<mark><INSERT REGIONAL OFFICE LETTERHEAD></mark>

<mark>January XX,</mark> 2024

MEMORANDUM TO: <mark>NAME</mark>
Executive Director
Developmental Service Ontario <mark>[REGION]</mark>

FROM: <mark>NAME</mark>
<mark>Regional Director</mark>
<mark><INSERT REGION></mark>

SUBJECT: **Quality Assurance Measures (QAM) and Policy Directives for Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) offices**

The purpose of this memo is to provide additional information on Quality Assurance Measures and Policy Directive-related questions that were discussed with ministry representatives at the Developmental Services Ontario Provincial Network (DSO PN) meeting held on November 27, 2023, including:

1. Requirements related to ongoing training and experience for assessors (including return from a leave of absence).
2. The requirement for DSOs to ensure assessors who administer the Application Package are independent from direct provision of developmental services.
3. The requirement to record a valid response for all questions included in the Application Package.
4. Applicability of board requirements to governance boards.
5. Ministry acknowledgment of, and commitment to, following up on additional items.

1. Requirements related to ongoing training and experience for assessors (including return from a leave of absence).

In accordance with the Policy Directives for Application Entities – 5. Assessor qualifications and service standards for the assessment of support needs issued under the authority of the Services and Supports to Promote the *Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 (SIPDDA)*:

"Assessors shall meet the following ongoing training and experience requirements to ensure that their skills continue to meet the ministry's standards:

- Successfully complete interviewer reliability reviews through the ministry's assessor training and data quality assurance program (ATDQAP) every 18 months.
- Ongoing administration of the Application Package with applicants on a regular basis. The assessors should administer at least 36 Application Packages in the 18-month (as a best practice at least 2 assessments per month) period between each

- successful completion of the interviewer reliability qualifications review (IRQR) through the ministry's assessor trainer and data quality assurance program.
- Assessors who return from a leave of absence are required to follow the ministry guidelines for maintaining assessor qualifications provided through the ministry's assessor trainer and data quality assurance program, specifically the sections that pertain to 'leave of absence'."

These requirements support <u>consistency</u> and promote the <u>integrity</u> of both the assessment process and results.

The American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), the creator and owner of the SIS-A, recommends interviewers (Assessors) complete a minimum of two SIS-A assessments per month.

It is the ministry's ongoing expectation that qualified assessors, except those on a documented leave of absence, administer at least 36 Application Packages in the 18-month period between IRQRs (two SIS-A assessments per month as a best practice). <u>This includes assessors who are in the role as a partial full-time equivalent (FTE) and those who hold dual roles within an agency (i.e., their job description includes conducting assessments).</u>

When a qualified assessor takes a <u>leave of absence</u> (e.g., they leave the assessor role temporarily to fulfill another role within the DSO, or they are on a personal leave from the organization), the assessor's supervisor and the Assessor Training and Data Quality Assurance Program (ATDQAP) ministry trainer must agree on a plan to ensure quality assessments are conducted once the assessor resumes duties. This plan depends on the unique circumstances, including, but not limited to: the length of time away, the length of time the assessor has been in their role, the amount of time since their last IRQR. The ministry's **Guidelines for Maintaining Assessor Qualified Status** provides guidance on steps for inclusion in the plan.

Note: Information about the future implementation of a standardized template to document return-from-leave plans can be found toward the end of this memo.

It is also the ministry's ongoing expectation that supervisors adhere to the requirements for maintaining their assessor qualification while in a supervisory role as outlined in the **Guidelines for Maintaining Assessor Qualified Status,** should they wish to continue being an assessor. This includes administering a minimum of 3 assessments per quarter (one per month), and completing various other assessment-related activities to build and maintain their skills.

Demonstrating Compliance:

To assess compliance with the requirements, ministry Program Advisors will review a sampling of records to monitor whether assessors (except those on a documented leave of absence at the time of inspection) have administered at least 36 Application

Packages in the 18-month period between IRQRs (two SIS-A assessments per month as a best practice).

Program Advisors will also review DSO documentation outlining the duration of any assessor's leave of absence and the plan developed for the assessor to resume assessments upon return.

2. **The requirement for DSOs to ensure assessors who administer the Application Package are independent from direct provision of developmental services.**

The Policy Directives for Application Entities - 5. Assessor qualifications and service standards for the assessment of support needs requires that DSOs "ensure assessors who administer the Application Package are independent from direct provision of developmental services (are not employed in a service agency that delivers residential services and supports or community participation services and supports under the authority of SIPDDA)". The policy intent of this requirement is to avoid an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

The Ministry expects that DSOs will comply with all applicable legal requirements, including requirements contained in the *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008* (SIPDDA), Ontario Regulation 299/10 (the quality assurance measures regulation made under SIPDDA) and the Policy Directives for Application Entities. However, it also has heard from DSOs that there are challenges with the requirement to ensure that assessors who administer the Application Package are, in all cases, independent from the direct provision of developmental services due to sector workforce factors. The DSOs have advised that the application of their own internal conflict of interest policies could act as a safeguard against any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interests.

This memo provides written confirmation that a temporary suspension of the enforcement of the requirement that assessors are independent from the direct provision of developmental services, as contained in the Policy Directives for Application Entities 5. Assessor qualifications and service standards for the assessment of support needs, is in effect **until further notice**, while a policy review is conducted by the ministry.

However, DSOs must note that pursuant to their transfer payment agreements with the ministry, all transfer payment recipients, including DSOs, are required to disclose to the ministry, without delay, any situation that could be considered an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest. The transfer payment agreement identifies a conflict of interest in circumstances where:

a) the Recipient; or
b) any person who has the capacity to influence the Recipient's decisions,

has outside commitments, relationships, or financial interests that could, or could be seen to, interfere with the Recipient's objective, unbiased, and impartial judgment relating to each Service, the use of the Funds, or both.

The recipient is required to:

(a) disclose to the Province, without delay, any situation that a reasonable person would interpret as an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest; and
(b) comply with any terms and conditions that the Province may prescribe as a result of the disclosure.

During the period of the ministry's policy review, it is expected that DSOs will continue to take all reasonable steps to comply with the requirement for all assessors to be independent from the direct provision of developmental services. It is the ministry's expectation that DSOs will continue to ensure that all assessors who administer the Application Package for adult developmental services and supports adhere to their organization's conflict of interest policy and DSOs will continue to disclose to the ministry any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest as identified.

3. **The requirement to record a valid response for all questions included in the Application Package.**

The ministry's Service Standards for the Assessment Process (Application Package Administration) outlined in the <u>Policy Directives for Application Entities 5. Assessor qualifications and service standards for the assessment of support needs clearly identifies</u>:

- "The assessor must record a valid response for all questions included in the Application Package."

Concerns have been expressed that the **Application for Developmental Services and Supports (ADSS) User Guide** does not align with this requirement. Specifically, page 117, which provides background on **Section 3: Getting to Know You** indicates:

"The response categories are described below. It is possible to use these categories as prompts for individuals during the Getting to Know You conversation. Note: these are not to be used rigidly as content areas that require a response from an individual. Rather they can be used as suggested areas of exploration if an individual is having difficulty thinking of something in response to a particular question."

and

"Once again, all of this information is provided as a potential aid to a conversation, it is not intended to structure or define the boundaries of a conversation."

Importantly, this section of the **User Guide** continues to also indicate:

"When recording comments made during the Getting to Know You conversation:

- ✓ Utilize the coding categories to direct and structure the conversations. Some questions may be hard for the individual's or respondents to answer spontaneously. The coding categories are designed to assist the Assessor in guiding the conversation and to elicit information.

- ✓ During the pilot project the coding categories were tested and evaluated. Categories may seem similar or repetitive; however, each coding category was shown to elicit discreetly different and valuable information.

- ✓ Document all responses.

- ✓ **The individual and the respondents may not have information relevant to each coding category; however, all should be discussed and documented rather than leave the section blank but record what the individual said about the category** for example: Things I like for financial and material items: The person indicates that they are not very concerned about money or material items and don't have any preferred possessions.

- ✓ Check each coding category to indicate that it was included and considered as part of the conversations and document all responses.

- ✓ Record direct quotes and indicate who made the statement (individual or parent)

- ✓ Remember to provide detailed documentation when describing each section."

The ministry is confirming that the **ADSS User Guide** instructions are consistent with the requirement to record a valid response for <u>all questions</u> in the Application Package.

4. Applicability of QAM requirements to governance boards.

Another question raised is whether all Quality Assurance Measures (QAM) requirements relating to Board Records apply where the DSO has a governance board (i.e., board members do not have direct contact with people supported).

In circumstances where a DSO has the documentation to support that <u>no board members</u> have direct unsupervised contact with people supported, then s. 34(2) of Regulation 299/10 (QAM) will be noted as non-applicable.

All other board requirements will continue to apply.

5. Ministry acknowledgment of and commitment to follow-up on additional items.

The ministry is committed to following up on:

- Posting assessor attendance records for ministry-led training sessions on the ATDQAP Sharepoint site.
- Developing a standardized form to document return-from-leave plans, and guidelines for its use.

If you have questions about this information, please contact your MCCSS program supervisor.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

<INSERT REGIONAL DIRECTOR>

c.   Community Program Managers
        Regional Supervisors