

# EVALUATING A SEVERELY LIMITED CAPACITY FOR EMPLOYMENT

## Brochure for doctors evaluating the severely limited capacity for employment of recipients of an income support program

### IN QUEBEC, LAST-RESORT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED BY TWO DISTINCT PROGRAMS:

#### THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Accessible to persons with no obstacle to employment or a temporary one.

#### THE SOCIAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAM

Accessible only to persons with a severely limited capacity for employment, attested by a medical report and validated by the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale.

\* The market basket measure is a calculation by Statistics Canada that estimates the minimum monthly cost of meeting basic needs.

The monthly benefits shown are for 2020 for a single person. The most recent market basket measure is the indexed measure for 2019, for a single person in Montreal. Sources: MTESS and IRIS.

Table comparing the monthly benefits paid by each of the programs and the market basket measure.\*



### WHAT IS A SEVERELY LIMITED CAPACITY FOR EMPLOYMENT?

A severely limited capacity for employment is a recognition of significant difficulties in getting a job or holding one in a permanent or prolonged manner over the next 12 months.

The recognition of this severely limited capacity by a doctor and by the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS) is to date the primary means of access to the Social Solidarity Program.

Having a severely limited capacity for employment is not synonymous with being “disabled for life.” It is possible for recipients of the Social Solidarity Program to eventually (re)integrate the labour market.

### SEVERAL FACTORS CAN EXPLAIN A SEVERELY LIMITED CAPACITY FOR EMPLOYMENT

Though a diagnosis must obligatorily be provided in the medical report, it is rarely sufficient to fully explain a severely limited capacity for employment. The interplay of medical and socioprofessional factors must be taken into account.

If the primary diagnosis does not appear on the MTESS’s list of obvious diagnoses, the MTESS will proceed with an in-depth evaluation of the case. It will verify whether the individual possesses the physical and mental capabilities, as well as the socioprofessional characteristics (age, education, work experience, adaptability), that enable him or her “to work full time (based on the Quebec reality) in a sustained (pace) and continuous (duration) way.”

Training and employability programs can be offered to recipients of the Social Solidarity Program. Protective measures to facilitate their return to work are also available: preservation of claim slips, simplified readmission in case of a failed reintegration.

### COLLABORATING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

It is important to gather all the professional opinions needed to enable a proper assessment of the individual’s situation. A complete report, including secondary diagnoses and psychosocial factors potentially hindering the capacity for employment, will facilitate the MTESS’s in-depth evaluation. Reaching out to the social assistance doctor for an explanation of the situation may also prove useful.

A collaborative approach will allow you to share the burden of the decision and to dissipate certain concerns, while helping you to build the rationale that could serve to defend the individual before the MTESS’s doctor.

If there is no medical report signed by a doctor, the individual does not get an in-depth evaluation of his or her case by the MTESS.

### AN EVALUATION PROCESS THAT DRAGS OUT CAN HAVE DEVASTATING IMPACTS

Through fear of hampering future employment reintegration, some doctors hesitate to sign the medical report, preferring to sign off on recurring temporary limitations. Unfortunately, this practice often leads to a lack of continuity in the available budget, given the difficulty the individual has in securing the medical report’s renewal within the prescribed periods.

The sometimes very long times required for the medical and administrative process (often taking several years) have significant impacts both on the psychological state and on the living conditions of recipients.

A refusal by the doctor or by the MTESS to acknowledge a severely limited capacity for employment may lead to strong feelings of injustice, powerlessness and hopelessness.

### THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF ACCESS TO THE SOCIAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAM

The recognition of a severely limited capacity for employment, by the doctor and then by the MTESS, gives access to the Social Solidarity Program. The income supplement associated with the program:

- Increases food security and residential stability;
- Diminishes the stress, anxiety and sense of hopelessness arising from a recurrent lack of money;
- Favours personal motivation and social engagement (therapeutic initiatives, volunteer work, etc.).

### HAVING A FRANK DISCUSSION WITH THE RECIPIENT ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS

The medical appointment is stressful for numerous recipients, who don’t know how to explain the complexity of their situation, often in the very little time allotted. Having frank discussions with a recipient makes it possible to:

- Establish a climate of trust;
- Raise the issue of a possible return to employment or training;
- Reduce the potentially negative impact on self-image of the diagnosis confirming the severely limited capacity for employment;
- Bring up certain concerns about possibly harmful behaviours (demotivation, irresponsible spending of the available income supplement);
- Develop a support plan with the individual.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE RESEARCH

The information in this brochure is excerpted from the results of research conducted by a CREMIS team, in partnership with the Programme du Centre de Recherche et d’Aide pour Narcomanes (CRAN) of the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l’Île-de-Montréal.

For more information, check out our web dossier on promising practices for a more equitable access to the Social Solidarity Program, including:

- A brochure for professionals providing support;
- An informative brochure on the process for access to the Social Solidarity Program;
- An overview of the research results.

Download it at: [www.cremis.ca/contrainte](http://www.cremis.ca/contrainte)

### OTHER AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Social rights group
- Health network professionals
- Committees for social assistance recipients
- Legal aid for applications for review

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