

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE
NOVEMBER 2022

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COVID-19, Learning Recovery and Key Updates

- The government released its ***Plan to Catch Up*** on July 25, 2022, which is intended to help students catch up on learning, prepare for the jobs of the future and support their physical and mental health and well-being.
- The Plan includes five key pillars:
 - Kids being **back in the classroom**, on time with a full school experience that includes extracurriculars like sports, band and field trips;
 - **Tutoring supports** to fill gaps in learning;
 - Preparing them for the **jobs of tomorrow**, including the skilled trades;
 - More money to **build new schools** and improve education; and
 - Expanded supports for **students' mental health**.
- The government has made key investments that students and educators are already benefiting from, including:
 - More than \$26.6 billion in funding for the 2022-23 school year, the highest investment in public education in Ontario's history.
 - Investing more than \$175 million for enhanced tutoring support programs delivered by school boards and community partners, with a focus on reading, writing and math.
 - \$304 million in time-limited funding to support the hiring of up to 3,000 front line staff, including teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants, and other education workers.
 - Investing \$14 billion to build state-of-the-art schools and classrooms and renew and repair existing schools, including \$2.1 billion for the 2022-23 school year.
 - Allocating \$90 million for mental health initiatives and supports for students, a 420 per cent increase from 2017-18.
 - Additional funding to support students with exceptionalities through a \$93 million increase in funding for the Special Education Grant and over \$9 million in funding to support the new de-streamed grade nine program, with an emphasis on supporting students most at risk including students from racialized, Black, immigrant, and Indigenous communities.
- On October 20, 2022, the ministry announced **next steps on Ontario's *Plan to Catch Up*** that include:
 - ***Catch Up Payments***, offering families direct financial support to support their children as they catch up. This new initiative commits a total of \$365 million in direct financial relief for parents. Families of students in publicly funded, private, First Nation/federally-operated or home-school settings will receive financial support. Students (up to 18 years old) can receive \$200 per child; students with special education needs (up to 21 years old) can receive \$250.
 - Developing and releasing a Curriculum Review Guide that includes a regular curriculum review cycle that ensures curriculum is up to date and relevant to important job and life skills.
 - Working with school boards to create provincial expectations for how boards help students with attendance difficulties and enable more students to benefit from consistent classroom learning.

- Noting that EQAO released provincial highlights from the 2021-22 school year Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics, and the Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Primary and Junior Divisions. While results reveal stable performance in the OSSLT and relative stability in Grade 6 reading and writing results, there is weaker performance in math across all grades and reading and writing in Grade 3.
- Building on the work to date and to support students to recover learning in math, a new Math Recovery Plan is in development, which will include
 - access to more digital math resources, including elementary math course packs provided by TVO and TFO Idello's Missions d'Élo, and access to the Grade 9 online math course for additional review and practice.
 - An additional \$15 million for school boards to offer a digital tool aligned with the Ontario curriculum to support students, parents, and educators.
 - Working directly with school boards through the Math Action Teams, including board and school-based math coaches.
- In line its commitment to improve student literacy in response to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) *Right to Read Report*, the ministry will require all students in publicly-funded schools in year 2 of Kindergarten to Grade 2 to be screened for reading twice a year using evidence-based early screening tools.
 - The second screening would be optional for students meeting or exceeding the benchmark.
 - The ministry intends to work with school boards and partners on recommended screening tools in the current 2022-23 school year, for use in the 2023-24 school year.

Key Facts

- On August 5, 2022, the ministry released its 2022-23 Health and Safety Measures in Schools. On the advice of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, for the 2022-23 school year, most health and safety requirements remain unchanged from the previous direction provided to school board partners at the end of the 2021-22 school year.
 - Continuing with this direction and based on the advice of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, masks will not be required for students, staff and visitors in schools, school board offices, or on student transportation. We strongly encourage school boards and schools to actively promote respectful, welcoming and inclusive environments for individuals who choose to wear, or not to wear a mask within their school communities.
 - The government will continue to provide free high-quality masks for students and staff and eye protection for staff, if they choose to use them. School boards can continue to order this optional PPE for students and staff through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery (formerly the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services).

