



Sheltered workshops – What you need to know

**Ontario is moving away from sheltered workshops over time.
Please read this fact sheet to find out more about this transition.**

What's happening with sheltered workshops?

The Ontario government is working with agencies, families and individuals to move away from sheltered workshops towards inclusive employment and other meaningful community participation.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services has informed agencies that there will be no new admissions to sheltered workshop programs. This should **not** be confused with immediate closures. The transition away from sheltered workshops will be planned over time to ensure we make the right choices. We want to make it clear that no sheltered workshop program will be phased out without appropriate alternatives in place for individuals and their families.

Are sheltered workshop programs ending now?

The Ontario government **has not** directed any agencies to close sheltered workshops at this time. Your local agency will not close programs without appropriate alternatives in place, and will work closely with you to offer inclusive programming and supports that best meet your needs and goals.

What if I can't work at a regular job?

The shift away from sheltered workshops is not only about employment. The goal is to promote full community inclusion and belonging, based on an individual's own needs and goals. Skill-building and training programs that support competitive employment are only one alternative to sheltered workshops. Programs and supports will also be focused on meaningful community participation, which can include skill-building, rehabilitation or social/recreational activities, and appropriate volunteer opportunities. Agencies will work closely with families to identify which programs and supports are right for you.

When will sheltered workshops close for good?

The transition will be gradual. In many places, such as Vermont, it has taken several years to transition away from sheltered workshops. The Ministry of Community and Social Services will be engaging with stakeholders, agencies, individuals and families in the coming months and years to carefully plan this transition.

Why is the ministry doing this?

Ontario wants to make sure that people with developmental disabilities have every opportunity for inclusion and independence. We want to make sure that those individuals who are able to participate in competitive employment have the opportunity and support to do so, but we want the range of services we provide to meet the range of goals and needs of our clients – whether that means programs that are geared towards competitive employment or programs that have a rehabilitation, skill-building or social/recreational focus.

If you have additional questions about your programming options, please contact your local service agency or Developmental Services Ontario office.