



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

November 2018

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## **OAFCCD Membership Renewal**

You can help OAFCCD by paying your 2019 membership or by making a donation to OAFCCD. Memberships are for each Calendar year and you can pay for your 2019 membership now. Giving to OAFCCD is easy! You can send a cheque with your membership fee using the attached Membership Renewal Form or you can make an immediate donation on-line through CanadaHelps. Donations of \$25 or more will be recognized with a free membership for 2019.

## **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. Just click here.



## **United Way and OAFCCD**

Did you know that you can designate your United Way contribution to OAFCCD? Michelle Ryan, a longtime supporter, has designated half of her annual United Way contribution to OAFCCD. You can too!! Designating your contribution to OAFCCD helps OAFCCD to continue to work on public awareness and advocacy.

## **Speech and Language Services in Ontario – Where are we now?**

In June, the newly elected Ontario government placed a hold on work involving the previous government's Special Needs Strategy. In the past few months, some specific direction has been provided to some agencies who have been involved with implementation of coordinated service planning and integrating rehabilitation services. There has been no word of plans to address the strategy as a whole. The original three main goals of the Special Needs Strategy outlined in 2014 by the previous government were:

1. Early identification of children with special needs
2. Improved service coordination and planning
3. Integration of rehabilitation services, including speech and language services

We have organized our update into these three areas.

### **Early Identification**

Early identification of children with special needs is critical to ensure that they get the early intervention services that can improve outcomes for each child. The Preschool Speech and Language Program (PSLP) has a provincial goal to reduce the age of identification and a number of tools are being used to help parents identify when there are concerns and they should seek help. Families who have concerns about their child's speech and language development should contact their local Preschool Speech and Language Program and/or check out the developmental charts on the various PSLP websites. To find the PSLP near you check the Ministry website at:

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/earlychildhood/speechlanguage/locations.aspx>

## **Coordinated Service Planning**

The goal of Coordinated Service Planning is to support children/youth with multiple and/or complex special needs and their families through a dedicated Service Planning Coordinator who will connect them to the multiple, cross-sectoral services they need, as early as possible, and monitor their needs and progress through a single Coordinated Service Plan. As a result of the implementation of Coordinated Service Planning across Ontario, families and children/youth with multiple and/or complex special needs:

- Have access to a single Coordinated Service Plan that is responsive to their goals, strengths, and needs;
- Know who is accountable for developing and monitoring their child's Coordinated Service Plan; and have a clear point of contact; and
- Can be assured that service providers and educators are working toward a set of common goals identified in the plan.

To support children/youth with multiple and/or complex special needs and their families to access Coordinated Service Planning across the province, we now have 32 geographical service delivery areas that have a lead agency responsible for these services. Check the Ministry website for more details and to find the local Coordinated Service Planning agency in your community at:

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/specialneeds/planning.aspx>

## **Integrated Rehabilitation Services**

The goal of Integrated Rehabilitation Services has been that children and youth with special needs will receive efficient, effective, and seamless speech-language pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services from birth through to the end of school.

After 5 years of planning there has been only very limited change in how speech and language services are delivered to students in Ontario. School boards and the speech-Language Pathologists they employ or contract continue to be responsible for providing services to students with language disorders. Services to students with speech disorders continues to be provided by agencies contracted through the School Health Support Services (SHSS). Some

school boards have provided some service to students with speech disorders due to limited access to SHSS. The major change that has occurred recently is that responsibility for managing the School Health Support Services occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy services have changed from the Community Care Access Centres to the Local Health Integration Network. Starting in November 2018, these school health support services will move to the Children's Treatment Centres in each region. While the responsibility for who provides speech services has changed, the service model itself remains unchanged.

## **OAFCCD Concerns**

OAFCCD remains very concerned that families still face a speech and language system that:

- Is difficult to navigate – with 3 key delivery partners (Preschool Speech and Language Services, school boards and Children's Treatment Centres);
- Treats the speech needs and the language needs of students in school as separate and unrelated, resulting in duplication of services as two different organizations provide either language or speech services, and children who require both services may have two or more speech-language pathologists;
- Is inadequate as students languish on wait lists for multiple years, or are provided a limited number of therapy sessions based on resources rather than evidence informed practice; and
- Is ineffective as the ongoing intensive treatment required by students with oral motor disorders, such as apraxia of speech, and other disorders is not available

In addition, OAFCCD believes that parent voices are critical to planning and should be included in all future discussions on speech and language services. We have contacted our new provincial Members of Parliament to request a meeting to share our concerns and advocate for change.



