

# ESIA Transformation

## Client and Stakeholder Information Sessions

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October - November, 2018

# Welcome: Agenda

	Topic
Part 1 Where we were	Welcome – Introduction Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What we heard</li><li>• What we learned</li></ul>
Part 2 Where we are	Building Income Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poverty Reduction Credit</li><li>• Child Maintenance</li><li>• Personal Items Allowance</li><li>• New Wage Exemption</li><li>• Bus Pass Pilot</li><li>• Poverty Reduction Grants</li><li>• Employment Support Services for youth</li></ul>
Part 3 Where we need to go	Standard Household Rate <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Rate Structure</li></ul> Special Needs Approach Recap: Employment Support Services Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality of Life &amp; Social Inclusion</li></ul>
In Conclusion	Questions and Answers

# Welcome: Purpose of Meeting

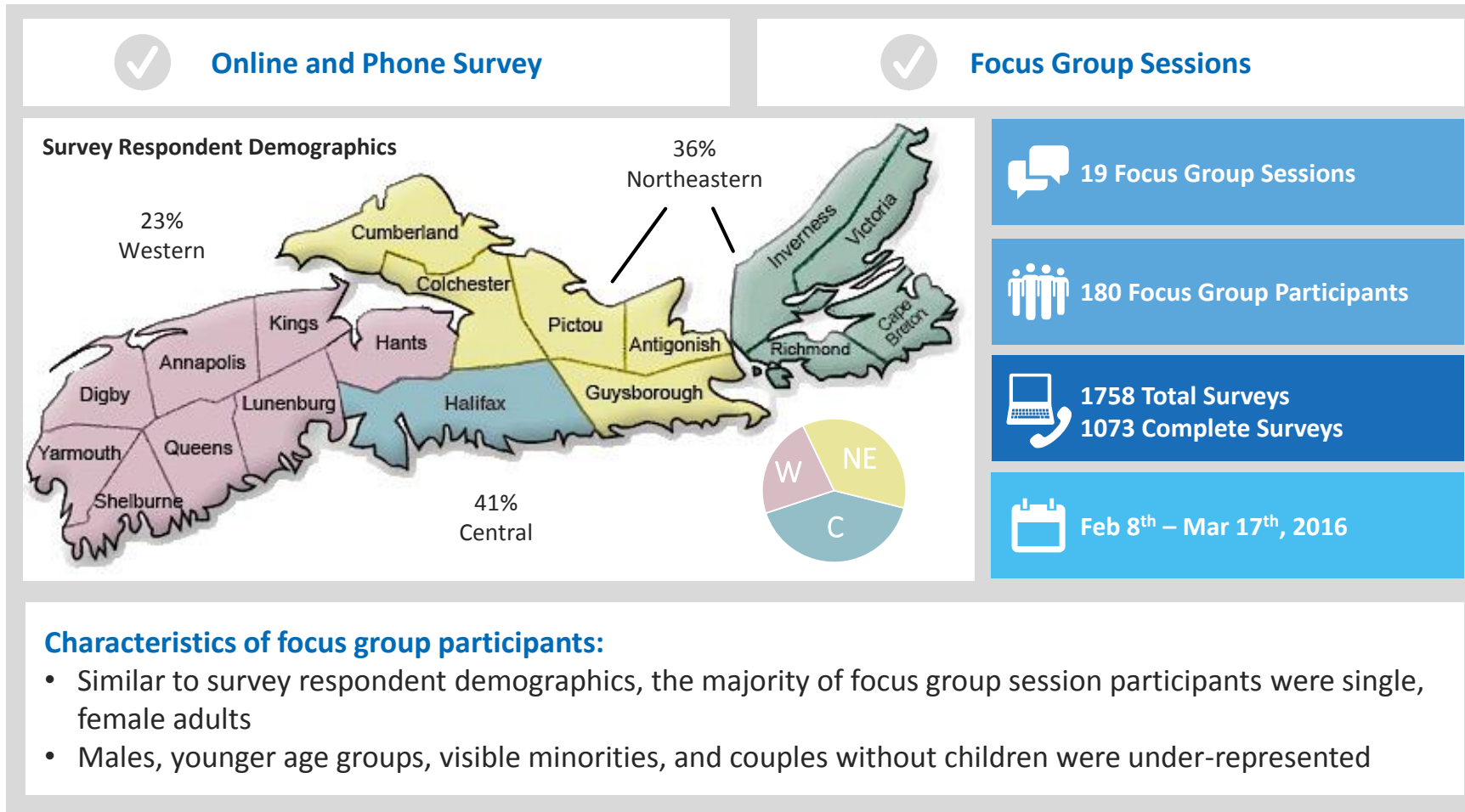
## Today's Discussion

- ▶ ESIA changes implemented in Summer 2018
- ▶ What changes mean for clients
- ▶ Upcoming changes
- ▶ What clients can expect in months ahead

