

Joined via Zoom Meeting

10am-11:00 am

1. Land Acknowledgement – Giiwe Shko Naaniibwida (Standing Strong Together)



We acknowledge that the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabek Nation. We give thanks to the Chippewas of Saugeen, and the Chippewas of Neyaashinigmiing as the traditional keepers of this land and water, and we also recognize the traditional homeland of the Metis Nation.

Traditional knowledge refers to the skills and knowledge systems that Indigenous peoples have acquired through inter-generational knowledge transfer. Traditional knowledge plays a crucial role in the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. We encourage you to connect to the land and to hear this knowledge at Giiwe

Sharing Circles or culturally mindful sessions. May we all, as Treaty People, live with respect on this land.

2. Climate and Equity – Managing the Impacts of Extreme Heat Events – Jason Weppler, Grey Bruce Public Health



“Energy poverty” refers to the experience of households or communities that struggle to heat and cool their homes and power their lights and appliances. This is an often-overlooked social determinant of health. Climate change is making weather patterns more unpredictable and causing more frequent and intense extreme weather events, like heatwaves, hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires. The changing climate is already having a measurable impact on our physical and mental health. The impacts are not equally shared. Conditions such as poverty and socio-economic or political marginalization can put women, children, older adults, Indigenous Peoples and other populations at a disadvantage in coping.

Those in this situation face multiple challenges and impacts, including:

- Inability to afford adequate indoor temperatures (lower than 26C).
- Exposure to high temperatures for extended periods of time
- Higher stress and poor mental health outcomes for adults.
- Discomfort from living in cold and drafty homes.
- Sacrificing other essentials such as groceries and medication to keep up with energy bills.
- Increased incidence of respiratory illness in children and infants

Data shared on indoor heat temperatures and Cooling Centre effectiveness shows that core temperatures can dip during a 2-hour time but will rise again when someone returns to a heated space. People need a longer extended time to keep a core temperature at a healthy level.

Fans, limb immersion in cold and neck cooling will not drastically reduce a person's core temperature. Record high temperatures in British Columbia and Quebec have resulted in 619 and 86 heat-related deaths. See attached slides for the full presentation.

Resources:

- [Public Health Grey Bruce Extreme Weather Resources](#)
- [The Energy Poverty and Equity in Canada](#)
- [Energy Poverty Backgrounder \(energypoverty.ca\)](#)

3. 211 Extreme Weather Resources & Data



Cooling and Warming Stations are listed for all municipalities, cities, and towns on 211.

- [Grey County, Rest Stations for Extreme Weather Relief](#)
- [Bruce County Rest Stations for Extreme Weather Relief](#)

211 Ontario has a new dashboard that can be used to look at local 211 data including met and unmet needs. You can filter using location, gender, age and language. Top category for calls are related to housing/utilities.

- [211 Business Intelligence Dashboard | 211 Ontario](#)

4. What are the Resources & Gaps in your community – Group Roundtable Discussion

- **Locating rest stations:** Libraries and community centres/arenas are open as cooling stations in most communities in Grey Bruce. However, some community members may be unaware of locations.
 - **Action:** we encourage all municipal and community partners to educate community members.
 - **Action:** the Health Equity Action Group can look at better ways to inform and educate people on the subject.
- **Access to cooling stations:** transportation remains an issue in rural areas.
- **Built space planning:** a new splash pad has been built in Tara next to a community centre. It is also surrounded by trees which over more shade. The Community Centre is a cooling station.
- **ODSP/OW:** CLEO has released a document on how to apply for support to ODSP/OW and use discretionary funds. Doctor support letters are required and there is a fee to obtain a letter. In some cases, a doctor may charge up to \$170/year for all applications, letters, etc. [Rules about air conditioners - CLEO - Steps to Justice](#)
 - **Action:** The Ontario Energy Support Program has an option to cover more if they heat with baseboard heat. Can this be extended to air-con use? Is this something we can advocate for?
 - **Bruce County Human Services:** cooling devices are not currently available under OW discretionary funds. However, housing shelter allowance may have room to purchase air conditioners. There is more room in the budget if someone is living in Rent Geared to Income housing. They also have a utility support program to support hydro costs. [Utility Support Programs | Bruce County](#)
 - **Action:** Bruce County will take it under consideration to review its policy.

