

# 2023 Review of The Child, Youth and Family Services Act

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## Autism Ontario's Response

### Autism and Accessibility

#### Communication

- Provide various communication options to ensure that autistic children and youth have a “voice” in decisions that affect them, including feedback for service provision.
- Prioritize access to Service Providers who can facilitate and enable skills related to communication and participation.

#### Technology

- Provide opportunities for families and autistic children and youth to access and share health information as appropriate.
- Provide service providers with access to consistent technology to support reporting.

### Autism Training and Education

- Provide culturally appropriate and responsive training and support to service providers.
- Provide autism-specific training and education for child welfare and service providers.
- Provide training and support in mental health, addictions, trauma, and neurodiversity, prioritizing workers providing assessments.

### Intersectionality of Autism, Culture & Equity

- Provide individualized services and support for Indigenous bands that reflect the needs of their communities.
- Review and standardize tools to reflect equity-based, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed practices.

### Autism Service Models

- Provide opportunities for service providers serving Indigenous families to connect and collaborate:
  - e.g., ECHO Ontario Autism for Service Providers/Allied Health
- Implement proven early identification and intervention models across the province.
  - e.g., QuickStart
- Implement proven regional service hub or network models across the province.
  - e.g., Children’s Treatment Network of Simcoe/York

Autism Ontario's journey began over fifty years ago, at a time when information about autism was limited, awareness was scarce, and little support for families existed. Driven by devoted parents who united through Chapters, now Regions, they sought to uplift one another.

As autism prevalence rates grew from 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 50 children in Canada, Autism Ontario joined with thousands of families and their children of all ages to bridge gaps through direct support for autism research, multiple advocacy approaches, and education and public awareness — along with fundraising initiatives to begin services where there were none. Today, various collaborations and partnerships with organizations and the ministry amplify Autism Ontario's impact, and our ongoing scholarship programs provide valuable assistance to autistic students and their siblings. Most notably, Autism Ontario has provided peer-to-peer family supports, relevant information and service navigation, and funding for social programs across the lifecycle.

However, the work of the volunteers who started Autism Ontario and others like it is far from over. Although the CYFSA focuses on children and youth, it cannot be at its most effective without placing those children at the center of its mandate, which also means holding other Ontario ministries accountable together with MCCSS to ensure that the siloing of supports (Education, Health, Youth Justice) does not result in further barriers to their safety and well-being.

By sharing stories, contributing to greater autism inclusivity, and collaborating with autistic individuals and their families across the province, Autism Ontario continues on a path toward a brighter future. Our vision, "Best Life, Better World, Making Autism Matter," reflects Autism Ontario's commitment to fostering understanding around autism and nurturing a world where autistic individuals and their families are supported and included.