

Relief Services For Families Of Children With Autism

Relief services, provided by experienced autism support providers, offer care of children and youth as well as opportunities for further learning and development of independent living skills. Examples of relief services include social, play or peer groups, weekend and longer-term relief, March Break and summer programs.

This year will see a significant increase in relief services for more than 3,000 Ontario families who are providing care for children and youth with autism.

The Ontario government's relief services investment is \$3.9 million this year.

“We have listened to families who have told us that getting a bit of a break from the day-to-day challenges of raising their children with autism is an enormous help,” said Minister of Children and Youth Services Mary Anne Chambers. “Relief services can provide a temporary break from the physical and emotional demands involved in caring for children and youth with autism.”

For information on relief services:

www.respiteservices.com is a centralized website operated by the Geneva Centre for Autism. The site provides information on relief services to families caring for an individual with a disability, including autism.

More Children And Youth With Autism Attending Camp This Summer

This summer, more children and youth with autism are enjoying the benefits of a camp experience while their families get a much-needed break from the day-to-day care of their children.

An Ontario government investment of \$530,000 is helping send more than 800 children and youth with autism to nine supportive camp environments. Of that investment, \$320,000 is being provided to Autism Ontario to reimburse families who hire one-to-one support workers to enable approximately 500 children and youth with autism to attend camp.

“Summer camps not only help maintain skills gained during the school year, they also give families a bit of a break while their children receive expert care in a positive setting,” said Minister of Children and Youth Services Mary Anne Chambers.

Minister's Message

As Minister of Children and Youth Services, I have remained firm in my commitment to get results for Ontario's families – committed to delivering a continuum of services and supports for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders, from the time of diagnosis right through their school years.

I have traveled the province visiting autism support organizations, treatment centres and summer camps. I have spoken with professionals, autism support staff and volunteers. And, most important, I have spoken with parents – people who work through the daily challenges and rewards involved in providing loving care to their remarkable children.

Our advances on behalf of these children, youth and their families are diverse and I invite you to have a look at the achievements highlighted in this newsletter.

For example, we have: tripled autism support funding to \$140 million; increased by 160 per cent the number of children receiving Intensive Behaviour Intervention (IBI) since 2004; and ended the policy of cutting boys and girls off IBI services at age six so that children in Ontario do not age out of autism services.

While we have made progress, I know there is more to be done.

The Ontario government continues to take steps to improve the continuum of services for children and youth with autism and their families. We believe it is absolutely essential that we keep providing support and opportunities needed by these young people to learn and grow.

210 More Children To Receive IBI Services

More children with autism will receive Intensive Behaviour Intervention (IBI) services this year as a result of a new funding commitment – the latest step taken by the Ontario government to build access to autism services across the province.

“Our government has been taking steps to increase the capacity of the sector by training and recruiting more therapists for kids with autism,” said Minister of Children and Youth Services Mary Anne Chambers. “As a result of the capacity building investments we have made to-date, we are making real inroads in the provision of IBI services to Ontario children.”

The new investment will provide services for 210 additional children, bringing the total number of additional children who will be receiving IBI in 2007 to 440.

With this latest investment, the number of children receiving IBI will increase to nearly 1,400 – a 160 per cent increase since April 2004.

Expanded College Program Means More Therapists To Treat Children With Autism

More children with autism in southwestern Ontario will get the help they need as a result of an expanded college certificate program to train more therapists.

Expansion of the program to three more colleges brings the total number participating to 12 across the province – with a total target enrolment of 220 students by next year.

Since 2005, the program has graduated 203 trained therapists provincewide and nearly 300 new therapists have been hired.

“We are moving quickly to boost training so more qualified therapists are available to support children and youth with autism and their families,” said Minister of Children and Youth Services Mary Anne Chambers.

The government is investing \$596,000 to expand delivery of the Ontario College Graduate Certificate Program in Autism and Behavioural Science to a southwestern Ontario college consortium.

The consortium, led by Fanshawe College in London, includes Lambton College in Sarnia and St. Clair College in Windsor. It has a targeted enrolment of up to 75 students by next year.

Ontario College Graduate Certificate Program In Autism and Behavioural Science

Participating Consortia And Colleges

- A northern consortium comprising Canadore College (North Bay), Confederation College (Thunder Bay) and Northern College (Timmins)
- Algonquin (Nepean) in partnership with Seneca College (Toronto)
- Mohawk College (Hamilton)
- George Brown College (Toronto)
- St. Lawrence College (Kingston)
- La Cité (Ottawa)
- A southwestern consortium comprising Fanshawe College (London), Lambton College (Sarnia) and St. Clair College (Windsor)

New Autism Initiatives Helping Students Succeed

The spring of 2007 saw an important step forward in supporting students with autism — all school boards are now required to provide programs using Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) methods to students who need it.

