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## **Are you working with people with disabilities who live on low incomes? Are you concerned about the proposed change to the ODSP Definition of Disability?**

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Last November 2018, the Ontario government announced its intention to change the definition of disability in the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to “align more closely with federal government guidelines.” If it goes through, this change threatens the health and well-being of many vulnerable people in Ontario.

### ***How are ODSP and federal definitions of disability different?***

To qualify for ODSP now, a person must have a physical or mental impairment that is continuous or recurrent and expected to last one year or more. The impairment must impact one or more areas of function (personal care, community function, or workplace function).

To qualify for the federal Canada Pension Plan-Disability (CPP-D) program, as one important example, a person must have a “severe and prolonged” mental or physical disability due to a medical condition. This means the person can’t work at all or on a regular basis, and the disability is likely to last a long time, or is likely to result in death. All other federal disability-related income benefit programs are as or more restrictive.

### ***How will this impact people?***

Changing the ODSP definition will force many low-income people with disabilities to rely on Ontario Works. This change will affect people with episodic disabilities like depression, or time limited disabilities like most breast cancers, and people who experience the cumulative impacts of several health conditions. It means they will qualify for 37% less income on OW, which will push very low-income people with disabilities into even deeper poverty, and likely homelessness. They may also be unable to access to important disability-related health benefits available through ODSP.

A significant drop in income is a major threat to people’s health. The evidence is clear that lower incomes are associated with higher rates of mortality from most health conditions, increased toxic stress and decreased well-being.

### ***What can you do?***

1. As a community worker you can help people who may qualify to apply for ODSP under the current system. The government has promised to grandparent most current ODSP recipients when the system is changed.
2. Contact your local MPP and Minister Todd Smith to share your concerns. Use this template <http://incomesecurity.org/publications/2019-03-25-template-letter-or-email-to-mpp-or-minister-from-community-worker-docx/>
3. Stay informed. Sign up for updates at <https://defenddisability.ca/>