# Where we were

# Where we were: Engagement

## Engaging with clients



# Where we were: Engagement

## Stakeholder and Staff Engagement Sessions

### Round 1 Engagement



When?  
July and August, 2015



Where?  
Across the province



How many?  
9 Stakeholder Sessions with 200 participants  
4 staff sessions with 100 participants

#### Who?

Community based service providers  
Women's centres  
Social workers

Advocacy groups  
Transition houses  
Educational institutions

Poverty networks  
Medical practitioners  
Policy groups

### Round 2 Engagement



When?  
October and November, 2016



Where?  
Across the province



How many?  
9 Stakeholder Sessions with 150 participants  
4 staff sessions with 100 participants

# Where we were: Engagement

## What we heard

- ▶ Clients told us that:
  - ▶ Financial support should be improved
  - ▶ Accessing our services needs to be easier and more consistent
  - ▶ Transportation is a challenge
  - ▶ Trust needs to be restored, and can be with mutual respect, kindness and support
  - ▶ Youth should be better supported

# Where we were: Engagement

## What we learned

- ▶ We have focused our work on making changes that:
  - ▶ Help increase income security
  - ▶ Help reduce the amount of paperwork required, reduce duplication and overlap
  - ▶ Remove barriers to the job market and increase support for finding work
  - ▶ Target supports toward youth



# Where we are

# Where we are: Department Vision

Outcomes for Nova Scotians (Client)	Outcomes for the Department (System)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clients have control over their own lives</li><li>• Clients are able to meet their basic needs</li><li>• Clients are safe from abuse and violence</li><li>• Clients are included in the community</li><li>• Clients are attached to the labour market</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supports and services are affordable and sustainable</li><li>• Supports and services are delivered efficiently</li><li>• System of supports and services is a balanced mix of prevention and intervention</li><li>• Supports and services are accessible</li><li>• DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives</li></ul>

We have made significant strides and improvements toward the implementation of this vision – but there is more work to do.

# Where we are: Building Income Security

## How are we responding?

A stronger Nova Scotia means helping people become more self-sufficient. We are building income security by:

1. Doubling the Poverty Reduction Credit
2. Exempting Child Maintenance from income calculations
3. Introducing a Personal Items Allowance of \$101 monthly for Nova Scotians who are staying at homeless shelters and transition houses for women
4. Introducing a new Wage Exemption structure

# Where we are: Poverty Reduction Credit

## The Poverty Reduction Credit has doubled

- ▶ The Poverty Reduction Credit has been doubled from \$250 to \$500 annually
- ▶ Eligible ESIA recipients will receive a quarterly payment of \$125
- ▶ The first adjusted cheques were issued on July 4 and were retroactive to April 1, 2018
- ▶ This change will have a positive impact for many single adults and couples with no children and will help in meeting basic needs
- ▶ Approximately 14,000 people will benefit



# Where we are: Poverty Reduction Credit

## Poverty Reduction Credit has doubled

### Eligibility:

- ▶ Individuals and couples who received Income Assistance from January to December of the previous year
- ▶ Income Tax Return filed for previous tax year
- ▶ Annual adjusted income below \$12,000 in previous tax year
- ▶ Have no children up to the time eligibility is determined
- ▶ One person of the married or common-law couple can receive credit on behalf of family

# Where we are: Child Maintenance

## Child Maintenance payments are now exempt income

- ▶ Clients on income assistance will no longer have child support payments deducted from monthly payments
- ▶ First adjusted cheques issued August 1, 2018
- ▶ Exemption will benefit approximately 1,600 people
- ▶ Average child support payment is \$275



# Where we are: Personal Items Allowance

New allowance to help support people temporarily staying in homeless shelters and transition houses for women

- ▶ Allowance to provide \$101 every month to help buy essential items, including those for personal hygiene
- ▶ More than 300 Nova Scotians stand to benefit from new allowance

# Where we are: New Wage Exemption

## Taking Home More Money

- ▶ New Wage Exemption fully exempts income up to \$250 and smooths out the rate at which employment income affects income assistance
- ▶ Allows clients to keep more of the money they earn before seeing a reduction in their income assistance
- ▶ Helps clients stabilize their income while they move into the workforce – the more they work, the more financially stable they can become



# Where we are: Wage Exemption

How does it work?

## Regular Wage Exemption

### Old System

Employment Income Bracket	Payment Retention Rate
\$0 - \$150	100%
\$151+	30%

### New System

Employment Income Bracket	Payment Retention Rate
\$0 - \$250	100%
\$251 - \$500	75%
\$501 - \$750	50%
\$751+	25%

# Where we are: Wage Exemption

How does it work?

