



# Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders **O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER** May 2017

933 Alice Street, Woodstock, ON N4S 2J9 Phone: 519-290-1763 Website: [www.oafccd.com](http://www.oafccd.com)

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## Special Needs Strategy Update

After months of limited activity there have been lots of recent developments in the Special Needs Strategy (SNS) but actual changes in speech and language services to children and youth are over a year away.

Many community plans to improve service coordination for children with complex and/or multiple needs have been approved and new service coordinators have been hired in some communities. This will not be relevant for most families of children who only receive speech-language pathology services. However, for those children and youth with complex and/or multiple needs the support of a service coordinator could be invaluable.

Work on the community proposals for integration of rehabilitation services, including occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech-language pathology, has been re-started. The next stage is a sharing of the proposals with community partners who will be impacted by the changes, including school board unions and federations, service provider agencies and front line staff. Feedback from these groups will help inform the final proposal and implementation plans.

Final proposals are due this fall and implementation planning will start soon after. It is the goal of the government to see the implementation of IR proposals in fall 2018. However, other changes have begun that will also impact families.

The Patients First legislation is being implemented and over the next few months all of the Community Care Access Centres (CCAC) will be dissolved and the services moved to the Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN). This includes the speech therapy services provided by CCAC through the School Health Support Program. Memos from the Ministry and a letter for families (on page 3) indicate that families will not be impacted by these changes in the first year, as all contracts will remain in place. If you are receiving services through the CCAC, or waiting for services, you will not notice a difference.

Similarly speech and language services provided by the Preschool Speech and Language Programs or school boards are also to remain unchanged. While changes are occurring at the CCAC, and with the Ministry who will provide the funding, all service providers have been asked to maintain current services. OAFCCD is, however, concerned that there has been no new funding for speech and language services since 2014 and there may be some reductions in service levels due to increasing costs. From a family perspective this may mean longer waits for services.

OAFCCD is also frustrated that it means another year of waiting for changes, including the integration of speech with language services. OAFCCD has always been concerned about the separation of speech and language services as it creates gaps in services for children, particularly those waiting for speech services through the CCAC, as well as potential duplication.

The biggest concern for OAFCCD is the lack of any plans to increase funding for rehabilitation services as part of the Special Needs Strategy. Unlike proposals for service coordination, the proposals to improve integration of rehabilitation services have not come with a commitment for additional funding. This means that agencies must implement the service requirements developed by the government within existing resources. OAFCCD is concerned that, even if the new service delivery models are more efficient, the process of change will be costly and without new dollars, wait lists for services may increase.

OAFCCD will continue to advocate for more funding for speech and language services. To help families understand the proposed changes, the article on page 2 provides more details of the planned changes. More information can also be found by Registering on the Special Needs Website at: <http://specialneedsstrategy.children.gov.on.ca/login/?loggedout=true>

## Program Guidelines for the Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services

In June 2016, the Ministry of Children and Youth, on behalf of the Ministries of Community and Social Services, Education and Health and Long Term Care, released program guidelines. This document described the provincial expectations and minimum standards associated with the core service requirements. These guidelines build on the original Ministry expectations for integrated rehabilitation services.

### What can families expect?

**Unification of speech and language services** – School age children and youth will see a single Speech-Language Pathologist who will be responsible for both the child's speech and language needs.

**Integration of Rehabilitation services** – When more than one service is needed by the child, the Occupational therapist, Physiotherapist and Speech-Language Pathologist will work collaboratively with the family and others to develop an integrated therapy plan.

**Family Focused Services** – Families, and youth, will work collaboratively with the Speech-Language Pathologist and others to identify priority needs and develop an intervention plan.

**Planning for Multiple Environments** - Plans for the child's speech and language intervention services will consider needs at school, home and in the community.

**Range of Services** – A continuum of speech-language services will be delivered, including consultation, small groups and one to one services in different environments, including child care, classroom and other settings.

**Tiered Intervention Services** – Interventions will vary from least intrusive to most intensive, depending on the child's needs and environment.

**Flexible Services** – Services will be flexible to meet the child and family needs and some interventions may be provided outside school hours and/or during the summer.

## May is Speech and Hearing Month

May is nationally recognized as "Better Speech and Hearing Month". You can help children and families by supporting OAFCCD and spreading the word about the impact of speech and language impairments on children and their families.

Some ideas of how you can help include:

- Paying your Annual Membership to OAFCCD by completing the Membership Form on Page 7 or through CanadaHelps
- Sharing copies of this Newsletter with families and peers
- Making a donation to OAFCCD by mailing a cheque or through CanadaHelps
- Giving a copy of the OAFCCD brochure to families
- Holding a coffee break or selling baked goods to friends and families for OAFCCD
- Direct families and peers to the resources on the OAFCCD website at: [www.oafccd.com](http://www.oafccd.com)
- Recognizing a peer, friend or family member by making a donation to OAFCCD
- Write an article for the OAFCCD Newsletter

Celebrate May as Speech and Hearing Month and spread the word!