- Where staff are required to perform an Aerosol Generating Medical Procedure (AGMP) or required to be in the same room when an AGMP is being performed, N95 respirators (fit tested) are recommended and will continue to be provided. All staff will also continue to have access to non-fit-tested N95s.
- School boards will also continue to have access to rapid antigen tests to be used in accordance with provincial testing guidance.
- It is recommended that staff, students and visitors continue to self-screen every day before attending school using either the [COVID-19 school and child care screening tool](#), or a screening tool designated by the local public health unit, in alignment with current provincial guidance. Following public health guidance, individuals should stay home if they are feeling ill to prevent the spread of illness.
- Appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette should continue to be promoted
- Schools and school vehicles are expected to continue with enhanced cleaning protocols requiring cleaning/disinfecting high-touch surfaces at least once daily. Required critical supplies and equipment, for example, disinfectant, will continue to be provided to school boards through the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and the government's pandemic supply chain.
- Significant improvements have been made to ventilation and filtration through the implementation of various measures across all schools. This includes improvements to existing ventilation systems, deployment of over 100,000 standalone HEPA filter units and other ventilation devices, upgrades to school ventilation infrastructure and increased transparency for students, parents and staff.
- In February 2022, the ministry released its 5-point action plan for learning recovery. The plan leverages and expands upon proven, high-yield programs and supports, and introduces new investments to address critical gaps. The full plan to support learning recovery and modernize education is outlined as follows:
 1. Measure and assess by reintroducing provincial EQAO assessments after a two-year pause to better understand student learning levels and additional opportunities for support going forward;
 2. Strengthen numeracy and literacy skills by investing \$15 million in summer learning with expanded opportunities for targeted student populations, providing over \$11 million in funding to support de-streaming and investing \$25 million in reading intervention programs and professional assessments;
 3. Focus on student resilience and mental well-being by stabilizing \$80 million of historic mental health funding made last year, providing an additional \$10 million for enhanced supports, and committing to consult, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, to leverage the best available evidence on emerging student mental health needs to support resilience and mental well-being, in alignment with Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness and within the continuum of mental health care;
 4. Deliver comprehensive tutoring supports through school boards, including in partnership with local community organizations, and the expansion of online

- tutoring through Mathify and Eurêka! supported by a major investment of \$176 million; and
5. Modernize education to better prepare students for job and life skills by investing over \$8 million in the 2022-23 school year.

Special Education Funding

Special Education Grant (SEG) Investments

Key Facts

- Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for 2022-23 was announced on February 17, 2022 in [Memorandum 2022 B03](#); and further details can be found in supporting documents such as the [Technical Paper 2022-23](#), [Memorandum 2022 SB08: Special Education Grant Changes for 2022-23](#) and the [2022-23 Education Funding: A Guide to the Special Education Grant](#).
- The government is committed to ensuring that every student, including students with special education needs, has access to the supports they need to succeed in school.
- This commitment is demonstrated by investments in the Special Education Grant (SEG), which provides boards with funding for programs, services, and/or equipment for students with special education needs. Boards may use the grant only for special education and must set aside any unspent funding to use for special education in a future school year.
- For 2022-23, SEG funding is projected to increase to over \$3.25 billion. The highest amount ever provided in SEG funding, this represents an increase of approximately \$93 million, or 2.9 per percent, over 2021-22 SEG funding.
- This 2022-23 increase in SEG funding is a result of the following:
 - Transferring of Priorities and Partnership Funding (PPF) in 2021-22 to Grants for Student Needs (GSN) 2022-23:
 - \$16.3¹ million in a new Local Special Education Priorities Amount within the Special Education Grant's (SEG) Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA).
 - Providing a \$1.4 million funding increase to the Northern Supports Component within the Special Education Grant's (SEG) Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (DSENA).
 - Providing a \$7.4 million funding increase to the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Per-Pupil Amount (PPA) for Assistive Technology.
 - Increasing Special Education Grant (SEG) benchmarks, consistent with other GSN benchmarks, to reflect a labour provision increase. This labour provision increase is subject to the outcome and conclusion of labour negotiations with teachers' federations and education worker unions whose agreements expire August 31, 2022.
- For further information regarding special education funding please visit the ministry's [Education Funding page](#).