## Supported Wage Exemption for Income Assistance clients and Disability Support Program participants

### Old System

Employment Income Bracket	Payment Retention Rate
\$0 - \$300	100%
\$301 +	30%

### New System

Employment Income Bracket	Payment Retention Rate
\$0 - \$350	100%
\$351 - \$500	75%
\$501 - \$750	50%
\$751 +	25%

# Where we are: HRM Bus Pass Pilot

## Greater access to public transportation

- ▶ The Department of Community Services has partnered with Halifax Regional Municipality to provide free annual bus passes to Income Assistance clients and their families in HRM
- ▶ Approximately 16,000 clients, spouses, and dependents are eligible for this pass
- ▶ Bus passes are available for:
  - ▶ Clients
  - ▶ Clients' spouses
  - ▶ Clients' children between the ages of 12-18 (parental consent is required)  
Children under age 12 ride the bus for free when they are with an adult who has an annual pass



# Where we are: HRM Bus Pass Pilot

Government has partnered with Halifax Regional Municipality to issue free annual bus passes to Income Assistance clients and their families in HRM

- ▶ Clients and their family members need to visit one of our locations to have their photos taken
- ▶ Once they have their photos taken, we will arrange for their bus pass to be mailed to their home
  - ▶ If client address is going to change soon, they must let their caseworker know before they sign up for a bus pass and have their photo taken
- ▶ If clients receive transportation money on their cheque to buy gas, bus tickets, or a bus pass, they and all of their family members over the age of 12 need to sign up for the free Bus Pass Program
- ▶ The free bus pass can be used on every bus route or ferry service that Halifax Transit offers
- ▶ The transportation allowance was not included on client cheques as of October 2018, even if clients choose not to participate in the program
- ▶ If clients receive a transportation allowance because they are unable to take a bus, they will continue to receive it.

# Where we are: Ensuring Clients Are Aware of Changes

## Communications

- ▶ Held staff training sessions to ensure caseworkers were aware and fully trained on changes being implemented so they, in turn, could accurately convey information to clients
- ▶ Sent letters outlining key changes directly to clients. Letters were also sent to clients on individual items, such as the child maintenance exemption, the new wage exemption, and the bus pass program in HRM for HRM clients
- ▶ Worked directly with clients and advocates to develop materials for best communicating key changes such as the wage exemption
  - ▶ Developed pamphlet to outline new wage exemption structure and provide example of how it will benefit clients who are working
  - ▶ Developed online wage estimator to help clients who are working get an idea of how much more money they will receive
  - ▶ <https://novascotia.ca/apps/dcs-estimator/>
- ▶ Met with advocates and media to outline changes and how they will benefit clients
- ▶ Information sessions for clients and advocates

# Where we are: Poverty Reduction

## Building Vibrant Community (BVC) Grants

Support community expertise to develop/test innovative projects that address poverty.

Status:

- Year One 49 Community Grants
- Year Two 41 Community Grants

### BVC Project Examples:

- The Take Action Society is transforming an unused school ice rink into a winterized greenhouse to teach children how to grow food and provide them with year-round access to fresh produce.
- Stepping Stone is helping youth, who are involved in the sex trade, to plan a positive future by helping them tackle barriers to success and independence.

<https://cch.novascotia.ca/building-vibrant-communities-grant>

## Poverty Reduction Government Innovations (PRGI)

Gov. Depts. collaborate to develop/test innovative projects that address poverty.

Status:

- Year One 8 PRGI
- Year Two 10 PRGI

### PRGI Project Examples:

- Reducing barriers to employment through subsidized experiential learning employment for youth with disabilities at NSCC Burrigde, Marconi, Annapolis Valley, Truro .
- Youth Housing Support Worker, Trusteeship Coordinator and rental supplements in Sydney.
- Expanding Mobile Food Market to additional communities.

## Social Innovation Labs

Support community expertise to develop/test innovative projects that address poverty.

Status:

- Year One 2 Labs
- Year Two 3 Labs

### Lab Examples:

- What is the most effective way to provide CBRM Worker Transportation in a sustainable manner?
- What are the best ways to sustainably improve food security rates in Amherst where people cannot access food they like and enjoy on a regular basis?