- **Grey County Social Services:** cooling devices are not currently available under OW discretionary funds as well. Will also look to find it in the housing budget of an individual tenant or as prescribed for extenuating circumstances. Grey County will purchase and install to ensure safety. New housing builds includes central air.
- **Action:** Grey County will take it under consideration to review its policy.
- **CMHA Housing & Support Programs:** works with a lot of private landlords. They have an inventory of air conditioners that tenants can use. \$25/month to rent by tenants. [Housing Services \(cmha.ca\)](https://www.cmha.ca)
- **South East Grey Community Health Centre:** provides electric and window fans to clients.
- **M'Wikwedong Indigenous Housing Support Program:** has a stock of portable heaters that borrowed by people whose heating is broken as a short-term option.
- **Utility Support Programs:** [Utility Assistance Program - United Way of Bruce Grey](#)
- **Monitoring local data:** the Grey Bruce Public Health obtains some data on heat-related deaths and the impact of extreme weather. This is something that could be monitored more closely as we experience more extreme weather.
- **Tamarack Institute** has some upcoming webinars and a network of practice [Community Climate Transition \(tamarackcommunity.ca\)](https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca)

5. Updates

- **GB CVITP Network Gathering:** is confirmed for Thursday, September 14th at Grey Bruce Public Health. The Case Study with The Meeting Place and South East Grey CHC has demonstrated that more than \$1 million dollars have come in as income to people in those communities.

6. Next Meeting Date: 18 August 2023, 10am

CLIMATE AND EQUITY

Managing the Impacts of Extreme Heat Events

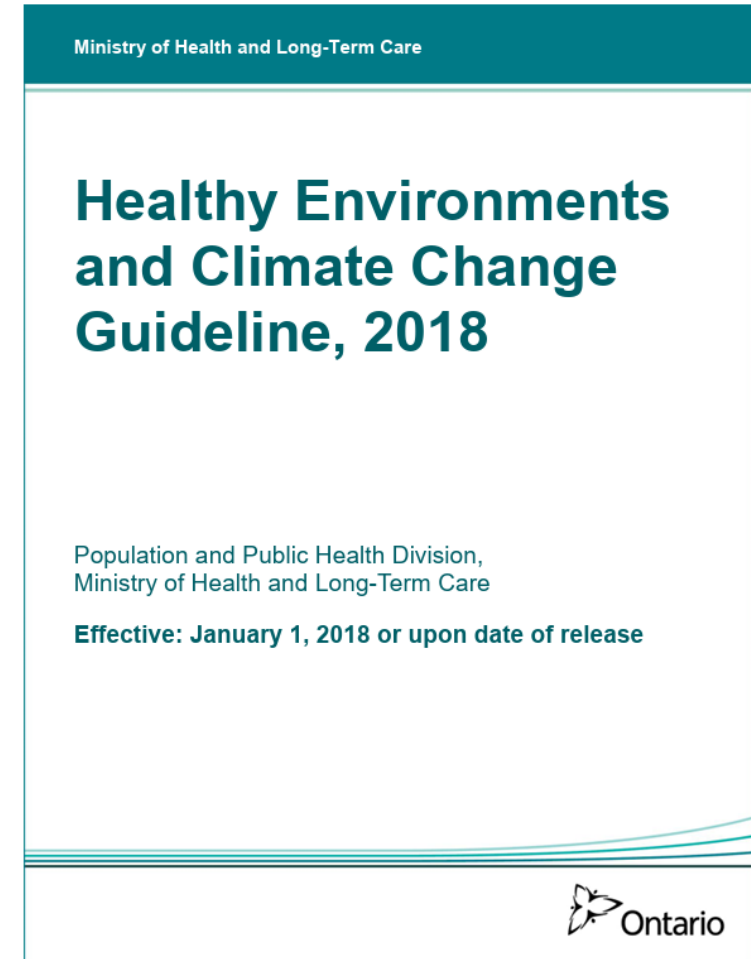
Grey Bruce Public Health
Jason Wepler - Public Health Manager



