drugs today, can they go to the pharmacy and the eligibility for drugs will be determined right away and the pharmacist will know that that person is on social assistance right away?

The Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) to Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) interface occurs daily (includes changes to individual cases) and monthly (includes complete updated caseload information). The information is then uploaded to the Health Network System (HNS), which is the database that pharmacies use to adjudicate drug claims.



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The elapsed time between entering information in SAMS and the information being reflected in the HNS is upwards of 72 hours because of lag time with data transmission and the processing steps taken by MOHLTC to enter the required information into the HNS.

If a case is activated in SAMS and the client needs medication within the first 72 hours, offices should issue the client a manual drug card. If the client does not inform his/her caseworker that he/she will immediately need medication and uses his/her health card to access drugs, the claim will be rejected by the HNS and the pharmacist will need to call the Help Line. The Help Line Agent will be able to verify the client's eligibility for social assistance, as long as the information is updated in SAMS.

12. Before with the manual drug card, everyone was on the same "card". If wife had to pick up prescriptions for husband, she could because he was on the same "card" as her. If each benefit unit member is covered by their own health card, will the wife now need husband's health card to pick up his prescriptions?

Allowing someone to pick-up another person's prescription and the necessary identification required would be at the pharmacy's discretion.

13. For newborns – will pharmacies be accepting the Temporary (paper) OHC # provided to the parent while in hospital until such time as the green card is received in the mail – or will they require the ODB from OW?

There is no change to documents that pharmacies will accept when dispensing prescription medication. This includes accepting the tear-off record (from the infant registration form) of a newborn's Ontario health number.

14. Retro terminations: If a client receives assistance for a particular month (example: September 2016) and then in mid-September the file is retro-actively terminated back to August 31st, is there an impact with regard to drug eligibility for the month of September? If the client filled prescriptions on September 5th and it was covered by the health card, but then on September 15th the file was terminated – will the drugs acquired on the 5th be deemed a debt because there was no eligibility?

No. The rules around recovery of drug costs under the ODB have not changed. There would be no overpayment.

15. This talks about some agencies being able to help homeless persons with the cost of obtaining identification in order to get their health card, but does that apply to people who have an address that need the same?

Yes. Staff and community agencies are asked to assist their clients with a obtaining a health card if they don't have one. This applies to homeless persons and all other clients requiring assistance.

16. Say you have a family of 3; 2 have Health Cards and one doesn't. The one that doesn't will be an '09' member and their information will be the only one printed; it's going to look strange to only have one member with a paper drug card. Is there going to be any wording for the others to know that they still have drug coverage and all it takes is for them to use their HC?

Effective December, only those benefit unit members that have a temporary health reference number will be included on the paper drug card. Communications have been sent to social assistance staff, clients, pharmacists and other stakeholders advising that clients with a



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permanent health number will need to use their health card and clients who do not have a health card will continue to receive paper drug cards until they can obtain a health card.

17. What will be the new way of providing manual drug cards if no health card is present?

There is no change to the way manual drug cards are provided. If the client does not have a health card, SAMS will generate a temporary health reference number. Paper drug cards for these benefit unit members will be printed each month. The client's temporary health reference number would be entered on the manual drug card.

18. Once the member has a health card after not having one, how does the process switch over to the new HC?

The caseworker must update the client's information in SAMS to include his/her health card number. This information will be included in the interface between SAMS and MOHLTC and uploaded to the HNS.

19. With the introduction of the paperless drug card, Optometrists and Physiotherapists will no longer be able to verify receipt of social assistance. An information sheet was distributed which states that optometrists and physiotherapists will be provided with a new way to verify social assistance eligibility a call centre will be available for practitioners to verify social assistance eligibility for clients who no longer receive a paper drug card.

Do you have any information that could be shared with staff about the call centre? If communication has not gone out in regards to this, will there be an update to release to staff in case they are contacted?

In addition to the staff resource package Q&A we provided in August, we will be posting a rolling Q&A on the SAMO Extranet very soon which will include your question and others that we have received since the start of the transition period for this initiative.

Since clients are still receiving monthly paper drug cards until November, optometrist and physiotherapists should not feel the impact of the initiative until December, at which point we will have a solution in place.

In the meantime, please advise managers that optometrists/physiotherapists are to contact us with their questions via the SASM-Q&A@ontario.ca e-mail address.