¹ Total provincial funding for Local Special Education Priorities Amount, including isolate boards, will be \$16.3M. The amount provided to school boards only is \$16.1M

2022-23 Priorities and Partnership Funding Investments

- In addition to SEG funding, school boards can use other GSN funding and Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF) transfer payments funding to meet their responsibility to support students with special education needs. The PPF provides support for a variety of time-limited, high-impact initiatives that directly support students in the classroom.

Regular School Year Pilots and Programs – Special Education (\$7.48M)

- Special Education Additional Qualifications (AQ) Subsidy for Educators \$1.00M
- Developmental Disabilities Pilot: Student Transitions \$0.48M
- Supporting Students with Special Education Needs / Students with Disabilities (Removing Barriers) \$6.00M

Regular School Year Pilots and Programs – Supporting Student Potential (\$33.32M)

- Professional Assessment and Reading Intervention Programs \$25.00M
- Early Intervention in Math for Students with Special Education Needs \$8.32M

Additional Third-Party Investments (\$5.85M)

- Geneva Centre for Autism – Online Training \$2.00M
- Geneva Centre for Autism – Synchronous Educator Training \$2.50M
- Special Education Additional Qualifications (AQ) Subsidy for Principals \$0.40M
- Learning Disabilities Assoc. of Ontario \$0.75M
- Opportunities & Transition Supports for students who are D/deaf and Hard of Hearing \$0.20M

Summer 2022 Funding (\$10M)

- Summer Learning for Students with Special Education Needs \$10M
- The Ministry of Education allocates funding to Ontario's 72 publicly funded district school boards through the Special Education Grant (SEG), as part of the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), to support the additional costs of programs, services and equipment required by students with special education needs.
- School boards may use the grant only for special education and must set aside any unspent funding to use for special education in a future school year.
- In addition to Special Education Grant (SEG) funding, school boards can use other Grants for Student Needs (GSN) allocations and Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) to meet their responsibility to support students with special education needs.

- For the 2022-23 school year, the Special Education Grant ([SEG](#)), consisting of 6 allocations, is projected as follows:
 1. The ***Special Education Per Pupil Amount - \$1.61 billion***
Provides funding to every school board to assist with the costs of providing additional support to students with special education needs. It is allocated to school boards based on the total enrolment of all students, not just students with special education needs.
 2. The ***Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount - \$1.21 billion***
Addresses the variation among school boards with respect to their population of students with special education needs and school boards' ability to support these needs.
 3. The ***Special Equipment Amount - \$140.1 million***
Provides funding to school boards to assist with the costs of equipment essential to support students with special education needs.
 4. The ***Special Incidence Portion - \$142.0 million***
Helps offset the additional staff costs for students with extraordinarily high needs who require more than two full-time staff to address their health and/or safety needs, and those of others at their school.
 5. The ***Education and Community Partnership Program - \$113.3 million***
Supports school boards' provision of education programs to school-aged children and youth in care and/or treatment centres, and in custody and correctional facilities.
 6. The ***Behaviour Expertise Amount - \$37.3 million***
Provides funding for school boards to hire professional staff at the board level who have expertise in Applied Behaviour Analysis, to provide training opportunities to build school board capacity in Applied Behaviour Analysis, and to provide students with ASD and other special education needs with additional targeted skills development opportunities, outside the instructional day.

Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide (2017)

Key Facts

- *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide* was released in August 2017 as a draft in electronic form only.
http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/onschools_2017e.pdf
- The Guide updates and consolidates information currently found in: *Standards for School Board's Special Education Plans (2000)*; *IEP Standards for Development, Program Planning and Implementation (2000)*; *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide (2002)*; *Special Education: A Guide for Educators (2001)*; and *Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide (2004)*.
- The document is intended for school and school board administrators but will be of interest to the broader educational community.
- This document is currently in process of migrating from the old ministry website to the new digital curriculum platform. In the near future it will be “going live” on this new platform. The new Curriculum and Resources site can be found at:
<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/>

Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Key Facts

- The Ministry of Education (EDU) is committed to supporting successful outcomes for all students, including students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- EDU is also committed to working with Ontario's families, educators, school boards, and partner ministries to help students find success inside and outside of the classroom.
- EDU is supporting the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) in implementing the Entry to School program, part of the Ontario Autism Program (OAP).
- The Entry to School program is being delivered by OAP community providers and is a six-month group-based skill-building program for young children on the autism spectrum (three to five years of age), who are entering school for the first time. Eligible children participate in this program during the six months preceding their school entry. The focus of the program is on preparing children to enter school. The first cohort of students are expected to transition to school from the program in September 2022. OAP Entry to School Program service providers partner with their local school boards to support school transitions for children in the group-based program. Strong partnerships between community-based OAP organizations and their local school boards are critical to support families.

Funding

- Funding for the Behaviour Expertise Amount through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) is projected to be \$37.3 million in 2022-23. This provides funding for school boards to hire professional staff at the board level who have expertise in Applied

Behaviour Analysis (ABA), offer training opportunities to build school board capacity in ABA and provide After School Skills Development Programs (ASSDP).

The ministry is continuing to fund the Geneva Centre for Autism to provide more ABA-based training opportunities for educators and education workers, including access to the Registered Behaviour Technician (RBT) course, through:

- An extension of the \$2 million per year investment for online training; and
- Ongoing implementation of the \$2.5 million annual investment to provide synchronous virtual training.

Next Steps

- EDU is continuing to work with MCCSS on the implementation of the new Ontario Autism Program, including the Entry to School Program.

Education and Community Partnership Program (ECPP)

Key Facts

- ECPPs are provided for children and youth who are unable to attend the regular school setting due to their primary need for care, treatment or because of a court order to serve a custody or detention sentence.
- ECPPs are voluntary, partnership programs developed between school boards and government-approved facilities such as custody and correctional facilities, mental health agencies or hospitals.
- The Ministry of Education (EDU) funds costs related to the education component of the program. The education component is delivered by teachers employed by the district school board.
- The Ministries of Children, Community and Social Services, Health, and Solicitor General fund costs related to the care, treatment or youth justice component of the program.
- 60 school boards are involved in the delivery of ECPP Programs.

Funding

- The Ministry is undergoing a review and approval of the Spring submissions for 2022-23 ECPP. The Ministry of Education has made up to \$113.3M available for ECPPs in 2022-23.

Supporting Students with Disabilities

Key Facts

- A \$6M application-based fund was announced in February 2022 for school boards to implement initiatives to prevent and remove accessibility barriers experienced by students with special education needs and/or disabilities.
- Over the summer, the ministry carefully reviewed each project application against the application criteria after which, 37 projects were selected for funding. The projects will be undertaken and completed in the 2022-23 school year, examples include:

- Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board – A program to assess and teach skills to young learners with complex needs. Program staff will work directly with the school team to ensure generalization and maintenance of skills.
- Bruce Grey Catholic DSB – A professional-learning focused initiative to strengthen capacity to respond to an increasing number of students with vision impairments.
- Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario – Conduct universal design for learning training, improve transitions for students with disabilities and developing a multi-year accessibility plan.
- Hamilton Wentworth District School Board – Create and pilot an interdisciplinary studies course focused on disability and human rights.
- Rainy River DSB – Focus on training on equity, ableism, accessibility and inclusion; effective strategies for teaching and designing lesson plans; inclusive assessment and evaluation practices.

Developmental Disabilities Pilot: Student Transitions

Key Facts

- Pilot to support select school boards to explore successful practices in transitioning students with developmental disabilities to work using an intensive job-placement program.

Funding

- \$478,000 for the 2021-22 school year.