Grey Bruce
Public Health

Climate Change is a Public Health Issue

- Ontario Public Health Standards
 - Healthy Environments and Climate Change Guideline
- Grey Bruce Public Health Strategic Direction
 - Determinants of Health and Equity
- Application of Public Health Functions
 - Health Promotion
 - Health Surveillance
 - Health Protection
 - Population Health Assessment
 - Disease and Injury Prevention
 - Emergency Prediction, Preparedness and Response

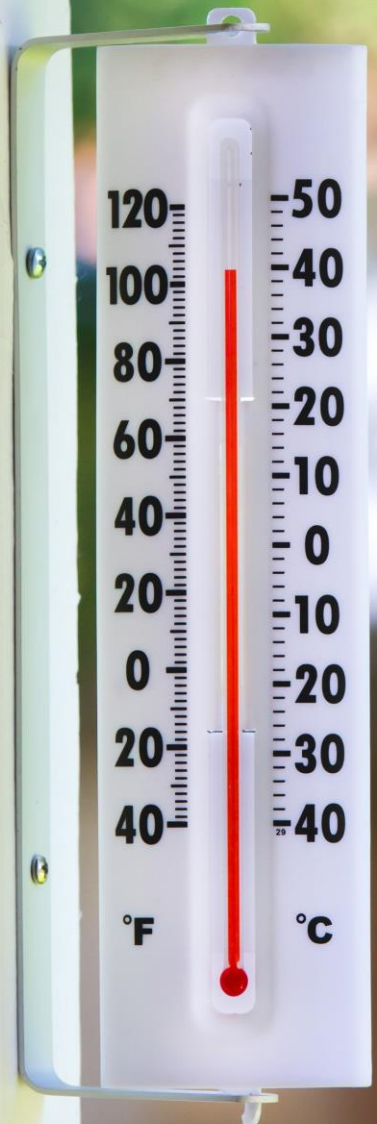


State of the Environment

- ▶ Climate change is making weather patterns more unpredictable and causing more frequent and intense extreme weather events, like heatwaves, hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires.
- ▶ The changing climate is already having a measurable impact on our physical and mental health.
- ▶ The impacts are not equally shared. Conditions such as poverty and socio-economic or political marginalization can put women, children, older adults, Indigenous Peoples and other populations at a disadvantage in coping.

The Chief Public Health Officer of Canada's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2022 Mobilizing Public Health Action on Climate Change in Canada





Health in a Changing Climate: The Canadian Context

June 2021 - A Canadian record high temperature of 49.6°C in Lytton, British Columbia led to 619 heat-related deaths.

A heat wave in Quebec resulted in 86 deaths in 2018, which was the hottest summer on record in 146 years.

Increasing atmospheric temperatures and humidity worsen air pollution and create conditions that facilitate the spread of vector-borne diseases, such as Lyme disease.

Rainstorms, freezing rain, flooding, power outages can result in increased motor-vehicle related injuries, falls, hypothermia.

Heat stress and heat-related health risks

- ▶ Extreme heatwaves are already being felt by millions of people each year in Canada.
- ▶ Direct health impacts of heat exposure include heat stroke, dehydration, mental health impacts (e.g., hospitalizations, suicidality), pregnancy complications, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and death.
- ▶ 2010 and 2018 Quebec heatwaves saw increases in daily mortality, emergency room visits, ambulance trips, and hospitalizations.



