



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

933 Alice Street, Woodstock, ON N4S 2J9 Phone: 519-290-1763 Website: www.oafccd.com

Special Needs Strategy

OAFCCD Board members are frustrated to report that there seems to have been little progress on the Special Needs Strategy in recent months. We understand that community planning is on-going and that school boards, Community Care Access Centres, Preschool Speech and Language Services and many other organizations continue to meet regularly and work on the planning proposals. However, from a family perspective there is no evidence of change, or a sense of when implementation will begin.

OAFCCD has sent a letter to the Minister of Children and Youth Services asking this very question: What is happening and when will families see change? (Copy of the letter attached)

In June 2016 the [Program Guidelines for Delivery of Integrated Rehabilitation Services](#) were released. These guidelines include many elements that OAFCCD has long been advocating:

- Speech-Language Pathologists will provide both speech and language supports in the school
- A broad range of interventions providing a continuum of services based on functional needs
- Service delivery plan/goals developed in collaboration with the family/parent
- Improved transition processes to reduce gaps in service
- Comprehensive communication plan to inform families of no "wrong door" approach
- Consistent wait management approach to support consistent, transparent and more timely access to services

The changes proposed are exciting and substantial, but without adequate funding and a commitment to make it happen soon, another year will pass without any changes to the system.

SEAC Representatives Needed

OAFCCD is looking for volunteers to advocate for students with speech and language impairments to school boards. If you are interested in becoming a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) member please contact Alison Morse at alison.morse@outlook.com



Giving Tuesday



Everyone loves a bargain and many of you will be out shopping on Black Friday or Cyber Monday. How about giving back to the community by making a donation on Giving Tuesday? Many charities, including OAFCCD, would appreciate a helping hand. Please consider making a donation to OAFCCD through CanadaHelps. Donation tax receipts are issued by CanadaHelps and the funds are directed to OAFCCD.



Federal Accessibility Legislation

Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC) is collecting information specifically about communication access barriers for people who have speech and language disabilities, not caused primarily by hearing loss. The information we collect will be used to inform the federal government's new accessibility legislation. Many people with speech, language and communication disabilities do not typically attend or contribute to government public consultations. In general, their communication access rights are not well known or understood and are frequently omitted in accessibility legislation.

To support the communication access needs of people with speech and language disabilities, CDAC is conducting a national survey to document what accessibility means for this group.

We are interested in hearing from people with speech and language disabilities, family members, clinicians, service providers, teachers, disability advocates and anyone who wants to see improved communication access to services.

This is our opportunity to be heard. Please take time to read the background information on this consultation and complete a survey.

Background information available in English and French at <http://www.cdacanada.com/projects/federal-accessibility-legislation/>

And there is an online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Federallaw>

If the online survey link doesn't connect, you may need to cut and paste into your browser.

There are pictures and symbols on our website to support people to communicate about the issues and provide input into the survey.

The deadline is **January 1, 2017.**

Barbara Collier Reg. CASLPO, F. ISAAC
Executive Director
Communication Disabilities Access Canada

Consultation on Student Well-Being – What does it mean and how can we improve it?

The Ministry of Education is conducting a consultation on student well-being, one of the four pillars of education. The four goals of the Ministry of Education are:

- **Achieving Excellence:** Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship. Educators will be supported in learning continuously and will be recognized as among the best in the world.
- **Ensuring Equity:** All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- **Promoting Well-Being:** All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.
- **Enhancing Public Confidence:** Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.

The goal related to well-being is new and the Ministry is looking for your feedback on how to define, support and measure student well-being. Check the discussion

paper on the Ministry website at: [Promoting Well-Being in Ontario's Education System](#)

OAFCCD has heard from many families about the social isolation of children and youth with speech and language impairments. Children and youth with communication disorders often miss important social cues and have difficulty starting and maintaining friendships. Employers talk about the importance of being a team player, of knowing how to collaborate and communicate effectively in the workplace. How do we teach those valuable life skills to students who have communication impairments?

The Four Domains of Well-Being



Well-being is expressed by the self and spirit and is anchored in the four domains, which are:

Cognitive: The development of abilities and skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and the ability to be flexible and innovative.

Emotional: This involves learning about experiencing emotions, and understanding how to recognize, manage, and cope with them.

Social: The development of self-awareness, including the sense of belonging, collaboration, relationships with others, and communication skills.

Physical: The development of the body, impacted by physical activity, sleep patterns, healthy eating, and healthy life choices.

These areas, as well as the spirit and self are explored in the engagement paper.

Please take part in the discussion by responding to the government consultation. Read the discussion paper and complete the on-line through the [engagement portal](#), available until January 15, 2017.



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

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Honourable Michael Coteau,
Minister of Children and Youth Services
56 Wellesley Street West, 14th Floor
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November 24, 2016

Dear Minister Coteau,

The Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD) has been very pleased to support the Special Needs Strategy through involvement in community consultations and sharing of the OAFCCD position statement (attached). Families are excited about the changes that are being proposed, especially the end of the separation of speech and language services, as well as plans to integrate services and reduce transitions. The Program Guidelines for Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services, released in May 2016, describe a system that will be more responsive to families and easy to navigate.

However, OAFCCD members have concerns about the speed of change and the lack of public information about progress. The Special Needs Strategy was announced in March 2014 and almost three years later there is no evidence of change. Meanwhile families continue to struggle. **OAFCCD recommends that the provincial government publicly share information about the status of the integration of rehabilitation services and let families know when they will see improvements to speech and language services.**

OAFCCD members are aware that individual agencies and school boards continue to make decisions about resource allocations based on their organizational priorities and available resources. These decisions may negatively impact the resources available for implementation of the integrated rehabilitation services community proposals. Of particular concern would be situations where the plan involves transfer of funding from one agency or ministry to another. **OAFCCD recommends that the provincial government develop a mechanism to ensure that the current level of speech and language service funding is maintained**

Through the consultation process, parent expectations have been raised that there will be significant changes to services and that it will be easier to get services for their child. OAFCCD members have concerns that the system may not be able to meet these expectations that the many requirements of the Program Guidelines may not be achievable with current levels of funding. **OAFCCD recommends that the provincial government provide additional protected funding for the implementation of Integrated Rehabilitation service proposals, to ensure that the needs of children and youth are met in an integrated and timely fashion.**

We appreciate your consideration of our position paper and the concerns we have shared regarding implementation of the Special Needs Strategy.

Sincerely Deb Almost and Susan Strachan, Co-Presidents