



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Disability Support Program

Independent Living Support Policy

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1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The Independent Living Support (ILS) Program is one of a suite of programs under the mandate of the Department of Community Services (DCS) Disability Support Program (DSP). ILS is a community based option that provides funding for hours of support services from a Service Provider, based on the assessed needs and circumstances of an eligible participant who is semi-independent and requires support to live on their own.

1.1.1 Independent Living Support Plus (ILS+) provides enhanced ILS funding for up to 84 hours per week of support services from a Service Provider. ILS+ will be considered when it is determined that additional support hours could make it possible for a DSP participant to move into community and live independently or semi-independently. The number of support hours is determined by the participant's circumstances and assessed needs.

1.2 The purpose of the ILS program is to promote independence, self-reliance, security and social inclusion by creating a flexible and responsive delivery system that incorporates the strengths of a participant, their personal and community resources, and approved ILS Service Providers. This is achieved using a person-directed and collaborative approach.

1.3 The goals of the ILS Program are to:

- assist a participant to maximize independence in their instrumental activities of daily living, such as:
 - maintaining a household
 - laundry
 - shopping and banking
 - preparing meals
 - transportation for community access
 - participating in leisure, volunteer, or work activities;
- assist a participant to build and maintain connections and relationships with family, friends and other community members and resources;
- assist a participant with the promotion and maintenance of their health and wellness;
- recognize the potential of a participant and facilitate opportunities for their continuing growth and personal development;
- delay the need for, or assist in the prevention of, admission to a staffed residential support option.

1.4 The ILS Program is not intended to provide funding for 24/7 support services.

2.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE

To describe the ILS program and enable consistent application of the ILS Policy for applicants, participants, ILS Service Providers and DSP staff.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Hours of support

The number of hours of support services to be provided to a participant by a Service Provider. The hours of support are approved in accordance with [Appendix A – ILS Funding](#)

[Maximums and Approval Levels](#) and are funded by the Department of Community Services as a type of assistance defined in the regulations made under the **Social Assistance Act** R.S.N.S. 1989, c 432.

Service Provider

An organization or person that is contracted to provide support services to participants in the Department of Community Services, DSP. Service Providers apply through a strategic source list process to become ILS providers.

For additional policy definitions refer to **DSP Glossary**.

4.0 PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- 4.1 An applicant must meet all of the DSP general eligibility requirements outlined in **section 4.0** of the [DSP Program Policy](#), in **sections 4.0 and 5.0** of the [DSP Financial Eligibility Policy](#), and must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the [DSP Level of Support Policy](#).
- 4.2 An applicant's eligibility for the ILS Program will be determined through the process outlined in **section 6.0** of the [Program Policy](#) and **section 5.0** of the [Level of Support Policy](#). An ILS participant must have the ability to:
- a) be alone at home and in the community for periods of time;
 - b) independently evacuate from their home in the event of an emergency;
 - c) access crisis support and/or use an emergency response system;
 - d) manage their medication, and other personal safety risks to themselves, others or their environment, safely and reliably, either independently or with available supports;
 - e) communicate their needs and preferences to others, and participate in decisions about their needs and activities; and
 - f) participate in the individual assessment and support planning processes.
- 4.3 The assessment process must identify that an applicant's needs can be met within the supports available through the ILS program, and within ILS funding parameters which are found in **section 7** and [Appendix A - ILS Funding Maximums and Approval Levels](#).

5.0 PROGRAM INELIGIBILITY

An applicant/participant is ineligible for the ILS Program if they do not meet the general DSP and specific ILS eligibility requirements, and their needs cannot be met within the supports available through the ILS program and within ILS funding parameters.

6.0 ILS PROGRAM FUNDING

- 6.1 Funding is provided to purchase the hours of support needed by a participant from approved ILS Service Providers. The nature of the support and the number of hours of support a participant receives is based on their assessed support needs, goals, abilities and resources.

6.2 In addition to funding for hours of support, a participant will be eligible for the Standard Household Rate to meet their basic needs and may also be eligible for Special Needs in accordance with the [DSP Basic and Special Needs Policy](#).

6.3 A participant may be eligible for funding for the start-up and replacement costs of basic household items and furniture, in accordance with approved rates, where no other alternative is available. These are found in the [DSP Basic and Special Needs Policy, Appendix D - Household Set-Up and Replacement Rate Guidelines for Living Independently](#).

6.1.1 Hours of Support – Four Options

The ILS Program offers four options for hours of support funding listed in **sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.1.4, and 6.1.5**. Each option will be delivered by a Service Provider in a manner that best meets the needs of a participant. Funding is approved in accordance with [Appendix A - ILS Funding Maximums and Approval Levels](#).