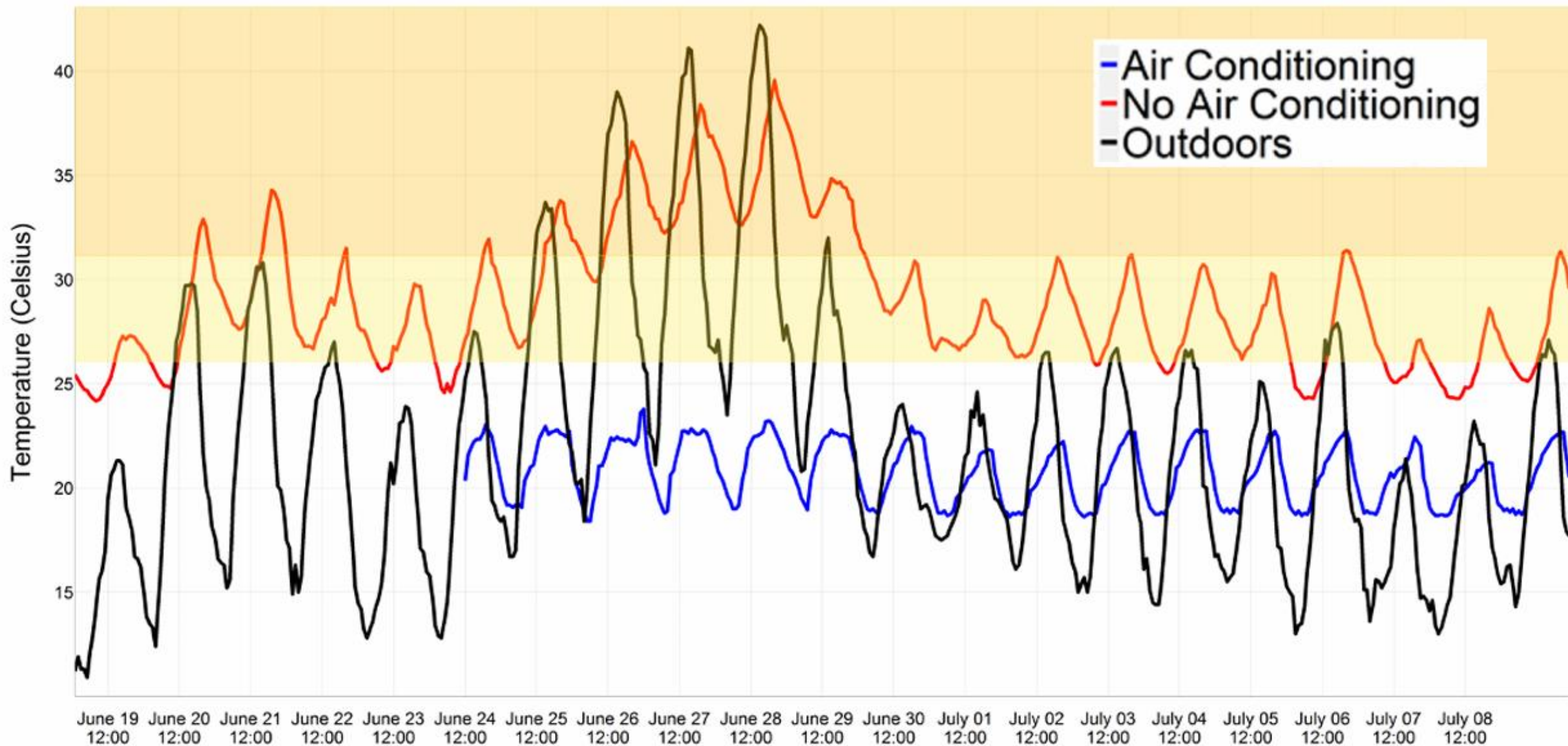
Health Equity

Disproportionate impacts on older adults, children, infants, people with certain pre-existing physical and mental health conditions, people who live or work outdoors, and those with limited financial or social supports.

People experiencing homelessness face increased exposure to extreme weather events.

Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can exacerbate pre-existing health conditions and risk behaviours, including mental health, chronic diseases, and substance use.

People died because it was hot *inside*



$\leq 26^{\circ}\text{C}$



A single-day exposure to temperatures $\leq 26^{\circ}\text{C}$ will likely not create an undue physiological strain in older adults.

$26-31^{\circ}\text{C}$



Sustained exposure to temperatures greater than 26°C but less than 31°C may pose a risk to health in some older adults.

