

Enhancements to the Ontario Autism Program

Thursday March 21, 2019, Toronto – Earlier today the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services made an announcement regarding the Ontario Autism Program that included changes to the childhood budgets and expanding eligible services.

We welcome these changes and hope that there are more to come. This announcement gives Surrey Place the ability to continue to work with families and children currently in service to provide the best possible outcomes and proper transitions as we move towards a direct funding model.

The announcement included the following changes:

- **Removing income testing for Childhood Budgets:** All families of children and youth under the age of 18 with a written diagnosis of autism from a qualified professional will now be eligible for a Childhood Budget. Children under the age of six will receive \$20,000 annually in direct funding, while those six and over will receive \$5,000 annually.
- **Further expanding eligible services:** Through Childhood Budgets, families will have access to a broader range of eligible services, such as speech language pathology, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy. Full details on eligible services will be posted on the ministry's website in early April.

Today the Minister also committed to families of children who currently have an Ontario Autism Program Behaviour Plan that they will continue to receive the services outlined in that plan until its end date and families will be able to renew it for six months at its current level of intensity.

The Minister did reiterate that the new Ontario Autism Program is still scheduled to be launched April 1st, 2019. We will still be required to transition to the new program with a fee for service mandate. For families on the waitlist they will be able to access our fee for service as early as April 2019.

We understand staff and families will still have plenty of questions but we are working closely with the Ministry so that we can continue to provide as much clarity and information as soon as possible.

We are pleased that some of the concerns of families, service agencies and stakeholders have been heard by the Minister. We continue to work collaboratively to make this program viable, sustainable and flexible that will meet the needs of children living with autism.

We remain dedicated to the families and clients we serve and will provide updates as soon as we have more information.

To access the Ministry Press Release visit: <https://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2019/03/ontario-enhancing-support-for-children-with-autism.html>

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