

Ontario Enhancing Support for Children with Autism

New actions include removing income testing for Childhood Budgets and further expanding eligible services.

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TORONTO - Ontario's government is putting people first by enhancing the Ontario Autism Program, which comes into effect on April 1, 2019.

"Our government is fully committed to transforming how autism services are delivered in Ontario," said Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. "The government is working to move all 23,000 children off the waitlist as quickly as possible within the next 18 months."

MacLeod highlighted that one of the enhancements the government is exploring is how best to provide additional supports to families based on the diagnosed needs of their child.

"Parents were right when they said that autism is a spectrum and that there are different needs for children on the spectrum," MacLeod added. "I'll take their input for the next several months to assess how we better support those with more complex needs and provide additional sources of support to them."

The government is working on its previously announced reforms, particularly to ensure all children receive support.

Moving Children Off the Waitlist

The government is working to move all 23,000 children off the waitlist so they have timely access to support.

Children will be brought off the waitlist based on a combination of the time they have been waiting for service, and with a continued focus on early intervention. Considerations will be made for children five years of age and youth 17 years of age to ensure they receive the maximum remaining funding.

The government will explore options to provide children who are currently on the waitlist with Childhood Budgets on a quicker timeline, especially younger children.

To build on previously-announced changes to the program, the government is:

Eliminating Income Testing

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.

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.

Smoothing the Transition for Families Receiving Services

All children who currently have an Ontario Autism Program Behaviour Plan will continue to receive the services outlined in that plan until its end date. Families will then be able to renew it for six months at its current level of intensity.

"We continue to work to support children with autism, and their families," concluded MacLeod. "The new Ontario Autism Program with its enhancements is the best possible program Ontario can deliver and it is the only program in the history of our province that will support every single child."

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