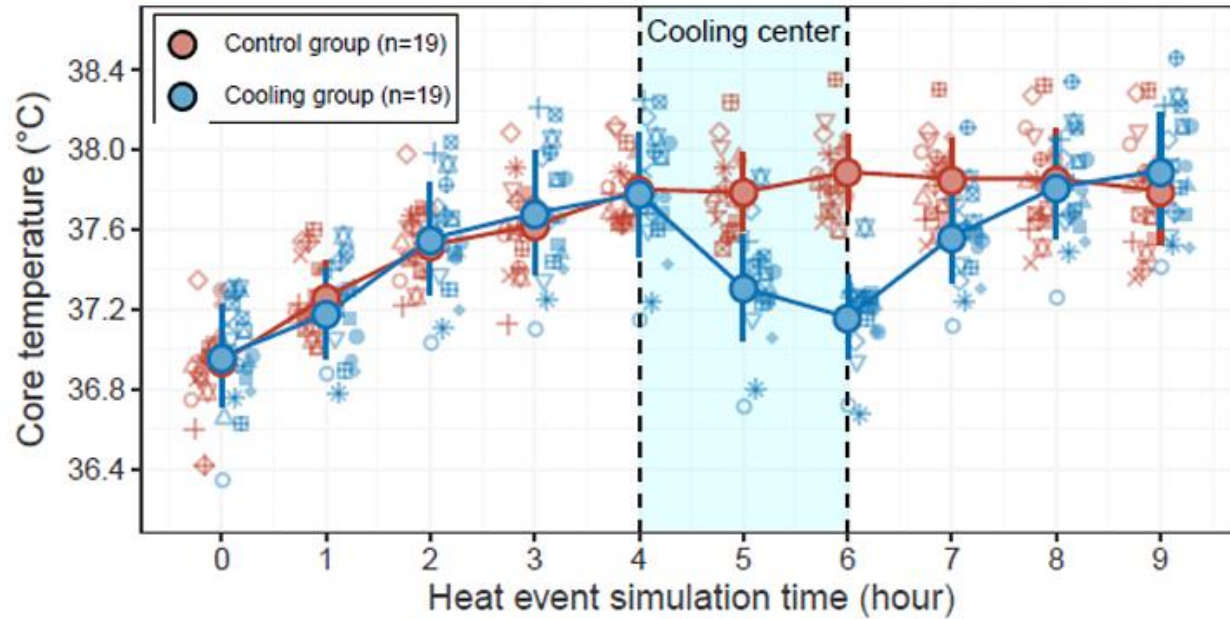
$\geq 31^{\circ}\text{C}$



Sustained exposure to temperatures $\geq 31^{\circ}\text{C}$ should be avoided for heat-susceptible populations whenever possible.

Indoor temperature should be maintained at less than 26 degrees during hot weather

A. Body core temperature during the 9 hour simulated heat wave



Cooling Centre
Effectiveness for
Short Durations



Cooling Myths

- ▶ FANS
- ▶ LIMB IMMERSION
- ▶ NECK COOLING
- ▶ Extra caution also needs to be considered as individuals often have a false sense of security and may adjust behaviour accordingly



Grey Bruce
Public Health

Questions/Comments



Ontario Works &/or Ontario Disability Support Program Discretionary Benefits: Cooling Devices

OVERVIEW

As the frequency of extreme heat events occurs, the need for cooling devices increases. Those without access to cool spaces during extreme heat events can be subjected to prolonged exposure. Such exposure can cause loss of internal temperature regulation which can lead to various negative health effects or, in some cases, death.¹

The impacts of extreme heat events disproportionately effect certain vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, low-income earners, and individuals with existing health vulnerabilities.² Members of these groups may be benefactors of Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

Recipients of OW or ODSP may be eligible to obtain a cooling device as a discretionary benefit.³ The ability to do so, including eligibility requirements and other restrictions, will be explored in detail below.

1. DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS FOR PERSONS RECEIVING OW &/or ODSP

Persons receiving support through any of the following programs can apply for discretionary benefits for needs other than financial assistance:

- *Ontario Works Act, 1997*
- *Ontario Disability Support Program, 1997*
- *Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities*

Discretionary benefits can cover medical devices, supplies, and items not covered by any of the aforementioned programs.⁴ Discretionary benefits are provided on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the Administrator.⁵ The Administrator also

¹ Jacqueline E. Cardoza, “Heat-Related Illness Is Associated with Lack of Air Conditioning and Pre-Existing Health Problems in Detroit, Michigan, USA: A Community-Based Participatory Co-Analysis of Survey Data” (2020) 17:16 Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 5704.

² Ibid.

³ *Ontario Works Policy Directives* [https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#:~:text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20\(%20TCA%20\)%20is%20being%20paid](https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#:~:text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20(%20TCA%20)%20is%20being%20paid)

⁴ Don Valley Legal Clinic, *Discretionary Benefits for Recipients of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program* (April 2023), online: <https://www.donvalleylegal.ca/blog/discretionary-benefits-for-recipients-of-ontario-works-and-ontario-disability-support-program/>.