6.1.2 Preventative

A participant who only requires minimal support to live independently in their own home, may receive funding for up to 12 hours of support per month, and may receive up to 90 additional hours of support annually, if they require increased supports intermittently during the year. A participant's funding must be approved by a Casework Supervisor.

6.1.3 Standard

A participant who requires ongoing skill development and weekly support with a variety of instrumental activities of daily living to live independently in their own home, may receive monthly funding which is equivalent of up to 21 hours of support per week. A participant's funding must be approved by a Casework Supervisor.

6.1.4 Supplemental

Additional funding may be provided for a participant who has support needs that require monthly funding more than the equivalent of 21 hours of support per week to live independently in their own home due to their need for any of the following:

- a) additional support that provides structure to maintain or enhance their skills, safety, health and wellness;
- b) a day activity support (when day time structure is required);
- c) minimal and nearby overnight support for health and safety concerns, that allows for a brief check or a quick onsite response in the event of an emergency.

This additional support (up to the approximate equivalent of 10 hours per week,) must:

- be within [Appendix A - ILS Funding Maximums and Approval Levels](#),
- provide an alternative to a more expensive DSP option.

A participant's funding must be approved by a DSP Specialist and ILS Program Coordinator.

6.1.5 Enhanced (ILS+)

Enhanced monthly funding may be provided for a participant who has support needs that expand beyond the equivalent 31 hours per week to live independently in their own home due to their need for any of the following:

- a) significant support needs that requires expanded structure to maintain or enhance their skills, safety, health, and wellness.
- b) expanded daytime activity support.
- c) overnight support for health and safety concerns, that allows for onsite support and response in the event of an emergency.
- d) current service option is not adequately addressing the needs of the individual.
This enhanced support must:
 - be within Appendix A – ILS + Funding Maximums and Approval Levels (ILS+ Funding Maximum of 84 hours per week),
 - provide an alternative to a more expensive DSP option (limit Exceptional Circumstances).

A participant's funding must be approved by a DSP Specialist and ILS Program Coordinator.

6.5 **Shared Costs and Hours of Support**

6.5.1 A participant who shares their home with another DSP participant may share costs, as outlined in **sections 5.7.2.3 and 5.7.2.4** of [DSP Financial Eligibility Policy](#).

6.5.2 A participant who shares their home with a spouse who is not a DSP participant may share costs, as outlined in **section 5.7.2.5** of [DSP Financial Eligibility Policy](#).

6.5.3 A participant who lives in close proximity to one or more DSP participant(s) (e.g. same neighborhood, duplex, apartment building) may share the same supports when it is outlined and approved in each participant's support plan and eligibility amount.

6.6 **ILS Orientation Hours of Support**

6.6.1 Preparation for relocation

An eligible participant who has been approved for ILS Program funding may receive up to 12 hours of support funding prior to their re-location from their family home, AFS home, or from a licensed DSP support option, to assist them with locating a home for themselves and for orientation to independent living. The funding must not exceed the funding parameters set out in [Appendix A - ILS Funding Maximums and Approval Levels](#).

6.6.2 ILS Transition Support

An eligible ILS participant who is relocating from another DSP program to live on their own and who initially requires the following additional supports:

- a) short term intensive teaching and skill development of instrumental activities of daily living; or
- b) support to ensure daily activities and routines are appropriately established and maintained;

may receive additional funding, up to the equivalent of 10 hours per week, for their transition to independent living. This funding may be provided monthly, but must not exceed three calendar months. The funding must not exceed the funding parameters set out in [Appendix A - ILS Funding Maximums and Approval Levels](#).

6.7 Temporary increase in hours of support

Subject to the funding parameters outlined in [Appendix A - ILS Funding Maximums and Approval Levels](#), twice in a fiscal year a temporary increase of up to 20 hours of support in a month may be approved by a participant's Care Coordinator to respond to an unplanned, temporary change in a participant's support needs.

6.8 Temporary reduction in hours of support

For up to three consecutive months, a participant may receive fewer than their approved hours of support, without affecting their ability to request a return to their approved number of hours of support.

7.0 TEMPORARY AND EXTENDED ABSENCES FROM ILS HOME

7.1 The Disability Support Program is committed to ensuring the continuity of a participant's receipt of ILS program funding during a temporary absence from their home. See **section 12** of the [DSP Program Policy](#).

7.2 If an ILS participant needs to be hospitalized or will be away from their home for up to and including thirty (30) consecutive days, they will continue to receive funding for basic and special need items approved by the Care Coordinator and there will be no interruption in their hours of support funding or the Service Provider's administration fee.

