

Ontario Investing \$333 Million to Improve Autism Services

New Autism Program to Reduce Waitlists and Provide Better Services for Families

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As part of the 2016 Budget, Ontario is investing \$333 million over the next five years to launch the new Ontario Autism Program, which will provide children and youth with critical interventions faster, and provide services that are better matched to their needs.

The newly expanded children's autism program will make it easier for families to access services for their children by reducing wait times, providing more flexible services based on children's needs, and serving more children and youth. It will also help children receive intensive therapy services during the key early developmental years.

Within two years, provincial wait times for children's autism services are projected to drop by more than half, on average.

The new approach is informed by advice from families, clinical experts and the Autism Spectrum Disorder Clinical Expert Committee. It is consistent with scientific evidence and will provide a more responsive continuum of supports. The transition to the new Ontario Autism Program will happen over the next two years.

Highlights of the new program include:

- Reducing wait times so children can access services sooner
- Transitioning to the new integrated autism program by:
 - Focusing Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) services to children in the appropriate developmental window: ages two to four
 - Gradually transitioning children five years and older currently receiving IBI to more clinically appropriate Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) services
 - Providing families with children five years and older on the IBI waitlist with \$8,000 in one-time funding to immediately purchase community services or supports based on their children's specific needs as they transition off the IBI waitlist
 - Increasing the duration and intensity of ABA services over four years, starting in 2017, so that services are more flexible and based on children's individual needs.

To ensure a successful transition from the current program to the future program, the government will establish an advisory group of service providers, parents and other experts to provide strategic advice.

Giving every child the opportunity to thrive and have the best possible start in life is part of the government's plan to support families and provide services that allow all children and youth to reach their full potential.

QUOTES

" This investment will go towards helping more children receive the critical services that they need, earlier and with services that are better tailored to meet their individual needs. The changes to how we deliver autism services will help more young people participate fully at home, at school, in the community and as they prepare to achieve their goals for adulthood."

- Tracy MacCharles

Minister of Children and Youth Services

" Families raising children with autism have been waiting a long time for this announcement. Providing early, evidence-based intervention, when it matters most, will set children with autism on the best path forward. This investment will set the stage for continuous learning for years to come."

- Margaret Spoelstra

Executive Director, Autism Ontario

" This announcement is very good news for the ASD community. Based on scientific evidence, the new plan strongly supports the continuum of care for all children with ASD, expanding intervention services to earlier in a child's development, which is critical for improved outcomes. I am proud and excited to support the new program based on the advice of the Expert Panel."

- Dr. Wendy Roberts

Vice-Chair, ASD Clinical Expert Committee

QUICK FACTS

- Beginning in April, Ontario will host online sessions, in partnership with Autism Ontario, for families to learn more about the transition to the new Ontario Autism Program.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong, complex neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent deficits in social communication and interaction and repetitive patterns of behaviour.
- There are an estimated 40,000 children and youth in Ontario with ASD. Prevalence rates have risen 123 per cent in the last decade. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States, in 2002, one in 150 children was diagnosed with autism. By 2010, that number had risen to one in 68 children.

LEARN MORE

- [Autism Spectrum Disorder Clinical Expert Committee report](#)

- [Ontario's Special Needs Strategy](#)
- More information visit ontario.ca/autism
- [Find out more about how autism services are changing.](#)

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