⁵ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, “*Ontario Works Policy Directives*” (08 September 2022), online: <[https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-Canadian Environmental Law Association](https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-Canadian%20Environmental%20Law%20Association)

determines the amount provided.⁶ Importantly, discretionary benefits are intended to cover one-time costs and are not provided on an ongoing basis. As such the cost of running and operating the air conditioner, including any necessary repairs, is not covered as a discretionary benefit.⁷

2. COOLING DEVICES AS DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS

Cooling devices, such as air conditioners, can be obtained with a prescription from a nurse practitioner or physician. A diagnosis is required and it must indicate that a cooling device is required as a part of a treatment plan. It is pertinent that the prescription indicates that failure to obtain this device would result in a hospitalization or a severe risk to life.

Current medical conditions that are recognizing as requiring a cooling device include:

- cancer
- chronic heart or chronic lung conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- heart or neurological conditions
- HIV
- people on dialysis
- people with chronic mental disorders on medication
- severe asthma

If a prescription can be obtained the expense of an air conditioner or portable fan may be covered in whole. However, there will be a maximum limit on the expenses and only one air conditioning unit per family will be covered.

The legislative authority for discretionary benefits comes Section 59 of Regulation 134/98 of the *Ontario Works Act, 1997* which enables Ontario Works delivery agents to provide a program of discretionary benefits to eligible recipients.⁸

3. FOR MEDICAL CONDITIONS NOT LISTED

The above list of eligible medical conditions is not exclusionary. If a person can obtain a prescription from a health care provider, they may still qualify for an air conditioner.

[benefits#: - :text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20\(%20TCA%20\)%20is%20being%20paid>](#)

⁶ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, “*Ontario Works Policy Directives*” (08 September 2022), online: <[https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#: - :text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20\(%20TCA%20\)%20is%20being%20paid](https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/71-summary-benefits#: - :text=Discretionary%20benefits%20are%20provided%20on,Assistance%20(%20TCA%20)%20is%20being%20paid)>

⁷ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, “*Ontario Works Policy Directives*” (08 September 2022), online: <<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-works-policy-directives/77-other-benefits#>>

⁸ *Ontario Works Act, 1997*, S.O. 1997, c. 25, Sched. A.; O. Reg. 134/98, s. 59 (1).

Administrators have discretion to authorize items on a case-by-case basis. A variety of other health conditions can be severely exacerbated by prolonged exposure to extreme heat. For example, elderly populations may have existing conditions and age specific factors that can make them particularly vulnerable.⁹ Therefore, it is important to disclose any relevant medical conditions to the physician or nurse practitioner when seeking a prescription for this purpose.

Depending on the nature of the request, it is possible that one or several steps may be necessary. For those receiving OW, only a letter is required. For ODSP recipients, a letter is first required. It is then possible that they will be asked to complete a Mandatory Special Necessities Benefit Request Form which will require a signature from the party providing the prescription.¹⁰

4. HOW TO SUBMIT A REQUEST

Recipients of OW or ODSP must submit a form to the Administrator for the geographic area where they reside.¹¹ Along with the form, applicants must also submit a prescription from a health care practitioner and an estimate of the item requested.¹² Evidence to support the cost of the item can include advertisements from local stores. Upon submitting the request, applicants must ensure that their names and Member IDs are clearly written on all documents.¹³ OW and ODSP recipients across the province are eligible.

5. FOR THOSE NOT RECEIVING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Many municipalities across Ontario also offer similar programs to those who are non-social assistance recipients but who are still considered low-income.¹⁴ Individuals applying for cooling devices through these programs must complete municipality specific forms.

⁹ National Institutes of Health, “Heat-related health dangers for older adults soar during the summer” (27 June 2018), online: <<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/heat-related-health-dangers-older-adults-soar-during-summer>>

¹⁰ Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, “Ontario Disability Support Program policy directives for income support” (08 September 2022), online: <<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-disability-support-program-policy-directives-income-support/912-mandatory-special>>

¹¹ *Ontario Works Act*, 1997, S.O. 1997, c. 25, Sched. A, 59 (3).

¹² City of London, “Ontario Works” (2023), online: <<https://london.ca/living-london/community-services/ontario-works>>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.