



Autism Ontario's 2014 Province-Wide Survey: Summary

Introduction

In the summer of 2014 Autism Ontario sent out a province-wide survey to 9,000 families and practitioners. The goal was to solicit feedback on a range of issues related to Autism Ontario and identify needs within the ASD community.

We received responses from approximately 1,560 individuals representing all 25 chapter regions.

Caregiver of a child with ASD: 76%

Caregiver of an adult with ASD: 22%

Individuals with ASD: 2%

Autism Ontario members: 58%

Francophones: 11%

Aboriginal Community – 2%

Professionals – 18%

The survey included two open ended questions which asked respondents to list services they wanted offered and areas of need they hoped would be addressed. There were several overarching themes, including a need for more funding and a need for services in rural areas. Listed below in order of mention, are the four most frequently cited topics and the needs identified within each. Included are a brief summary and representative comments.

Adult Supports

Overall, the most prevalent concern surrounded supports for adults. In general, individuals spoke about a lack of resources, and reported feelings of despair and confusion once their children turned 18 and thus were no longer eligible for the services they had come to rely upon. Specifically, responses centered on a need for more programs and supports of all kinds, in both urban and rural areas.

"No funding, no programming, it's like they drop off a cliff when they leave school."

1. The issue raised most often in the data was a need for support and training in relation to employment and daily living. This included a call for vocational training, daily living skill acquisition, job coaching and help finding employment opportunities.

"...it would be very effective in terms of vocational planning to have comprehensive 'life skills' i.e. ability to live independently, secure a job, obtain driver's license, etc."

2. The second most discussed issue concerned the difficulty families face when it comes to finding adequate and inclusive housing for their adult children.

"...needs to be more effort put into finding solutions and providing awareness to the current housing crisis. I don't want my child to be living in sub-standard conditions, at risk for being abused or assaulted. I want to know when I die that my child will be taken care of."

3. The third most prevalent issue was a call for social skills training programs specifically for adult populations.

"Social Skills training program such as PEERS for adults. Young adults and also older, with separate groups. Just because you turn 18 does not mean you no longer need training and assistance."

It is worthwhile noting that these concerns surrounding adulthood were not only voiced by adults or parents of adults, but also by parents of children who are worried about what will happen to them as they age.

"Our kids are growing up, they will become adults that will have very little support and resources."

Teens and the Transition to Adulthood

The second most discussed topic was teens and the transition to adulthood. In a similar vein to the adult comments, it appears as if there is a strong need for additional services. This includes both daily living skills programs and social skills training.

1. The most frequently mentioned issue was a general lack of focus on teens and a need for more support across a wide range of areas, both in terms of skills training and educational opportunities.

"Services seem to be tailored for panicking parents of preschool aged children, whilst parents of teens and older children are left out in the cold. I hate to see how it's going to be once my child is an adult."



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