## Organizes and Promotes Developmental Language Disorder Awareness Internationally

Raising Awareness of Developmental Language Disorder (RADLD) is an organization based in the UK to spread knowledge of the most up to date information on Developmental Language Disorder for health professionals, educators, families, those directly affected and the broader community. The website RADLD.ORG strives to achieve the ABC's of DLD, namely to **A**ssess Understanding, **B**uild Knowledge and **C**reate Awareness in individuals around the world about this often misunderstood and underdiagnosed disorder.

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is the new term to replace Specific Language Impairment (SLI). The website states that DLD, "... is diagnosed when children fail to acquire their own language for no obvious reason. This results in children who have difficulty understanding what people say to them, and struggle to articulate their ideas and feelings."

DLD causes difficulties with spoken language, language understanding, communication, and reading - with a high risk of dyslexia and can affect, on average, two children in every classroom.<sup>1</sup> Because it is a complex disorder, it can have serious and long-term impacts on development. According to The Manchester Language Study<sup>2</sup>, these may include experiencing bullying during childhood years, increased symptoms of depression in teenagers compared to typically developing peers, and increased risk of unemployment and reduced opportunities for independence in adulthood. These are in addition to the impacts on learning that a language disorder can have in the classroom, where much of the instruction is language-based.

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1 DLD affects approximately two children in every classroom. A recent epidemiological study in the UK, the SCALES study (Norbury et al. 2016), found that 7.5% of children had DLD with no associated biomedical condition.

2 The Manchester Language Study was carried out at the University of Manchester (<http://research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/idd/research/ManchesterLanguageStudy/>) and found that by 16 years of age, 40% of individuals with DLD had difficulties in their interaction with peers, 50% of 16 year olds recall being bullied in childhood (in comparison to less than 25% of typically-developing teenagers) and 13% have experienced persisting bullying since childhood (St. Clair, Pickles, Durkin & Conti-Ramsden, 2011).

Harry, aged 21 years, recalls that, "*I remember feeling frustrated, misunderstood and sometimes alone when others were doing better than me at school. This is why it is so important teachers and parents know more about DLD so that other children don't go through what I went through. It is scary knowing that DLD is very hard to notice at a young age which is often why people have no idea why a child is acting and behaving in a different way. It is a real knock on your confidence when you struggle while your friends sail through their work and tests. I am lucky to have been diagnosed with DLD at a young age while others still don't know they have this learning difficulty. When I had specialist support from a SLT (Speech-language Therapist) it was such a relief to know there wasn't something 'wrong' with me. Those with DLD are great in a unique way, they just need a different approach to learning. I've made it into University so I am proof!*"

By increasing awareness and recognition of DLD, our goal is to ensure any child affected is able to access speech and language assessment and the intervention and support they need.

### Visit the Website

<https://radld.org/>

The RADLD.ORG website has collated the most up to date information on Developmental Language Disorder for health professionals, educators, families, those directly affected and the broader community. It also includes DLD fact sheets, an online quiz to test your understanding of DLD and shareable video content information about DLD with many featuring case studies of those affected.

### Ontario joins the effort to Increase Awareness of DLD

Dr. Lisa Archibald, Associate Professor at Western University and a Speech-Language Pathologist, along with her colleagues held a conference on November 9, 2018 to share information about the new international consensus to use the term DLD. Speech-Language Pathologists from all over Ontario participated in small group discussion, question and answer periods and online polls and posts. The goal was for S-LPs in Ontario to adopt a more consistent approach to identifying language disorders and thus provide the momentum for enhanced services, accommodations, resources and research. Another outcome will be that parents of children with DLD will be able to find answers to their questions, high quality resources and accessible services.

## **How can you help support this effort?**

Parents can influence decision makers who are responsible for funding and delivering services. There are lots of ideas for creating awareness on the RADLD.org website. OAFCCD continues to work on behalf of families to raise awareness of communication disorders.

1. **At OAFCCD we need to hear your stories** and ideas so that we can share them when we contact key government officials and policy makers. Personal experience of families is the most powerful way to help people understand the impact of communication disorders and the need for services.

2. **Please renew your membership to OAFCCD and ask others you know to join. We are only as strong as our membership.**