Next Steps

- The Ministry of Education received approval to run two-year pilot (Year Two pending funding) supporting select school boards to explore and implement Project SEARCH.
- Project SEARCH transition-to-work model is a one-year employment preparation program for students with developmental disabilities who are in their final year of high school. It is a collaborative model that requires cooperation between school boards, businesses/site hosts and community partners.
- There are more than 600 Project SEARCH sites worldwide, licensed through Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Ohio.
- In Year One of the pilot, of the fourteen participating school boards:
 - Six moved to implementation in September 2022;
 - five are deferring implementation for one year, until September 2023; and
 - three have decided that Project SEARCH is not a good fit for their school board.
- The ministry made a second call for expressions of interest in the Spring of 2022. Two new school boards will be joining the pilot. These new boards will use their first year of the pilot to secure partners and ensure long-term viability in their communities.

Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

Key Facts

The ministry continues to support students with learning disabilities through the following:

- Policy Program Memorandum 8 (PPM8): *Identification of and Program Planning for Students with Learning Disabilities*, 2014 sets out the requirements for school boards for the identification of and program planning for students who have learning disabilities (LDs).
- Learning to read is essential for success in school and in life. The OHRC Right to Read report released in early 2020 recommended improving student literacy and making longer-term reforms to modernize the way reading is taught and assessed in schools, with a focus on phonics.
- The ministry took immediate action in response to some OHRC Right to Read report recommendations to improve student literacy and make longer-term reforms to modernize the way reading is taught and assessed in schools, with a focus on phonics. Ontario's plan to boost literacy outcomes and support learning recovery includes:
 - Revising the elementary Language curriculum and the Grade 9 English course with scientific, evidence-based approaches that emphasize direct, explicit and systematic instruction and removing references to discovery and inquiry-based learning, including the three-cueing system, by 2023
 - Revising the elementary Français and the Grade 9 Français curriculum by September 2023
 - Releasing a science-based guide for educators in spring 2022 that will support effective early reading instruction
 - Collaborating with partners, including faculties of education, on professional development for educators to ensure they are learning science-based reading instruction methods
 - Beginning development of a French-language reading intervention program
 - Engaging with parents and sector partners on a longer-term response and developing accessible, parent-friendly resources on literacy skills.
- How educators are trained and engaged in ongoing professional development are also key to equipping students with the supports they need. The Ministry of Education will continue to work closely with the Ontario College of Teachers and Faculties of Education to align training of prospective teachers with evidence-based approaches to reading. Teachers in Ontario continue to learn and develop professionally once they are in practice, including through the New Teacher Induction Program, professional activity days, additional qualification courses, and initiatives like the Learning and Innovation Fund for Teachers. These activities support Ontario's teachers to have access to the latest resources and educational approaches.

Funding

- As part of its Learning Recovery Action Plan, the ministry announced \$25M to support evidence-based reading intervention programs and professional assessments – beginning immediately and into the 2022-23 school year. With this

funding, the ministry provided guidance to boards about evidence-based approaches to supporting struggling readers, building on expert advice from the ministry's multi-year pilot project on supporting students with learning disabilities affecting reading.

- For several years the ministry has been providing funding to the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) to develop a range of online resources and conduct Summer Institutes for Educators to further enhance the understanding of evidence-based and research informed instructional strategies in the field of LDs. For 2022-25 school years LDAO has been provided with a total of \$2.25 million in funding. The LDAO is implementing educator-tailored capacity building activities and developing resources focusing on supporting students with Learning Disabilities (LDs) and struggling readers. The activities promote evidence-based practices and are conducted in English and French.

Next Steps

- This comprehensive OHRC report requires time for thoughtful review and consideration. The ministry will engage with stakeholders in the education sector, parents, and Indigenous partners, and work with key experts so that every student, including students with learning disabilities, is supported to learn to read well.