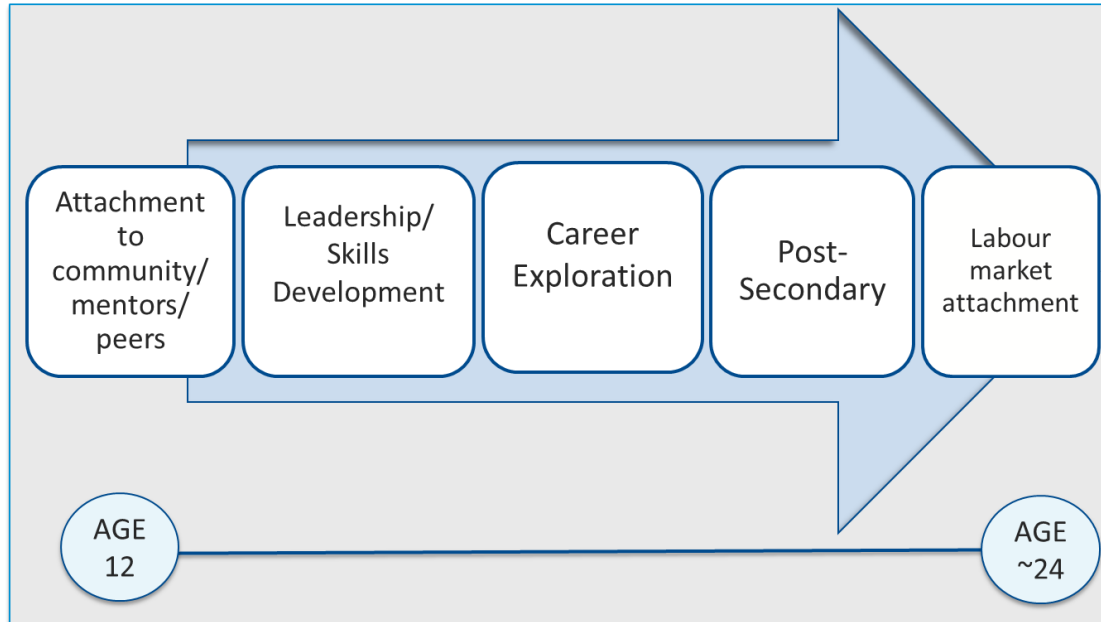


# Where we are: Youth Programming

- A key initiative under ESIA Transformation is the expansion of employment-related services for youth, focusing on ESIA dependents, youth in care, and youth clients
- One of the fastest growing segments of the ESIA caseload is youth under the age of 25 (34% of new intakes)



# Where we are: Youth Programming



- Preventive programming is critical to impacting the cycle of poverty and reliance on ESIA.
- Significant investments have been made recently to create a series of supports that help youth connect with their community, gain self-confidence and work experience, define a career goal, and attend post-secondary.



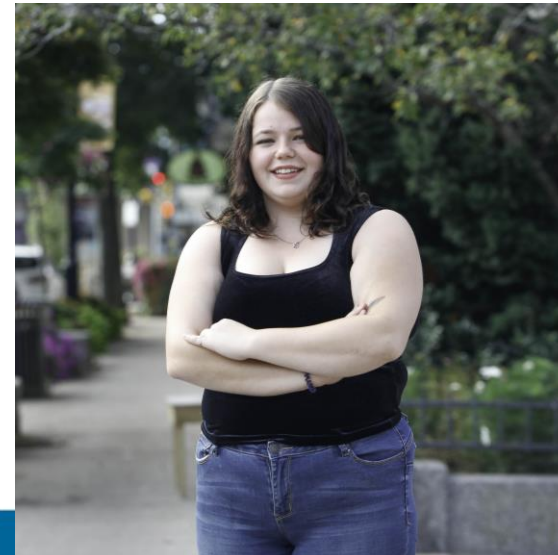
# Where we are: Youth Programming

- **Youth Development Initiative Program (YDI):** Provides career-focused community-developed programming and wage subsidies for work experience. [Ages 12 to 20](#)
- **Employment Supports within Residential Facilities for Youth in Care:** Provides employment-focused support to help youth transition from living in residential care to securing a career or attending college or university. [Ages 15 to 18](#)
- **Career Rising:** Provides employment supports in partnership with the NS Co-operative Council. Consists of a two-week skills development camp, summer work experience within the resource sector, ongoing connect to community and work, and establishing grants for participants in community college and university. [Ages 15 to 19](#)



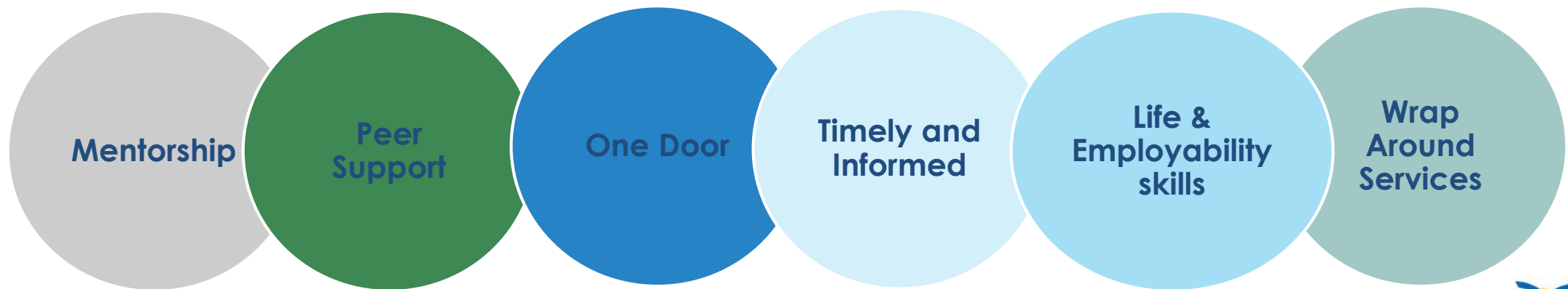
# Where we are: Youth Programming

- **Immigrant Youth Career Exploration Program:** In partnership with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia, refugee youth with DCS are supported with employability training and work experience. [Ages 15 to 19](#)
- **Summer Work Experience for Youth and ESIA Clients within Government:** In summer 2018, six departments within the NS Government hired high school youth attached to DCS and ESIA post-secondary clients for summer work experience
- **Educate to Work for Dependents of ESIA Clients:** Provides funding support for dependents to attend the Nova Scotia Community College



