



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Ministry of Children and Youth Services releases key components to new Ontario Autism Program with a strong focus on the family

Choice, consistency and confidence are the cornerstones of the new Ontario Autism Program which features responsive, coordinated, family-centred children's services for Ontario families.

Today's announcement from the Minister of Children and Youth Services provides answers to long-standing questions families have been waiting for and the news is very welcome

Announced today are the key components of the new Ontario Autism Program, which include: a single point of access; services based on need for all children and youth regardless of age; a direct funding option, and; a larger role for parents and caregivers to play in the collaborative decision making process regarding their children's intervention planning.

We are encouraged to see a program developed with a strong focus on the family. Ease of access to children's treatment is a positive step; families who are able to access the right services and supports at the right times are critical. When asked what would make navigating the publically funded system easier for their family, respondents to our 2017 Caregiver Survey reported having a central point for access was the most frequently mentioned component to accessing autism supports.

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.

We are encouraged to note that the new Ontario Autism Program has committed to perusing the first regulation of behavior analysts. Oversight of safe, effective quality providers is an important policy and program direction. Every child can benefit from good ABA. The goal of creating a continuum of ABA services that are timely, effective, and meet the assessed needs of the child in a flexible manner is tremendous news for families.

Although these components emphasize a clear focus on the family, questions remain about the role Ontario schools will play in supporting our children and youth on the spectrum. There are 18,000+ students on the autism spectrum in our province and the role education will play in supporting our children and youth on the spectrum has yet to be mentioned. Even more

troubling, despite increasing eligibility for all children and youth in the Ontario Autism Program, families and their loved ones on the spectrum will reach the inevitable drop off from services at eighteen. Children with autism grow up to be adults with autism. An individualized, broad, long term plan for any child must consider their lifespan. The right services, supports and intervention must meet the child and their family where they are. Our system must be prepared to support children, youth and adults within the context of development, continual learning, family and community. This includes supportive, understanding and inclusive communities ensure that each person with ASD is provided the means to achieve quality of life as a respected member of society. Today's announcement is a step in the right direction.

For more information about the transformations related to autism services in Ontario, please visit the [Ministry of Children and Youth Services](#) for a full description of the new Ontario Autism Program, including frequently asked questions, timeline of the roll out, and how will affect your child's care.

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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