Mental Health

Key Facts

- Student mental health and well-being is a top priority for the government. Good mental health is fundamental to a student's ability to learn, succeed, and reach their full potential at school and in life.
- The public education system in Ontario plays a unique role in mental health promotion and prevention for all students, and the early identification and intervention for students who may be experiencing a mental health issue.
- On October 25, 2021 the Ministry of Education announced the formation of the Mental Health Branch within the Student Support and Field Services Division.
- In Ontario, school-based services are reported as the most prevalent setting for students with a mental health issue to initially seek help.
- COVID-19 has impacted all students and their families. The pandemic has expanded existing inequalities and greatly impacted students from equity seeking groups (e.g., racialized, low-income, LGBTQI2S, and students with disabilities). This has made circumstances even more challenging and it has meant that many more families and students face new vulnerabilities.
- Prioritizing student mental health is critical to addressing these inequities and supporting the learning recovery of all students.
- Pre-pandemic child and youth mental health concerns were significant. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing concerns by increasing anxiety, distress, problematic substance use and eating disorders.
- Schools continue to provide mental health promotion supports to all students and offer timely clinical interventions for students that require school-based mental health services.

- On February 17, 2022 the Ministry of Education launched a five point [Learning Recovery plan](#) that included a focus on mental health and well-being. The mental health components of the learning recovery action plan may include:
 - Mandatory professional learning on mental health for educators
 - Working with the Ministry of Health to consult with stakeholders to leverage the best available evidence on emerging student mental health needs.
 - Continuing to support student well-being through:
 - mentally healthy classrooms and learning environments
 - effective and responsive school mental health supports
 - connections to the broader provincial system of mental health care.
- The ministry, through its implementation partner, School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON), continues to provide professional learning opportunities, ongoing coaching support and a suite of evidence-based resources to all publicly funded school boards in the province.
- On August 2, 2022, SMH-ON released their updated *Mentally Healthy Back to School Support Package* for school boards to support student mental health in the return to school. School board mental health leadership teams were offered a menu of resources that could be tailored for their boards' local context and needs.

Funding

- Ontario is investing \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years to develop and implement a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions strategy.
- The ministry is providing school boards with more than \$90M in dedicated funding to support student mental health in 2022-23.
 - This funding includes a new Student Mental Well Being allocation (\$10M) that is comprised of the following two components, fostering the resilience and mental well-being of all students (\$5M) and implementing evidence-based mental health programs and resources (\$5M). This investment will support the mental health and well-being of all students and will enable school boards to continue to assist students who are experiencing mental health challenges that are impacting their learning.
 - More than \$35M of this funding can be used to respond to local priorities such as employing new mental health professionals, providing professional learning and training for educators and mental health professionals, collaborating with community mental health providers for students requiring more intensive services, student engagement opportunities in the area of mental health, and the collection, analysis and reporting of student mental health related information.
- The Ministry of Education continues to fund the approximately 180 new mental health workers (FTEs) in secondary schools that were initially hired by district school boards in 2018-19. The purpose of this investment is to continue to have regulated mental health professionals (e.g., social workers, psychologists and psychotherapists) with specialized training in student mental health in secondary schools providing promotion, prevention, early identification, assessment and direct mental health services to students; enhanced and timely access through referrals to

community mental health services for students in crisis; and support for students, families, as well as classroom strategies for educators.

Next Steps

- EDU is working closely with the Ministry of Health to support cross-sector stakeholder consultations on student mental health. Consultations will occur in Fall 2022.

UPDATES FROM OTHER MINISTRIES

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Investment in Rehabilitation Services and the Preschool Speech and Language Program

Key Facts

- In the 2021 Budget, the Ontario government announced new investments to support children and youth with special needs to live happier and healthier lives.
- The government committed to new funding of \$240 million over four years, beginning in 2021–22. This investment will ensure that more children and families have access to critical services when they need them and build additional service capacity in early intervention and rehabilitation services, and the Preschool Speech and Language (PSL) program.
- The funding has supported Children's Treatment Centres (CTCs), PSL lead agencies and their local partners to build capacity and address waitlists for assessments and speech and language pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services for children and youth in the PSL program and in CTC community- and school-based rehabilitation services.
- As part of this investment, the ministry is also working with CTCs and other partners to implement SmartStart Hubs as a clear entry point to services that use a provincially consistent approach to inform earlier and appropriate connections to local services and streamline functional assessments and service delivery based on an understanding of children's strengths, goals and needs.