Donations accepted through CanadaHelps and tax receipts issued instantly. To donate, follow this link: <https://www.canadahelps.org/dn/10833>



## Annual General Meeting

Members in good standing who have paid their membership fees for 2017 are invited to attend the OAFCCD Annual General Meeting on Wednesday June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The meeting will be held by teleconference from 7 to 7:30pm.

Please contact Alison Morse at [Alison.morse@outlook.com](mailto:Alison.morse@outlook.com) to confirm your attendance and to receive the meeting documents. You can also call Alison if you are unsure of your membership status.

## **Letter to Families from the Ministries Responsible for the Special Needs Strategy**

*As a family whose child may be receiving or waiting for rehabilitation services (speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy), we are writing to provide you with an update on upcoming improvements to the delivery of children's rehabilitation services in your community.*

*As you may know, in 2014 the government launched the Special Needs Strategy in response to feedback received from families to improve the timeliness, effectiveness and coordination of the services that children and youth with special needs require to fully participate at home, at school, in the community and to achieve goals for adulthood.*

*A key initiative of the Special Needs Strategy is the integrated delivery of rehabilitation services, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology, for children and youth from birth to school exit.*

*Over the past year, service providers -including community-based Preschool Speech and Language providers, District School Boards, Community Care Access Centres and Children's Treatment Centres – in communities across the province have worked to develop locally integrated, family-centered ways to deliver children's rehabilitation services to improve family service experiences and outcomes for children and youth with special needs. In doing so, service providers have engaged with families and youth in our communities to seek their input.*

### **What is Changing?**

*Once the improvements are implemented, children and youth with rehabilitation service needs and their families will have:*

- A seamless service experience from birth to school exit, with no gaps in service as children transition to school or between service providers;*
- Child, youth and family centered service as parents and children/youth work together with service providers and educators to set goals based on their individual needs and strengths;*
- Access to a broad range of high quality interventions (classroom, parent training, educator consultation) in settings that are most appropriate to their needs, and as convenient as possible to families; and*
- Continuous and consistent services throughout the calendar year regardless of who delivers them in the community.*

*Following the ministries' review of initial local proposals, service providers are now beginning to refine their proposals based on consultation with stakeholders. Based on feedback gathered, they will then begin to develop local plans for implementation of their new local models for the integrated delivery of rehabilitation services in each community.*

### **When Will These Changes Take Place?**

*These changes will be phased in so that they will not disrupt any services your child may currently be receiving in the community or school. Families currently waiting for services will maintain their place on the waitlist. There will be no reduction in service capacity as a result of this change. Implementation of new service delivery models is expected to begin as early as Fall 2018.*

*We will continue to work together across service providers in the community to ensure that there will be no gaps in services for your child and that any changes will be seamless for you and your family.*

**This letter was signed by the Assistant Deputy Ministers for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.**

**Attached to the letter was a list of Frequently asked Questions on the following pages.**

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR FAMILIES CURRENTLY RECEIVING/WAITING FOR SERVICES:**

**Q1. What is the Special Needs Strategy?**

- A1. The Special Needs Strategy was launched in 2014 by the ministries of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), Community and Social Services (MCSS), Education (EDU) and Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), in response to feedback the government received from families and service providers about the need to improve outcomes and service experiences for children and youth with special needs and their families.

The vision of the Special Needs Strategy is "an Ontario where children and youth with special needs get the timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, at school, in the community, and as they prepare to achieve their goals for adulthood."

The strategy is focused on improving services for children and youth with special needs and their families by:

- Improving the early identification of special needs in children through a new developmental surveillance process to help identify early signs or risks of delays;
- Coordinated service planning processes for children with multiple and/or complex special needs so families can access a range of services and supports;
- Integrated delivery of rehabilitation services so children have access to speech-language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services delivered seamlessly from birth to the end of school.

As a result, families with children/youth with special needs will experience earlier identification of concerns, seamless services, clear access and service plans, and smooth transitions, without having to tell their stories over and over again.

**Q2. What is the Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services?**

- A2. A key initiative of the Special Needs Strategy is the Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology, for children and youth from birth to school exit.

As a result of these changes, children and youth with special needs and their families will receive rehabilitation services that are seamless from birth through school exit throughout the calendar year, built around their goals for home, school and the community and delivered in the way and in the place that meets the needs of the child and family.

The government is working with service providers in 34 communities across the province to develop locally integrated ways to deliver these rehabilitation services. These services are currently delivered by community-based Preschool Speech and Language providers, District School Boards, Community Care Access Centres, and Children's Treatment Centres, and children and families often experience gaps between services or uncertainty about where and how to access services.

Communities across the province are developing family-centred models of service provision so that families can access information and self-refer for rehabilitation services through clear access points, and services are provided seamlessly from birth to school exit.

This means that children who are transitioning from preschool services to school-aged services will not have to go on additional waitlists, and children will experience continuous and consistent services regardless of who delivers them in the community. Implementation of new service delivery models is expected to begin as early as Fall

2018.

**Q3. Why is the current system changing?**

- A3. Families and service providers identified several challenges with the current service delivery system, including gaps or disruptions in service provision upon school entry, or different program eligibility and referral requirements for different programs.

