

**Ministry of Children
and Youth Services**

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December 7, 2017

Dear parents, families and caregivers in our autism community:

It's my pleasure to connect with you as we prepare to close the calendar year.

Earlier this year, in June, I announced the new Ontario Autism Program (also known as the OAP). This new program is the result of the hard work and passion of many dedicated families, stakeholders, service providers, advocates, professionals and other experts. The changes introduced in June were focused on providing child, youth and family-centred services that offer families choice, confidence and consistency in the services they receive.

I am writing today to provide you with an update regarding one of these principles—choice. Back in May, I committed that a direct funding option would be available in the new program by the end of this year. I am pleased to say that we have met this commitment and a direct funding option for evidence-based behavioural services will be implemented as part of the OAP.

I would like to thank you for your patience as the ministry has worked to design this option. I want you to have confidence that the new OAP puts the needs of children, youth and families first.

Beginning in the new year, you will be welcomed into the OAP with the choice of either receiving funding to purchase evidence-based behavioural services for your child or youth, or receiving services offered through one of Ontario's regional providers. I encourage you to work with your existing providers as well as your regional provider to ask questions and discuss next steps for your family. Regardless of which service option you choose, you can expect to be supported with the information you need so that you and your child experience a smooth entry to the OAP. To enable a smooth transition, families currently receiving \$8,000 and \$10,000 payments may continue accessing these payments until March 31, 2018.

If you have any questions or would like more information, I invite you to visit ontario.ca/autism, and/or contact your regional provider.

I will continue to engage with families, caregivers, advocates, clinicians and providers to listen and hear about your experiences. I invite any of you who would like to share your feedback and hear the experiences of other families across Ontario to join my two upcoming tele-town halls.

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The first session is on January 11, 2018, at 7 p.m. and the second will take place on January 17, 2018, at 7 p.m. Further details will be provided shortly.

Ontario is transforming the way that children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and their families, receive services and supports through the new OAP. I thank you for the invaluable guidance and, most importantly, advocacy for your children. You have contributed greatly to shaping a program that will ultimately help young people with ASD reach their full potential and succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Coteau', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Coteau
Minister