



## Media Release

# Ontario Community Grieves Loss of Boy with Autism

**October 26, 2009 (Toronto, ON)** – Yesterday, a mother took the life of her son with autism. In Canada, this is the second time in a month that a parent has taken the life of their child with autism.

The need for supports and services is keenly felt across Ontario. Families of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder know that autism services can be challenging to access. When a crisis occurs, this is often more pronounced.

Studies show that raising a child with autism is more stressful than raising a child with any other disability. Many parents are stretched beyond what they feel they can possibly cope with. In this situation, the outcome was the unthinkable.

“When a child with autism is in crisis, the whole family is in crisis, says Dr. Yona Lunsky, a clinical psychologist and Research Section Head in the Dual Diagnosis Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Dr. Lunsky continues, “Parents need to be able to access crisis supports to help their children but also to help them, the parents. No parent should feel so alone in a struggle that she or he thinks there is only one way out. At the very least, we need responsive crisis services for every child and family. But what are really needed here are appropriate supports prior to the situation developing into an emergency.”

Autism Ontario offers support and information to families dealing with autism across the province. Executive Director, Margaret Spoelstra acknowledges that crisis intervention services can be a challenge to access for many families, but says, “Taking the life of your child should not be an option. If you are a parent or an individual in crisis, you need to contact your local crisis line.”

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1 in 150 children are now being diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Autism is a developmental disability that prevents individuals from properly understanding and responding to what they see, hear, and sense. This may result in severe problems of social relationships, communication and behaviour.

Since 1973, Autism Ontario has been providing information, supports, and advocacy to families, professionals and individuals dealing with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

For more information on autism, and Autism Spectrum Disorder, visit [www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com).

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**For media inquiries, please contact:**

**Karyn Dumble, Chapter Liaison**  
416-246-9592 x226  
[karyn@autismontario.com](mailto:karyn@autismontario.com)

**Marilyn Thompson, Program Manager RCP**  
905-715-3306  
[marilyn@autismontario.com](mailto:marilyn@autismontario.com)