

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Autism Ontario Responds to Needs-Based Autism Program Announcement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Toronto, Ontario - February 4, 2021 -- Yesterday's announcement from the Province of Ontario that it will begin core clinical services for approximately 600 children in the new needs-based Ontario Autism Program (OAP) this March is long-awaited news by families of children and youth on the autism spectrum.

The announcement reflects key recommendations of the [Ontario Autism Program's Advisory Panel 2019 Report](#) and affirms the continued work of the OAP Implementation Working Group during pandemic-strained times. Their continued commitment to this important work speaks to their knowledge of what caregivers and autistic children and youth are experiencing while in a variety of lock-down situations across the province. Many have felt the double loss of educational supports and OAP core services as noted in Autism Ontario's province-wide [Readiness for School: Findings from the 2020 Autism Ontario Education Survey](#).

Good news is the inclusion of an increased investment in Ontario's autism diagnostic hubs, the extension of childhood budgets and interim one-time funding for families awaiting entry into the OAP, and the initial implementation of the OAP Advisory Panel's recommendations of funding allocations based on assessed need for the 600 children chosen to come off the waiting list.

There are still many moving parts that need to be addressed and further clarified, including the variety of competitive bids for various pieces of OAP- related services, including the impact of a transition to a new Independent Intake Organization, a call for proposals for urgent response services -among others, the thinking behind age-based funding categories, and the dispute mechanism process on the needs-based assessment.

Other key questions that remain are the movement towards regulation of behavioural clinicians through the College of Psychologists and how the critically needed mental health supports will be assessed, delivered, and monitored within the OAP.



As with many important announcements regarding children and youth on the autism spectrum, this announcement ignores the reality that autistic youth exiting child-aged programs on their 18th birthday have few, if any supports into and through adulthood. Getting the OAP working well for families, however, is an important step of many more required to enable young autistic people to achieve their best life.

For more information, email our media team at media@autismontario.com

About Autism Ontario: Autism Ontario has an over 47-year history of representing thousands of families and people on the autism spectrum across Ontario. We are the only organization in Ontario that has elected volunteer parent representation from all areas of the province through our 25 Chapters and regional supports. We advocate with and on behalf of all people on the autism spectrum 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

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