# Where we are: The EDGE on Employment

- EDGE is an early intervention pilot for new youth applicants and reapplications to ESIA between the ages of 18 and 26
- The pilot will be the first of its kind in NS, providing a youth-focused approach to employment services
- The pilot is being delivered in Kentville and Halifax and is built on the best practices from other jurisdictions and what we have learned from them





# Where we need to go: Standard Household Rate

# Where we need to go: Standard Household Rate

## Why Change?

- ▶ Rates that clients receive today are based on an assessment of expenses and the building of budget deficits
- ▶ It's a process that leads to unnecessary complications and different interpretation of rules
- ▶ Process can sometimes lead to situations where clients feel a lack of trust in the system
- ▶ Low rates mean clients are not always able to meet their basic needs



# Where we need to go: Standard Household Rate

## What is the Change?

- ▶ Standard Household Rate - more than just a rate increase
- ▶ Personal Allowance + Shelter Allowance will become a single rate based on family size
- ▶ Rates will be fixed to the maximum – clients will no longer receive assistance based on actual expenses but will receive full Standard Household Rate
- ▶ Changes to also include a 5% increase to the rate for single clients who own or rent their shelter and are under the following special circumstances: are disabled; are fleeing an abusive situation; have a chronic mental, cognitive, or physical condition that limits participation in employment services; are 55 years of age or over; or are a youth aged 16-18
- ▶ 2% increase for all other clients.

# Where we need to go: Standard Household Rate

Household Type	Current Max Rates	Future Max Rates	Change to Max Rates	Current Applied Average	Average Change to Future Max Rates
Single 0C Reg. 45	\$810	\$850	\$40	\$757	\$93
Single 0C Own/Rent	\$575	\$586	\$11	\$537	\$50
Single 1C Own/Rent	\$845	\$862	\$17	\$776	\$86
Single 2C Own/Rent	\$895	\$913	\$18	\$822	\$91
Single 3C Own/Rent	\$895	\$913	\$18	\$824	\$89
Couple 0C Own/Rent	\$1,120	\$1,142	\$22	\$1,066	\$76
Couple 1C Own/Rent	\$1,170	\$1,193	\$23	\$1,110	\$83
Couple 2C Own/Rent	\$1,170	\$1,193	\$23	\$1,121	\$72
Couple 3C Own/Rent	\$1,170	\$1,193	\$23	\$1,124	\$69
Single 0C Board	\$498	\$508	\$10	\$495	\$13
Single 1C Board	\$517	\$527	\$10	\$509	\$19
Single 2C Board	\$557	\$568	\$11	\$540	\$29
Single 3C Board	\$557	\$568	\$11	\$543	\$26
Couple 0C Board	\$792	\$808	\$16	\$780	\$28
Couple 1C Board	\$832	\$849	\$17	\$777	\$72
Couple 2C Board	\$832	\$849	\$17	\$810	\$39
Couple 3C Board	\$832	\$849	\$17	\$800	\$48

