



Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders **O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER** May 2016

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Career Celebration for Genese Warr-Leeper and Deb Almost



Thursday June 9th
4- 7 pm

**Elsie Perrin Williams
Estate
101 Windermere Road W.
London, Ontario
N4 N6G 2J4**

Genese Warr-Leeper is close to retirement from Western University where she has been conducting research and teaching Speech-Language Pathologists for over 38 years. Genese is an expert on language disorders. She has spent much of her career demonstrating that language disorders are life long and that intervention by Speech-Language Pathologists can minimize the impact of the impairment.

Deb is the Co-President of OAFCCD and has recently retired from Woodstock General Hospital. In her career she has worked in the community with Home Care, at the school board and for the last 30 years at the hospital.

Please join us for a celebration on June 9th, 2016. Tickets are \$20 and can be reserved by calling Alison at 519-290-1763 or by e-mail, alison.morse@outlook.com. If you are unable to attend, please consider making a donation to OAFCCD in recognition of their contributions to the field. Donations can be made through CanadaHelps.org by clicking the image. A tax receipt will be issued immediately.



Special Needs Strategy Update

The proposals for Service Coordination and Integrated Rehabilitation Services were submitted in 2015 and it seems like nothing has happened since. However, there have been a number of positive announcements and we are starting to hear about regional plans, for service coordination, that have been approved and started implementation.

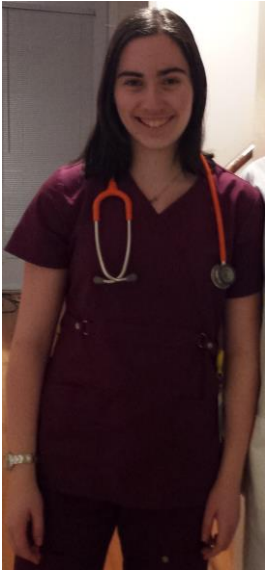
The great news is that the government committed \$17 million, in the March provincial budget, for the Special Needs Strategy. This includes up to \$110,000 per region for service coordination in 2016-17. This money is provided to regions once the Ministry has met with the local committee and approved their proposal. Most importantly, part of the funds must be used to hire Service Coordinators. This means that more service coordination support will be available for families from the start. Additional funds will be allocated in the future based on identified demand.

The proposals for integration of rehabilitation services, including speech and language, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, are still under review. Planning committees have been asked to clarify elements of their proposals and meetings with Ministry representatives are planned for the fall. Key to the implementation of the proposals will be the Program Guidelines that are to be released in June.

The process seems to be moving slowly but in the direction that families want to see. Families want the services to be better coordinated and integrated. They want fewer transitions, and all transitions to be seamless without disruptions in services. They also want to be active participants in planning services for their child that meet the child and family needs.

The OAFCCD Position on the Special Needs Strategy is on the [OAFCCD Website](http://www.oafccd.com).

Celebrating Student Success Stephanie – on the way to a career in nursing.



Stephanie was one of the three students who were profiled in the OAFCCD DVD, *The Power of Parents, Supporting Success for Students with Speech and Language Impairments*. Stephanie has severe language impairment and in the video she shared how she was being supported in high school. Stephanie was in Grade 10 and her story illustrates how the Individual Education Plan (IEP), Learning Resource Teacher, classroom teacher and her family work together to support her success.

In the video Joyce, her Mother, spoke about the importance of parent engagement, advocacy and collaboration in supporting Stephanie. Joyce also credits the involvement of Genese Warr-Leeper, who provided professional guidance, as they advocated for programs and supports to support Stephanie's severe language impairment. Stephanie's parents believe getting intensive school-based supports in her elementary school years, and ongoing classroom and language supports throughout high school, was key to Stephanie's success. Her language skills and academics have flourished.

In 2015, Stephanie was on the Dean's Honour list for her Pre-Health Science certificate (1 year course at college) and as a result was accepted to the college's 2 year Registered Practical Nurse program. The first year of the nursing program has been challenging for Stephanie but nonetheless successful. Stephanie still struggles with reading comprehension and asks for help to define a term or help her understand a concept, both in daily conversation and in her studies. But she implements the reading comprehension and other strategies she has learned, and once she understands it, "it's in her brain for life".

