

HEALTH PROVIDERS AGAINST POVERTY

TIP SHEET: Dealing with individual clients' situations

Our primary therapeutic alliance is with our clients, and we should act within the realm of current regulations to maximize our clients' access to benefits and decrease their risk of poverty-associated health problems.

General Approach

- Examine situations from the *client's perspective*
- Acknowledge the *limitations* of living in poverty and on social assistance, particularly in adhering to a plan of care,
- **Prioritize** health care plans according to patient's situation, ie. food, shelter, and income before regimens to control chronic conditions
- Recognize that client may have *difficulties attending appointments* or tests due to various issues including transportation, and food bank, drop-in, or shelter schedules

Practical Assistance

- **Strongly advocate** in support of clients' applications for disability benefits programs
- Explore whether **supplements** to welfare/disability income are being received, eg. allowances for special diet, transportation allowance, extra medical supplies
- **Encourage** clients on social assistance to request the income supplement forms from their worker and follow up as necessary.
- **Connect** with colleagues, social workers, lawyers, social services providers, and others who can provide clients with practical support in applications and appeal processes.
- **Write a letter** to support your client's application for subsidized housing

"The long-term solution is to have adequate rates for all social assistance recipients that enable them and their families to eat and live well. In the short-term, it would help a lot for providers to treat recipients with respect and understanding for the challenges of their situation"

Rachel Huot, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty