



## ONTARIO AUTISM COALITION

### BRIEFING NOTE

Education Working Group

Summary of Key Concerns

March 6, 2023

### **TRANSITIONING KIDS FROM THERAPY TO SCHOOL:**

*MCCSS recently announced their policy regarding Behaviour Plan kids (also known as Legacy Kids) moving into the new Ontario Autism Program. These are children who have continued to receive therapy for the last 4+ years under the old Liberal plan, where they were able to keep their therapy time at the same (or less) intensity as per their clinicians recommendations.*

*There are somewhere between 2.5-4K BP kids, province wide, remaining (the government has not released these numbers), and between April 1st and September 30th (depending on when their current contract ends) these kids will be forced to transition to the new OAP where they will be faced with funding caps (tiered by age). The majority of these kids that are still in moderate to intensive therapy will face significant cuts to their therapy hours due to less funding and will be transitioning to the classroom, many of them for the first time.*

*To our knowledge, no transition plan has been made for these children, nor has the government communicated this information to school boards who will likely be left unprepared for an influx of new kids with high levels of support needs.*

#### Why It's Important:

- Many of these children will need special class placements or 1/1 support in a mainstream classroom
- Support for kids with special needs and placements in congregated classrooms is already stretched and the transition of these few thousand kids will add further strain to support levels of children who desperately need extra support in order to be able to access a meaningful education and often to just be at school safely at all
- The government has invested a lot of money into this cohort of kids, they are the only autistic children in the last 4 years in Ontario to receive consistent, government funded therapy. To throw them back into the school system without proper support or transitioning can result in extreme regression.

What we need:

- Proper transition planning for this cohort of children, including investments and communication with school boards to ensure they are prepared for the extra resources (class placements and staffing) that will be needed to support these kids without taking away supports from other kids with exceptional needs.

## **EXCLUSIONS:**

*Students are experiencing either hard exclusions (request for pickup, modified schedules) or soft exclusions (restrictions on field trips, extra-curricular, transportation)*

Why It's Important:

- All students are entitled to full day participation
- All students are entitled to a fulsome and rich school experience
- It is unfair and unreasonable to expect parents to create on demand availability

What we need:

- Broaden the definition of Exclusions in the Ed Act
- Modification in required data collection to include statistics on all hard exclusions as defined above, in order to assess individual board prevalence.
- Investments in behavioural intervention and support services, training, and alternate environments such as calming rooms.

## **ACCESS TO CLASSROOMS FOR A CHILD'S THERAPY TEAM (PPM81)**

*It is common for students with autism to seek outside therapy services (speech/OT/ and behavioural) . However, this therapy team is not allowed access to the child's classroom to observe and determine effective strategies.*

Why It's Important:

- Students with ASD need a cohesive mix of therapies and academics in order to thrive
- Therapy teams often work on strategies to be a more effective student within a classroom, yet have no ability to assess these strategies in a real life setting
- Allowing access to OAP funded therapists would break down the historic silos of two Ministries: MCSS and EDU

#### What We Need:

- Minimum Ask: allow a child's OAP funded therapy team access to the classroom to observe
- Preferred Ask: allow a child's OAP funded therapy team to perform one on one therapies within the school setting.
- A revisit of PPM81 to facilitate these changes.

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