



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Minister of Children and Youth Services Announces the Inclusion of a Direct Funding Option in the New Ontario Autism Program

This is welcome news for families across the province who have been vocal about the need for a direct funding option under the new program.

Today's announcement from the Minister of Children and Youth Services regarding the inclusion of a direct funding option in the new Ontario Autism Program is a welcome one for **families who have repeatedly called for flexibility and choice to be a part of the new program.**

Previously, families of children receiving early intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) were given the option of pursuing either a direct service option, whereby they received intervention services and support directly from government funded providers, or a direct funding option, whereby families were able to hire their own private providers and receive reimbursement for these services from the government.

When the Ministry of Children and Youth Services announced the formation of a new Ontario Autism Program last spring, families were concerned that the choice between direct service and direct funding would no longer exist and they would be required to access services solely through publicly-funded providers. They were assured today that this will not be the case. Instead, **families of children will have the choice of how they access behavioural services for their children, regardless of age.**

Autism Ontario recently surveyed thousands of families across the province and asked questions about a range of issues relating to intervention and diagnostic services. When asked what funding option they felt would work best for their family, approximately **66% said that given the option, they would prefer direct funding.**

“When looking at the data we saw that families consistently reported the desire to not only choose their own provider, but the timing and location of services. For many, travelling to a service centre during work hours is an impossible task, be it because of their own job commitments, or because they live hours away from the nearest publicly-funded provider. With direct funding, they can hire someone to come to their house during times that work for the entire family. On the flip side, we heard from families who would prefer direct service. These families reported multiple concerns, including, being unable to manage acting as an employer – finding and hiring service providers, or that in this case, there are no private providers nearby that they can hire. Overwhelming families reported wanting choice, be it to manage and hire service providers themselves, or to access services directly from publicly-funded providers. The needs of all families must be respected.”

Nicole Bardikoff, Ph.D.,
Researcher, Autism Ontario

In light of this data and our conversations with families across the province, **Autism Ontario strongly supports the inclusion of a direct funding option under the new Ontario Autism Program.** It is important that families are able to choose what option they feel works best for them. It is also paramount that families across the province are able to access services in an equitable way.

The current announcement pertains to behavioural treatment, yet we know from families that the range of services that individuals need over the course of their lifetime spans much further. **Children and adults with ASD need to be able to access many types of services, such as, speech and language services, educational supports, occupational therapy, mental health, employment opportunities with support and adult specific resources.** Autism Ontario hopes that accessing these many important and necessary services will become increasingly feasible for families across the province.

About Autism Ontario:

Autism Ontario has a 43 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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