The goal is for families to experience rehabilitation services as a seamless, single program, where children and youth with special needs and their families receive rehabilitation services that are seamless from birth through school exit throughout the calendar year, built around their goals for home, school and the community and delivered in the way and in the place that meets the needs of the child and family. Seamless service delivery means a continuous and unbroken service experience for the child/youth and their family as long as they require service. It involves continuity of supports, information and intervention over time and across transition points.

**Q4. What will this mean for my child receiving Preschool Speech & Language services?**

- A4. The ministries are continuing to work with local service delivery partners through the Steering Committees in each community with the intention to move forward to finalize their local proposals after consultations with stakeholders. Based on feedback gathered, they will then begin to develop local plans for integrated rehabilitation services.

If your preschool-aged child is currently receiving preschool speech and language services, they will not need to reapply for speech and language services or receive additional assessments when they begin school.

There will be no additional waits or transition points as children move from preschool services to school-aged services, and children will experience continuous and consistent service regardless of who delivers them in the community. We are committed to ensuring that there is no disruption in services and we will continue to work together across service providers in the community to ensure that any changes are seamless for you and your family, and that you are supported during the transition to the new service delivery model.

**Q5. What will this mean for my child receiving services in publicly funded schools?**

- A5. The ministries are continuing to work with local service delivery partners through the Steering Committees in each community with the intention to move forward to finalize their local proposals after consultations with stakeholders. Based on feedback gathered, they will then begin to develop local plans for integrated rehabilitation services.

To support implementation of continuous, consistent and locally integrated ways to deliver children's rehabilitation services, this plan may include changes to service providers for children receiving services in publicly funded schools. These changes will take effect outside of the school year so that children will not experience gaps in service during the school year. These changes will not affect families with children receiving or waiting for rehabilitation services in-home or in private schools.

With these changes, there will be no additional waits or transition points as children move from preschool services to school-aged services, and children will experience continuous and consistent services across providers. Families currently waiting for services will maintain their place on the waitlist.

We are committed to ensuring that there is no disruption in services and we will continue to work together across service providers in the community to ensure that any changes are seamless for you and your family, and that you are supported during the transition to the new service delivery model.

If families have any questions about the delivery of services in publicly funded schools, we would encourage you to speak with your child's school principal.

**Q6. What will this mean for my child receiving services from a Children's Treatment Centre?**

- A6. The ministries are continuing to work with local service delivery partners through the Steering Committees in each community with the intention to move forward to finalize their local proposals after consultations with stakeholders. Based on feedback gathered, they will then begin to develop local plans for integrated rehabilitation services.

If your child is currently receiving rehabilitation services from a Children's Treatment Centre, they will not need to reapply for these services or receive unnecessary assessments.

There will be no additional waits or transition points as children move from preschool services to school-aged services and children will experience continuous and consistent services regardless of who delivers them in the community.

We will continue to work together across service providers in the community to ensure that any changes are seamless for you and your family, and that you are kept informed and supported during the transition to the new service delivery model.

**Q7. What will this mean for children with a developmental disability who are transitioning into adulthood?**

- A7. Integrated Transition Planning does not replace the Ministry of Education's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or processes associated with IEPs. For young people with developmental disabilities preparing for adulthood, the integrated rehabilitation process is expected to align with the IEP process and Integrated Transition Planning (ITP).

Where applicable, the integrated transition planning process will include the family, youth, school-aged rehabilitation service providers, school staff and adult developmental service organizations (e.g., Developmental Service Ontario). The transition planning process will consider the young person's goals for work, further education and community living and the steps needed to attain these goals. Transition planning does not guarantee eligibility for or availability of adult developmental or other services.

**Q8. How can I get more information?**

- A8. Service providers in your community will keep you informed as new models are developed. For further information, please contact your service provider agency or send an email to [specialneedstrategy@ontario](mailto:specialneedstrategy@ontario) for response from the ministries.

**Ontario Association for Families of  
Children with Communication Disorders  
(OAFCCD)**

**2017 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION or RENEWAL**

Your Membership Fees and donations are very important to the organization. Your fees will enable us to maintain parent support services. Please pay your membership today and also consider making a donation *NOTE: Fees may be waived on request.*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Postal Code:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-Mail Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Please note that Newsletters and notices are distributed by e-mail only)**

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Days:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Evenings:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a Speech-Language Pathologist or other professional, please indicate your position and the name of the organization you work for.

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you a Renewing Member?** \_\_\_\_\_ **Are you a New Member?** \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a cheque for the following:

- \$25 One year Membership
- \$50 Two year Membership Fees
- Donation (Tax receipts issued for donations over \$10)

**Cheques should be made payable to OAFCCD and mailed to:**

OAFCCD, 933 Alice Street, Woodstock, ON N4S 2J9

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OAFCCD collects information from members for the purpose of conference or workshop registration, newsletter distribution, and announcements of events and activities that may be of interest. Your name and contact information may be shared with the Chapter leadership, if there is a Chapter in your area. OAFCCD may share contact information with partners who are involved in organizing joint events, including conferences and workshops. We do not sell, trade or rent mailing lists to other groups or organizations.