Stephanie's language impairment is lifelong, but with the appropriate help and support, Stephanie is well on

her way to becoming a vibrant and contributing member of society. This success story was possible because of a strong parent advocate and intensive academic and speech language supports at school.

Tips for Promoting Parent Engagement

(Excerpts from Alison Morse's presentation at the
OSLA School Symposium)

Parent engagement is important because:

- Research shows that student achievement and well-being improves
- Students are more likely to:
 - Be motivated
 - Earn higher marks
 - Have better behaviour and social skills
 - Go to college or university
- Special Needs Strategy requires family engagement and input into child's goals for speech and language services

There are many barriers that prevent parents being actively engaged in their child's speech and language program. This may include:

- Difficulty accepting that their child has delayed or disordered speech or language
- Language or cultural challenges in accessing services
- Deference to the "experts" who are perceived to know what is best
- Lack of knowledge about where to get help or what type of help is available
- Limited knowledge of speech and language development
- Confusion about the speech and language service system
- Frustration when there seems to be delays or disruptions in services
- Lack of time to attend meetings or follow up at home

There are ways to overcome all of these barriers and promote parent engagement. Effective strategies start by finding out the parent's needs. Meeting the parent's immediate needs includes providing the right information for the situation and support that allows parents to recognize their feelings and express themselves. It is also important to recognize cultural values that may make it more difficult for a parent to accept help or acknowledge a problem.

Parents are at a serious disadvantage in terms of information and providing information to families is critical. Families need information about speech and language development, about what help is available and what they can do. Families that are well informed are more likely to participate in therapy and follow up at home. Providing tips and strategies that parents can use at home makes them feel empowered and optimistic.

The current speech and language service system is complex and parents often find it difficult to navigate. The speech and language system will be changing with the Special Needs Strategy with features such as common intake, single care plans and integrated rehabilitation services, but families will still need support as their child grows and needs change. Professionals can help families by providing information and working collaboratively to ensure continuity of service. Helping parents to understand how different environments support their child or how increasing academic and social demands impact the child's needs will help families to better understand the service system.

It seems like families are busier than ever before and this means that parents may have less time to attend meetings or help their child at home. Tip sheets and strategies to use at home need to be simple and easy to incorporate into busy schedules. In cases where the parent just can't participate there may be other people in the child's life or supports at school to support the child.

This excerpt is from a presentation by Alison Morse at the OSLA School Symposium held on April 15th, 2016. For a copy of the complete presentation, please e-mail Alison at alison.morse@outlook.com

Special Education Videos

In April, Easter Seals Ontario held a special education conference and 7 of the sessions were recorded. There are links to each video on the [Easter Seals Kids at School](#) Website. The one hour video sessions feature Closed Captioning which can be accessed on the start bar by selecting English on the CC button.

Keynote Presentation – What's New in Special Education - Louise Sirisko, Director, Special Education Policy and Programs Branch, Ministry of Education provides an overview of Special Education in Ontario.

Effective Advocacy and Collaboration – Information for parents on how to advocate effectively and work collaboratively with teachers and other school staff, Lynn Ziraldo, Past Chair of Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education.

Identifying Potential and Programming Effectively, Joe Trovato, Psycho-educational Consultant, ErinoakKids Centre for Child and Youth Development provides information on how psycho-educational assessments support student programming.

Therapy at home and school – Developing a single plan of care that supports student success in school and at home, Judy Anderson, Single Plan of Care Coordinator for Children's Treatment Network, York Region District School Board.

Accessibility Issues at School, David Lepofsky, Chair, AODA Alliance. David shares his experience as an advocate for accessibility and discusses the need for an Accessibility Standard for Education.

Implementing Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for Successful Communication, Daniele Fiorindi, Speech/Language Pathologist, CTN - YRDSB Augmentative Communication Consultation Services (ACCS), Sherry Caldwell and Jennifer Facchinelli, parents.

Developing Effective Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Alison Morse, Provincial Coordinator – Special Education, Easter Seals Ontario.

Handouts from the sessions are available at <http://education.easterseals.org/keys-to-special-education-conference-handouts/>

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