# Where we need to go: Standard Household Rate

## What does this mean?

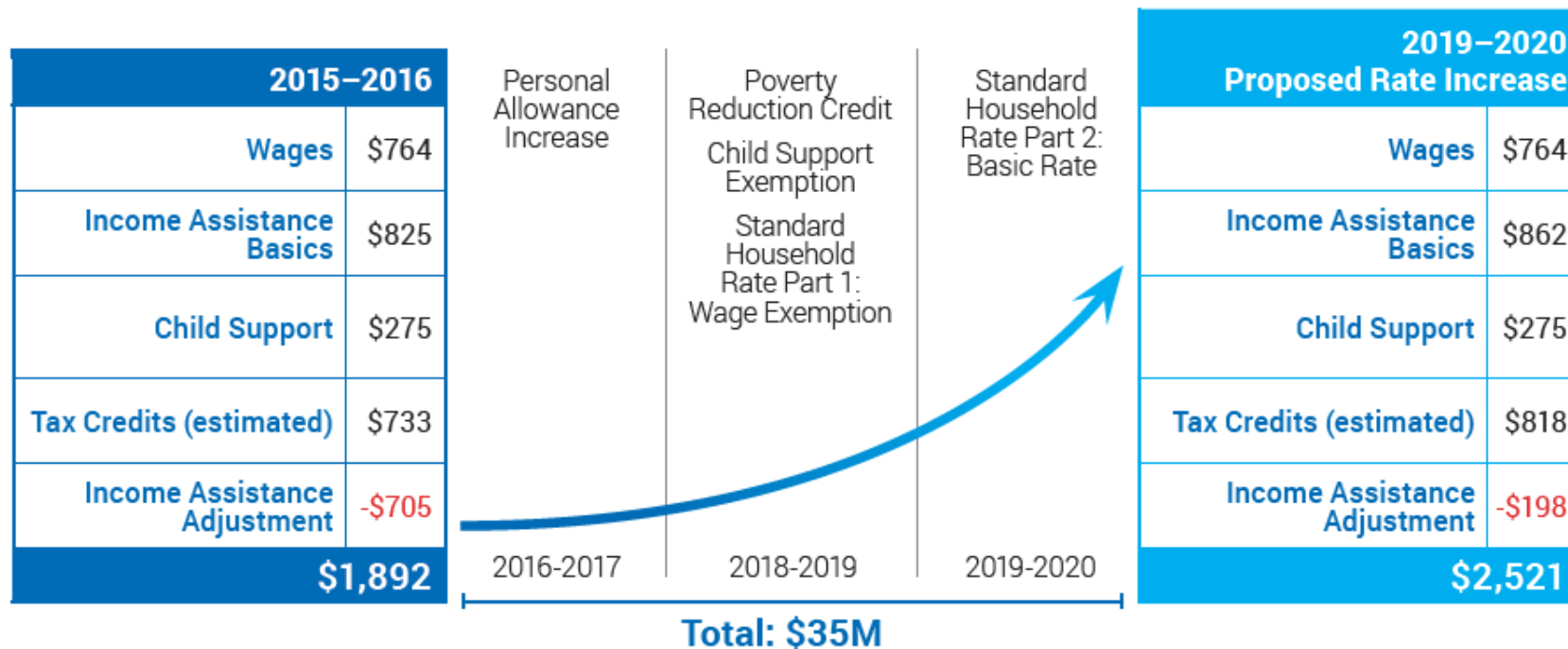
- ▶ All clients will receive an increase in their Income Assistance payments
- ▶ New system will standardize and fix rates to the maximum, making it a more simplified system for clients and staff
- ▶ New structure will add degree of stability and predictability for everyone
- ▶ We recognize that not everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the new Wage Exemption. Single clients who own or rent and are under the special circumstances rate (previous slide) will see the largest rate increase



# Where we need to go: Standard Household Rate

## Impact: single parent, one child

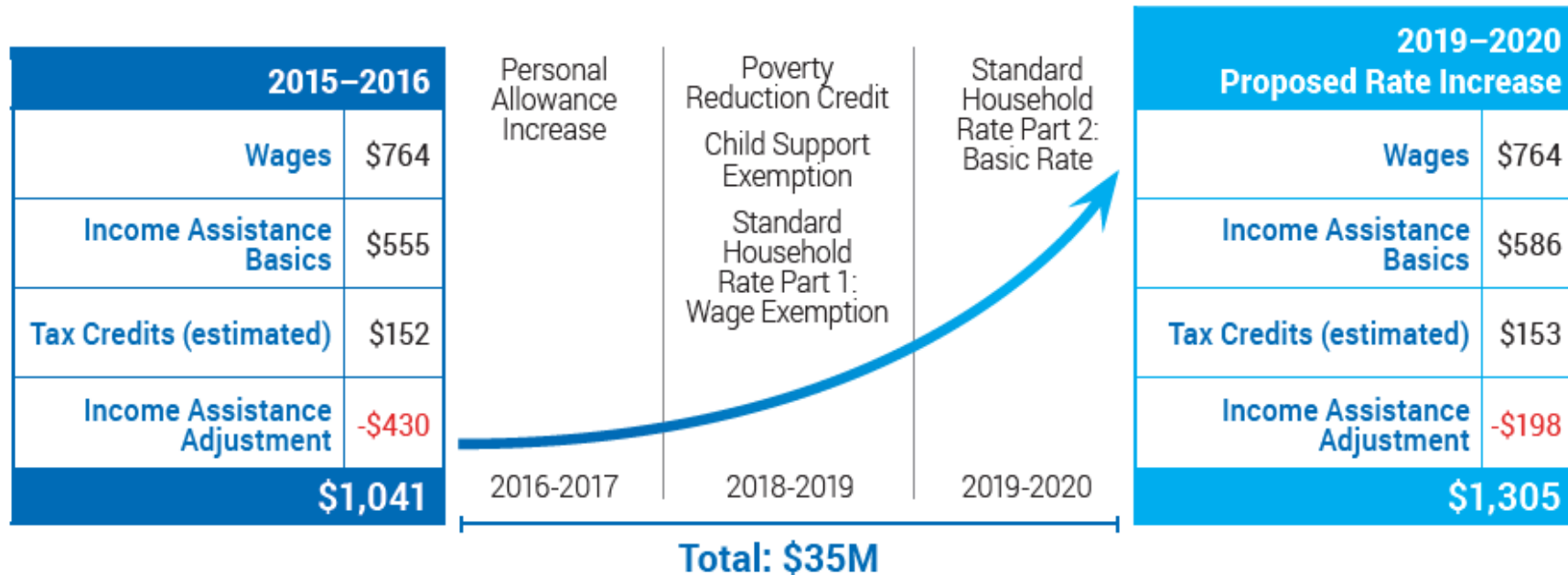
- ▶ A single parent – with \$764 net monthly income from working – with one child and receiving child support, will receive **\$629 more per month** than they received in 2015/16.