Virtual/Remote Service Delivery in Response to COVID-19

- Service providers continue to take pragmatic and innovative approaches to keep children and youth safe and families supported, including delivering services through innovative modalities such as virtual tele-practice and remote services, to avoid or minimize service disruptions to children and families, all while following the guidance of local public health authorities.

Next Steps

- Ontario will be releasing guidelines to support provincial consistency in the provision of a high quality, child- and family-centred PSL and children's rehabilitation services in alignment with the broader provincial objectives to modernize early intervention and special needs services.
- The guidelines were developed with input from the PSL Advisory Group and the Children's Rehabilitation Services Advisory Group and reflect research evidence from Western University and CanChild Centre for Disability Research. They are informed by consultation and engagement with regulated health professionals, service provider organizations and associations to support ongoing improvements in service delivery.

Regulation of Applied Behaviour Analysis

Key Facts

- On [August 13, 2019](#), Ontario announced its intention to strengthen the oversight of behaviour analysts who provide Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), and that the professionals would be regulated through an existing college under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*.
- On June 3, 2021, the Legislature passed the *Advancing Oversight and Planning in Ontario's Health System Act, 2021*. This legislation will regulate ABA as a new profession under the College of Psychologists of Ontario, beginning with behaviour analysts in supervisory and assessment-focused roles.
- Behaviour analysts provide services to a wide range of clients, including children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities and autism, those with mental health challenges or behavioural difficulties, seniors with dementia, and those in substance abuse treatment, brain injury rehabilitation and rehabilitative programming in correctional facilities.
- Currently in Ontario, if there are issues with services, clients and families have limited mechanisms to make a complaint about a provider because the majority of clinicians are not regulated and do not have a local governing body to handle complaints or discipline.
- Regulation of ABA will result in:
 - Consistency in ethical and professional standards to promote a higher level of trust between families and practitioners.
 - Clearly defined educational and ongoing quality assurance requirements for clinicians to improve consistency in treatment.
 - A mechanism for families to report complaints about providers to reduce the risk of harm.
- Behaviour analysts are not currently regulated in any Canadian province or territory; however, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have online lists or registries of qualified behavioural service providers for children and youth with autism.
- In the United States, there is a growing trend to regulate behaviour analysts. Thirty-one states have licensed behaviour analysts, while a further four states have proposed licensing legislation for behaviour analysts.

Next Steps

- The College of Psychologists is developing proposed regulations to implement the new legislation for government approval. These regulations will set expectations for professional standards and educational requirements for ABA providers across the province. This will support families in finding qualified providers and making complaints about providers, if necessary.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnostic Hubs

Key Facts

- The five regional Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnostic hubs were implemented in January 2017 to support timely access to diagnostic assessments for autism and to increase capacity to diagnose autism across the province.
- The government provided a \$3.9M increased investment in the diagnostic hubs for 2021-22 and 2022-23, in addition to \$5.5M in annual funding for the hubs, to improve families' access to an assessment for their child by reducing waitlists and wait times.
- With their funding, ASD diagnostic hubs are required to:
 - Conduct diagnostic assessments by partnering with other organizations and professionals;
 - Increase the number of health professionals in local communities able to conduct ASD diagnostic assessments by offering training and capacity building; and,
 - Connect families with the appropriate services in their communities as quickly as possible following a diagnostic assessment.
- The five regional hubs are:
 - Children's Treatment Network (Central Region)
 - Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (East Region)
 - Child and Community Resources (North Region)
 - Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Toronto Region)
 - Hamilton Health Sciences / Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre (West Region)
- Since November 2019, the hubs have been offering training opportunities to support health care professionals in local communities to build their expertise in autism diagnosis, including screening for early signs of autism and training on specific diagnostic assessment tools.

Next Steps

- The hubs continue to provide diagnostic assessments and are working collaboratively to implement capacity-building initiatives across the province.

