



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Ministry of Children and Youth Services Announces Additional Details of their Direct Funding Option in the New Ontario Autism Program

Greater choice, consistency and flexibility means families transitioning into the new Ontario Autism Program will find services better matched to meet their changing needs.

Today, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services announced the details of the direct funding option for families to purchase evidence-based behavioural services from private providers, as part of the Ontario Autism Program (OAP), including a number of key program enhancements to deliver effective services to all families.

The direct funding option (DFO), is the option where a family may purchase evidence-based behavioural services for their child or youth from an eligible private provider. Beginning on January 15, 2018, families choosing to be, or who are currently enrolled in DFO, will see an increase in their maximum hourly rate of \$39 per hour to \$55 per hour.

While the additional program components are less detailed at the moment, it is important to note the announcement mentions the introduction of minimum qualifications for Clinical Supervisors, an OAP Provider List, which will be implemented in spring 2018 to help families select a qualified OAP service provider, an Independent Clinical Review Process to allow families to request a review of key components of their child's Behavioural Plan and the introduction of a quality assurance review process.

These program components reflect many themes we have been hearing from families all over Ontario; it is clear they are looking for greater consistency, choice and flexibility from autism supports and services that match their children's and family's changing needs.

This spring, over 3000 families responded to Autism Ontario's Caregiver Survey and when they were asked what funding option they would prefer, approximately 66% indicated DFO. Raising a child on the autism spectrum can be joyful and challenging. We know families are looking for choice, they want the ability to select their provider, the time and the place of their child's care. We are encouraged to see that the newly proposed DFO model allows families that much needed choice and flexibility and we hope to see mechanisms in place to address additional concerns that were voiced in the survey responses.

Yet to be addressed in this announcement are the waitlists. In the spring, families reported on long waitlists and the confusing, fractured nature of the service delivery system as large barriers to accessing continuous, consistent care for their child. Continuity of service was and remains a large concern for parents and caregivers accessing autism services in their communities.

Additionally, flexibility of service continues to remain unaddressed. When parents and caregivers were asked where their child should receive intervention services, caregivers questioned why there had to be solely one option. This announcement provides more choice for *who* can be involved in their child's treatment, it fails to address *where*. Even with the 2017-2018 Ministry of Education [pilot](#) that promises to provide dedicated spaces for external practitioners of ABA to deliver on-site autism services, we continue to ask why children are not being served where they are, be it at school, at home or in the community, and in doing so promote greater generalizability of treatment and behaviour.

Lastly, we must consider the differing realities for families across the province. For instance, in rural and northern communities there is a shortage of providers of any kind. Families can find themselves hours away from their regional direct service provider and without options to hire private DFO providers.

This announcement is another step in the right direction, and as the OAP continues to evolve and grow, Autism Ontario will continue to support access to seamless, individualized, continually-assessed, evidence-based and effective interventions and supports across the lifespan of all people with ASD.

About Autism Ontario: Autism Ontario has a 44 year history of representing thousands of families and people with ASD across Ontario. We are the only organization in Ontario that has formal parent representation in all areas of the province through our 25 Chapters. We advocate on behalf of all people with ASD and their families – at all ages and stages of life, reflecting a wide range of expression and abilities. To connect with us, visit www.autismontario.com

Vision: Acceptance and Opportunities for all people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Mission: To ensure that each individual with ASD is provided the means to achieve quality of life as a respected member of society.

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