7.3 If an ILS participant is in hospital or will be away from their home for longer than thirty (30) consecutive days, and is expected to return to their home, the administration fee and hours of support costs for the ILS participant will be suspended and not be paid to the Service Provider. The Care Coordinator will make an assessment and recommendation concerning the participant's continuing eligibility for basic and special needs funding. The recommendation requires the support of the Casework Supervisor, and approval of the DSP Specialist.

7.4 If an ILS participant requires hospitalization for an extended period, or it is known that they will not be returning to their ILS home and they are waiting for an alternative DSP residential support option, they may continue to receive the following supports and services if it is approved by the DSP Specialist: as outlined in DSP policy:

- a) Standard Household Rate - Essentials;
- b) Comfort Allowance;
- c) Special Needs; and

d) Case Management Support

- 7.5 An ILS participant's Care Coordinator will ensure that the participant, their family (when appropriate), Service Providers and hospital staff are informed of any changes in the participant's ILS placement.

8.0 SUPPORT PLANNING

- 8.1 The ILS program embraces the delivery of individualized services and supports, facilitated through a collaborative, individual assessment and support planning process. This approach, which incorporates person-directed and supported decision making principles, will assist in achieving outcomes that support the participant's independence, self-reliance, security and social inclusion, and creates a vision for the future while coordinating resources and supports to respond to current needs (See [DSP Level of Support Policy](#), section 6.3).

8.2 **ILS Participant's role and responsibility in support planning**

An ILS participant will work with their Care Coordinator and other persons of their choosing, such as family, other members of their personal support network, and the ILS Service Provider to complete their detailed support plan. The participant's health, safety, assessed needs, goals, wishes and personal preferences are the key considerations in the development and ongoing review of these two plans.

8.3 **Care Coordinator's role and responsibility in support planning**

- 8.3.1 An ILS participant's Care Coordinator is responsible for assessing and determining a participant's eligibility and level of support. (See [DSP Program Policy](#) section 4.0). They are responsible for ensuring that a participant's assessment is reflective of a participant's current support needs and is shared with their service provider when:

- a) the participant has chosen a service provider; and
- b) there are significant changes in the participant's support requirements.

See also [Level of Support Policy](#) section 6.0.

- 8.3.2 An ILS participant's Care Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the DSP forms are signed by themselves, the participant, the Service Provider and other persons of the participants choosing. This form will be completed once the orientation to an ILS Service Provider has occurred and thereafter when there are changes to the participant's support plan.
- 8.3.3 The Care Coordinator is responsible for reviewing seeking approvals for changes to a participant's plan or hours of support funding.
- 8.3.4 ILS participants will have their support needs and eligibility reviewed by the Care Coordinator at a minimum annually, or when there are any changes in their circumstances, or when the participant requests it (See section 10, [DSP Program Policy](#) for more information about the review and reassessment process).

8.4 Service Provider's role and responsibility in support planning

- 8.4.1 An ILS Service Provider will develop a detailed support plan with each participant for whom they are providing support services. It will be compatible with the participant's IASP and approved funding. The detailed support plan will outline the nature of support, roles and responsibilities, goals and strategies that will assist in achieving a participant's desired outcomes that relate to a participant's:
- a) instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs);
 - b) establishment of routines related to promotion and maintenance of health and wellness;
 - c) medication management;
 - d) family or personal network involvement;
 - e) emergency arrangements;
 - f) community participation;
 - g) transportation;
 - h) professional supports;
 - i) educational and vocational activities;
 - j) social, and leisure activities; and
 - k) budgeting.
- 8.4.2 An ILS Service Provider is responsible for ensuring the detailed support plan identifies how a participant will work towards their own identified goals.
- 8.4.3 An ILS Service Provider is responsible for conducting a review and update of a participant's detailed support plan, at a minimum of annually, or when there are changes in the participant's circumstances. This will be conducted in consultation with the Care Coordinator and other persons of a participant's choosing, and a copy of the updated plan will be sent to a participant's Care Coordinator.

9.0 ILS SERVICE PROVIDER OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNDING

9.1 Service Agreement

- 9.1.1 A Service Provider must sign a Service Agreement with the Province which requires them to be responsible for delivering support services to ILS participants, providing adequate and qualified staff who meet core competency standards set by the Department, working collaboratively with the Department's Care Coordinators and other staff, following DSP policies, maintaining required files and records, reporting to Departmental staff, and managing and accounting for their services and for the funding provided by the Province.
- 9.1.2 A Service Provider is accountable to the Department for the support services and reporting services set out in the Service Agreement, for employee training, for development and implementation of staffing policies, for maintaining staffing schedules, and for evaluations, inspections, and audits by the Minister.

9.2 Funding

- 9.2.1 In accordance with the Service Agreement terms and conditions, a Service Provider will receive funding for the delivery of hours of support services to participants, a daily administration fee, and travel costs associated with delivering support services.