# Where we need to go: Standard Household Rate

Impact: single person with no children

- ▶ A single person – with \$764 net monthly income – with no children, will receive **\$264 more per month** than they received in 2015/2016.



# Where we need to go: Special Needs

# Where we need to go: Special Needs Approach

## Special Needs will continue

- ▶ Standard Household Rate combines the Personal Allowance with the Shelter Allowance into a simplified and standardized rate structure, however Special Needs are more complex and are based on the needs of the individual
- ▶ Special Needs are part of “assistance” provided under Employment Support and Income Assistance Act. ESIA regulations further define what is and what is not included as a special need item or service
- ▶ Special needs may be provided to meet specific:
  - ▶ health/safety needs; or
  - ▶ to support participation in employment/employability activities
- ▶ Special Needs will continue to be provided based on the needs of clients

# Where we need to go: Special Needs Approach

## Opportunities for improvement

- ▶ Looking to simplify the process where it makes sense
- ▶ Some areas for exploration include:
  - ▶ Developing a new approach to Annual Reviews that would assess the frequency for reviews as determined by the needs of the client
  - ▶ Adopting an allowance-based approach to some special needs
  - ▶ Identifying options to utilize purchasing power of clients to enhance supports (i.e. transportation and phone services)

# Where we need to go: Recap - Employment Support Services

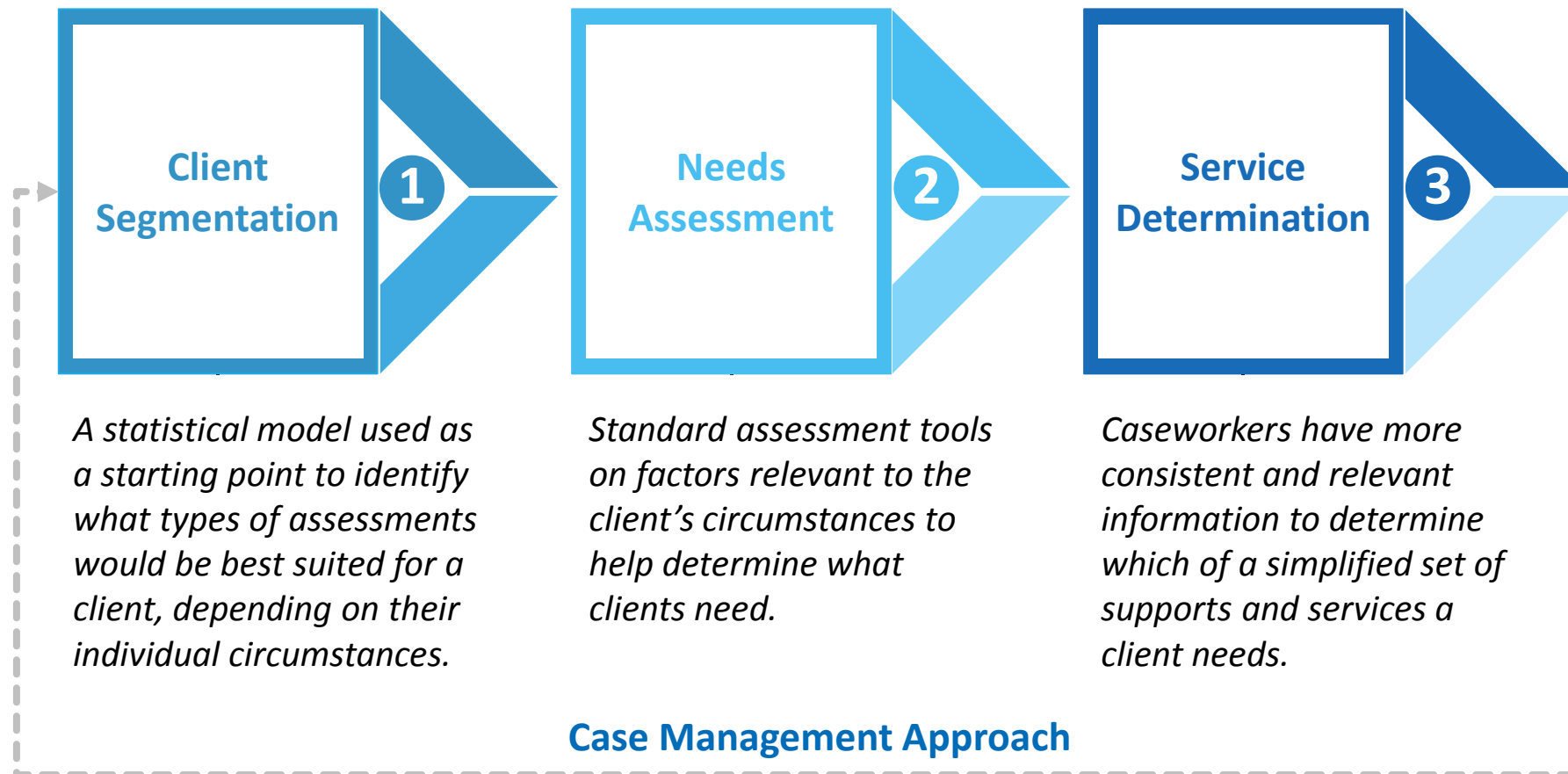
# Where we need to go: Employment Support Services