“All students with autism deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential,” said Education Minister Kathleen Wynne. “That’s why we are providing equal access to this vital teaching approach.”

The government is also assisting school boards in bringing ABA methods into the classroom for students with autism. Extensive staff training took place over the spring with six to eight representatives from each school board, including superintendents, principals, teachers, teachers’ assistants, school support staff and special education advisory committee members.

This will be followed by school team training – funded through a \$1 million investment – for up to 1,400 principals, teachers’ assistants and teachers.

The government has also provided a \$2.75 million grant to Geneva Centre for Autism. It plans to use the funds to provide further training for school staff. Additionally, \$2 million is being invested to bring school staff and community service agencies together to develop research-based approaches to delivering student autism services.

Other recent changes in special education include:

- Requiring principals to ensure students with autism have transition plans when they start school, move between grades and schools, and move to colleges, universities or the workplace
- Creating a resource guide for educators on the most effective ways to teach students with autism.

These initiatives are part of the government’s response to recommendations in the Autism Reference Group’s report.

“The reference group’s report has been very helpful for our work to ensure that children and youth with autism receive the supports they need to achieve success,” said Minister of Children and Youth Services Mary Anne Chambers. “We have been making great strides on several fronts and we are determined to do more.”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

1. My child has been in school for several years. How will his or her education be different this September?

Some of the changes you may notice in your child's school beginning in September include:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) instructional methods being incorporated into your child's Individual Education Plan, if appropriate
- Transition planning to help your child move more smoothly between classrooms, grades and schools
- Teachers and other educators having greater awareness and knowledge about autism following recent professional development sessions
- Relevant school board and community personnel being invited to participate in the Individual Education Plan process.

2. My child has been receiving IBI but is starting school for the first time this September? What can we expect from the school?

You can expect that teachers will work with you and community agencies to plan for your child's successful transition into school.

All schools also develop an Individual Education Plan for students with autism. The plan outlines required programs and services — including ABA methods if appropriate — to help your child reach his or her full potential. Principals ensure that the plan is developed for your child within 30 school days of starting school.

3. Who makes decisions about the education my child receives?

Teachers and other educators work with community agencies to develop your child's Individual Education Plan including whether programs using ABA methods are appropriate. They will also consult with you to ensure your child receives the best education possible. Your child's principal is responsible for approving the plan.

4. Who do I contact with questions about services and supports available for my child?

Always begin with your child's teacher who has the most information about his or her education. Your child's principal can also help guide you to other school board resources.

You can also visit the Ministry of Education's website (www.edu.gov.on.ca) for further details on how the government is improving the learning environment for all students with special needs. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services' website (www.children.gov.on.ca) also has valuable information about children with autism.

For more Questions and Answers about students with autism, visit <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>.

Important Resources

Autism Ontario's ABACUS registry of service providers

www.abacuslist.ca

Aspergers Society of Ontario

www.aspergers.ca

Autism Ontario

www.autismontario.com

Children's Information Portal

www.childreninfo.ca

Geneva Centre for Autism

www.autism.net

Ministry of Children and Youth Services

www.children.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Education

www.edu.gov.on.ca

Ontario Early Years Centres

www.ontarioearlyyears.ca

Autism Coalition

www.ontarioautism.com

Relief Services

www.respiteservices.com

Regional Autism Service Providers

Central East Region

Kinark Child and Family Services

1-800-230-8533

(905) 474-9595

Central West Region

ErinoakKids

1-877-374-6625

(905) 855-3557

Eastern Region

Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario

1-877-542-2294

(613) 745-5963

Hamilton/Niagara Region

Hamilton Health Sciences

(905) 521-2100

ext. 77315

North East Region

Algonquin Child and Family Services

(705) 476-2293

Northern Region

Child Care Resources

1-877-996-1599

(705) 525-0055

South East Region

Pathways for Children and Youth

(613) 546-8535

South West Region

Thames Valley Children's Centre

1-866-516-5368

(519) 685-8680

Toronto Region

Surrey Place Centre

(416) 925-5141

ABACUS: A resource for parents

Autism Ontario's website, www.abacuslist.ca, funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, is an important resource for parents. The site provides online information and resources for families to assist them in finding and hiring Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) providers to work with their children and youth with autism. The site enables service providers to register their services and indicate their qualifications, special training and where they offer services to families across Ontario. The website now has 120 listings for ABA providers across the province.

For more information

This newsletter is intended to provide you with up-to-date information on the work the Ontario government is doing to support young people with autism and their families.

For more information visit www.children.gov.on.ca, or call **416-325-5666** or TTY at **1-800-387-5559**.



If you would like to receive future newsletters, please complete this form and send it to:

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Ministry of Children and Youth Services
7th floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

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Or send your name, mailing address and email address to mcsinfo@mcys.gov.on.ca with the subject line NEWSLETTER REQUEST.