Payment of all approved basic and special needs funding, hours of support funding and transportation and mileage costs associated with the delivery of supports to any ILS participant, requires Care Coordinator approval.

- 9.2.2 A participant in the ILS Program is entitled and encouraged to participate in the management of their own finances to the greatest extent of their ability.
- 9.2.3 A Service Provider that provides financial management services to a participant will, for each participant:
- a) receive funds for the benefit of the participant for the purposes of administering expenses such as rent, utilities, food, clothing and other miscellaneous items on the participant's behalf, in accordance with DSP Policy and the participant's Individual Assessment and Support Plan;
 - b) maintain written documentation detailing how the funds are administered and utilize monies received for the participant for those items that are specifically approved for the participant;
 - c) prepare a monthly account reconciliation and provide appropriate receipts, which shall be available to the Care Coordinator or other Departmental staff upon request.

10.0 TRANSFER TO ANOTHER DSP PROGRAM

A participant may request or require a transfer to another DSP support option that meets their support needs. See **section 11** of the [DSP Program Policy](#) for detailed information on transfers within the DSP.

11.0 DISCHARGE FROM DSP PROGRAM

When a participant no longer meets the eligibility criteria of the ILS program or the DSP general eligibility requirements, or becomes ineligible for financial assistance from the DSP, discharge protocols will apply. See **section 13** of the [DSP Program Policy](#) for detailed information on discharge from the DSP.

12.0 RIGHT TO APPEAL

- 12.1 An applicant/participant has the right to appeal any decision made by the Department in relation to their application for or receipt of assistance. See **section 19** of the ***Social Assistance Act***. See [DSP Appeal Policy](#).

13.0 APPLICATION

This policy applies to all ILS applicants and participants and any person acting on their behalf, all DSP staff and ILS Service Providers.

14.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

- 14.1** The Executive Director is responsible for the establishment and implementation of this policy and ensuring that the Program achieves the objectives for which it was created.
- 14.2** The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that the Program is delivered within a fiscally sustainable manner.
- 14.3** Supervisors are responsible for complying with policy and exercising financial approval within their authority level.
- 14.4** Specialists are responsible for complying with policy and Service Delivery Managers are responsible for exercising financial approval within their authority level.
- 14.5** The Program Directors and Service Delivery Directors are responsible for ensuring compliance within their respective areas of responsibility, as well as making best efforts to ensure the necessary resources are available.
- 14.6** Casework Supervisors are responsible for preparing their employees to carry out their respective functions.

15.0 MONITORING

- 15.1** The Program Director is responsible for implementing appropriate mechanisms to ensure monitoring and compliance with this policy.
- 15.2** Specialists and Service Delivery Managers are responsible for regularly monitoring and reporting on compliance with this policy.

Appendix A: ILS Funding Maximums and Approval Levels

ILS PROGRAM FUNDING	MAXIMUMS	APPROVAL LEVEL
ILS Options for Hours of Support:		
Preventative (6.1.2) A participant who only requires minimal support with instrumental activities of daily living to live on their own	up to 12 hours/month, and up to 90 additional hours annually.	Casework Supervisor
Standard (6.1.3) A participant who requires ongoing skill development and weekly assistance with a variety of instrumental activities of daily living to live independently in their own home	up to 21 hours per week, equivalent to up to 90 hours per month	Casework Supervisor
Supplemental (6.1.4) A participant who has ongoing increased support needs and may require more monthly funding than the equivalent of 21 hours of support per week to live independently in their own home due to their need for additional supports described in section 6.1.4 of this Policy	Standard plus an additional 10 hours per week, or the equivalent to \$1000 per month in other supports.	Specialist recommendation and Program Coordinator approval
Enhanced (ILS+) (6.1.5) A participant who has support needs that exceed 31 hours per week to live independently in their own home due to their need for additional supports described in section 6.1.5 of this Policy	up to 84 hours per week, equivalent to up to 362 hours per month	Specialist recommendation and Program Coordinator approval
Orientation Support:		
Preparation for Relocation (6.6.1) A participant has been approved for ILS funding, and needs assistance with finding a new home and orientation to independent living	12 hours of support	Casework Supervisor
Transition Support (6.6.2) A participant has re-located to their own home and needs additional supports with short term intensive teaching and skill development of IADL's, or to ensure daily activities and routines are appropriately established and maintained	up to \$1000 per month, not to exceed 3 calendar months	Casework Supervisor
Temporary increase in hours of support funding (6.7) A participant who experiences an unplanned temporary change in health or support needs	up to 20 hours of support per month, limited to two times in a fiscal year, within \$3400 per month per participant limit	Care Coordinator
Temporary decrease in use of hours of support funding (6.8)	NA	3 months or less: Care Coordinator Over 3 months: Casework Supervisor