## A new approach

- ▶ Putting Clients First
  - ▶ Determine barriers clients may face
  - ▶ Use standard assessment tools to better understand clients needs
  - ▶ Identify programing best suited to clients
- ▶ Employment, quality of life, and social inclusion services
- ▶ Expanded supports for youth

# Where we need to go: Employment Support Services

Starting with client needs





# Where we need to go: Employment Support Services

## Better information to better support clients

- ▶ By better understanding the information we already receive from clients, we can better organize the supports they need to help them along their journey
- ▶ This information can help us estimate how long clients need before they can secure a job, or if the services they need would be better focused on improving their quality of life and inclusion into their community
  - ▶ Helps us determine what combination of services will have the greatest benefit to client
- ▶ Helps ensure employment supports are based on the emerging needs of clients across the system

# Where we need to go: Employment Support Services

## Assessments to help determine services

- ▶ Assessing a client's strengths, barriers, and service needs
- ▶ Process in which caseworkers and clients work together to better understand and identify client needs
- ▶ Standardized and consistent but still requires caseworkers to use judgment in determining specific services for clients

# Where we need to go: Employment Support Services

## Supports

<b>Employment services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Full suite of employment services to serve clients throughout their employment journey</li><li>▪ Includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Job search assistance</li><li>- Job development</li><li>- Employment preparation (employability)</li><li>- Career exploration</li><li>- Retention and advancement</li><li>- Referrals to other services</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>Skills development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Opportunities to develop essential and technical skills for clients with skills gaps</li></ul>	<b>Transitional jobs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Integrated work experience, supports and skills development for clients that lack work experience</li></ul>
	<b>Supported Employment (IPS)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Integrated work placements, employment services and health supports for clients with severe barriers and needs</li></ul>	<b>Youth specific</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Youth-focused sector-based employment</li><li>▪ Transitional jobs</li><li>▪ Early intervention for dependent children</li></ul>
<b>Case management and wrap-around supports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ High quality case management, service planning and supports to address additional client needs</li></ul>		

- Results from assessments would help caseworkers identify supports that are appropriate and meaningful to the client
- Each category indicates a range of needs that require a varied service response

# Where we need to go: Quality of Life and Social Inclusion

# Where we need to go: Next Steps

## Quality of Life and Social Inclusion

- ▶ We are always looking for opportunities to better meet the needs of clients when it comes to quality of life and social inclusion
- ▶ Work is more than a pay-cheque. It helps provide meaningful engagement in the community, but there are many for whom finding a job or career isn't an option
- ▶ We will be holding engagement sessions in the future to discuss how we can improve services other than employment supports



# Where we need to go: Quality of Life and Social Inclusion

## Current system and client challenges

Clients identified many challenges directly through First Voice sessions:



**Social Inclusion and Income Assistance Stigma** – Many individuals feel judged for being on income assistance. They tend to be less engaged outside their homes and have no financial resources and/or transportation to get around. In some cases, participants feel labeled by the community.



**Job Opportunities and Incentives to Help** – Clients generally feel they need improved support to get jobs, remain connected to a job, and have supportive employers. There is a desire to participate in projects (intervention) to obtain life and work-specific skills. Many expressed a strong desire to work. Penalties for failing are too harsh and discouraging.

# Where we need to go: Next Steps

## Quality of Life and Social Inclusion

- ▶ ESIA clients, including those who are pursuing employment, should have access to quality of life and social inclusion services that are aligned with their needs
- ▶ There is a diverse range of services addressing quality of life and social inclusion, making it important for the Department to identify key needs and priorities

# Questions



Thank you