To: Chair and Members
Emergency & Community Services Committee

From: Joe-Anne Priel
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Re: Change in Procedure for Provision of Cribs and Car Seats for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program Recipients (CS10001) (City Wide)

Council Direction:
Not applicable.

Information:

In December 2004, a report regarding the Special Income Business Process Review (HCS04073) was brought before the Public Health and Community Services Committee. The purpose of the Report was to recommend a change to three (3) existing business procedures, within the Special Supports Program (formally known as Special Income), and to inform Council of the outcome of the Business Process Review (BPR).

Since that time, the Special Supports staff have actioned the 27 recommended changes contained in Report HCS04073, which were identified as potential process improvements. Several of the recommendations were pertaining to tendering for a sole source. Unfortunately, staff was unable to achieve a sole source for all of the recommended areas: cribs, taxi and dentures.

Cribs and Crib Mattresses

Since approximately 1988, Special Supports has been authorized to provide cribs and mattresses to eligible Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients. Until 1995, Special Supports had a contract with a preferred vendor for

1 A recommendation report will be brought forward to Committee to address the sole sourcing of taxi.
2 Staff was unable to obtain a sole source for the provision of dentures. Report “Increase to Discretionary Denture Program 2007 (ECS07054)” was presented and approved by council in August 2007.
the supply and delivery of cribs. The vendor at that time went bankrupt and since the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth was unable to obtain another supplier, Council approved that the benefits be paid directly to the eligible clients. In 2005, staff tendered for the supply and delivery of cribs and crib mattresses. The tender was cancelled as the submitted bid exceeded the approved budget. In November 2005, the second tender was issued removing the requirement for delivery. The tender was awarded to Royal Mattress. This contract ended in December 2008 and staff issued another request for tender. Royal Mattress, once again, was awarded the contract. Unfortunately, Royal Mattress went bankrupt in June 2009. Staff once again tendered for the supply of cribs and crib mattress in August 2009 and no bids were received. Special Supports is currently without a supplier of cribs and crib mattresses.

The business process has been changed so that $270.00 is being issued directly to eligible OW recipients by staff in the Employment and Income Support Division. Staff in Special Supports issues $270.00 to eligible ODSP clients to purchase cribs and crib mattresses. There is a set cap of $270.00, per benefit unit, per lifetime (except in extenuating circumstances).

**Car Seats**

In 2003, the Public Health Department, Family Health Team initiated the Car Seat Donor project. Provision of car seats was funded by the National Child Benefit (NCB) Reinvestment Strategy “Injury Prevention Resources Age 0-6” and Public Health staff administered the program. Public Health staff would issue a voucher for an age/weight appropriate car seat to eligible OW or ODSP clients after the family attended the Car Seat Education Clinic.

As part of the 2007 NCB Strategy, the Community Services Department (CSD) and Public Health Services (PHS) proposed that funding of some of the NCB funded programs be shifted to the net levy (SSC06023). In October 2006, Council approved this request and the funding of the “Injury Prevention Resources Age 0-6” (Car Seats) was requested as an enhancement through the 2007 Budget Process. Car Seats are considered a “health-related”, discretionary benefit and are eligible for 80% cost sharing from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Council approved the enhancement of $52,500 gross/$10,500 net on March 3, 2007, during the 2007 Budget Deliberations.

In January 2007, a request for quotation for car seats was completed and Sears was awarded the contract to supply car seats. Since that time, Public Health staff has continued to administer the Car Seat Donor Project and issue vouchers to approved OW and ODSP clients for Car Seats. The cost of the approved car seat varies from $100.00 to $230.00. Special Support staff was responsible for reconciling the vouchers and for the payment of invoices for the approved car seats.

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3 The amount of the enhancement attributed to the car seats was $40,000 gross/$8000 net. The balance of this budget enhancement was to cover other approved benefits: blenders and telephone lines for victims of violence.
This program has grown by 20% over the last two years with referrals and coordination is consuming approximately 15% of Family Health's two (2) FTE's, as well as considerable time for OW staff filling out referrals. The number of referrals is currently at 30-35 families per month. Due to the increased demand and the deployment of Public Health staff to the H1N1 Clinics, Public Health is no longer able to administer the program. Therefore, in order to continue to assist eligible clients with the provision of car seats, staff has implemented a new approval process. The challenge with vouchers is approving the correct age/weight appropriate car seat. It has been necessary to cancel the contract with Sears, which was scheduled to terminate in January 2010 in order to continue with the new process.

The business process has been changed so that $150 is being issued directly to eligible OW recipients by staff in Employment and Income Support Division so that clients can purchase the required car seat. Special Support staff issue $150 directly to eligible ODSP households upon receiving a referral from ODSP. There is a set cap of $150 for a car seat, per household, per lifetime (except in extenuating circumstances).

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