Implementation of the needs-based Ontario Autism Program (OAP)

- The Ontario Autism Program (OAP) is now supporting about 40,000 children through existing behaviour plans, childhood budgets, interim funding, core clinical services, caregiver-mediated early years programs, the entry to school program, foundational family services, and urgent response services.
- **Foundational family services** launched in August 2020 and are available to all families registered in the OAP. These evidence-informed services aim to build a family's capacity to support their child or youth's learning and development. Services include family and peer mentoring, caregiver workshops, brief targeted consultations, transition supports, and family resource and clinic days.
- **Caregiver-mediated early years programs** launched in June 2021. These programs are time-limited services for young children (12-48 months of age) to help

them learn new skills and meet individualized goals in the areas of social communication and play, and to build the capacity of caregivers to support their children. The following six programs are offered:

- Early social interaction/social communication emotional regulation and transactional supports (ESI/SCERTS)
- Joint attention, symbolic play, engagement and regulation (JASPER)
- Pivotal response treatment (PRT)
- PLAY project
- Project ImPACT
- Social ABCs
- **The entry to school program** launched in March 2022. It is a six-month group-based skill-building program for young children registered in the OAP, aged 3 to 6 years, who are entering kindergarten or Grade 1 for the first time. The program is delivered by 14 service providers across the province and is focused on preparing children to successfully transition and enter school for the first time. Following completion of the group-based program, children will receive transition supports as they enter school to support a successful school transition.
- **Urgent response services** - In April 2022, 11 lead organizations located across the province, started offering urgent response services to children and families registered in the OAP. These include time-limited services and supports, delivered for up to 12 weeks, to respond rapidly to a specific, urgent need to help stabilize the situation, prevent crisis, and reduce the risk of children and youth harming themselves, others and/or property.
- **Independent Intake Organization (IIO)** - As part of the ongoing implementation of the OAP, the ministry officially launched the Independent Intake Organization (the “IIO”), called AccessOAP, in April 2022. AccessOAP provides a single point of access to the OAP. The goal of AccessOAP is to support an integrated and consistent service delivery experience for all families.
- Led by Accerta Services Inc., AccessOAP is delivered through a partnership with McMaster University, Autism Ontario, and HealthCare 365. The IIO partners bring together significant experience in administering public programs, supporting children and youth on the autism spectrum and their caregivers, care coordination, service navigation, research, and healthcare education.”
- The ministry started contacting families in spring 2022 to connect them with AccessOAP to support their entry into core clinical services. At this time, children are beginning to receive invitations to enter core clinical services in the order that they registered for the OAP, as recommended by the Ontario Autism Advisory Panel and committed by the Ontario government in December 2021. By fall 2022, Ontario will bring 8,000 children and youth into core clinical services.
- **Core clinical services:** Based on a child’s individual support needs, families have access to a broad range of core clinical services and supports such as applied behaviour analysis, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and mental health services.
- Families of children with existing behaviour plans will have the option to enter core clinical services in the order that they registered in the Ontario Autism Program, or

extend their plans until spring 2023, at which time they will begin to transition into core clinical services.

- In July 2021, the ministry announced a plan to build service capacity to deliver the needs-based OAP in Ontario. The Autism Workforce Capacity Action Plan, part of the province's \$600 million annual investment in the program, encompasses a mix of short and long-term initiatives, including the following:
 - Transition funding and other supports for publicly-funded children's service providers;
 - The Workforce Capacity Fund grant program to support capacity-building activities led by public and private children's service providers and community organizations. As announced on December 3, 2021, the government awarded 79 grants to build and retain the workforce in the first year of the program. A second application round will launch in August 2022;
 - Investments in skills and training for more than 7,000 clinicians, including Indigenous Cultural Competency Training and mental health training; and
 - Support for three pilot projects to build capacity in Northern Ontario.

Next Steps

- Implementation of the needs-based autism program is underway and ongoing throughout 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Temporary Changes to Direct-Funding Programs in Response to COVID-19

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services announced a number of updates for the Ontario Autism Program:
 - An [extension for the amount of time families have to spend childhood budget and interim one-time funding](#) and submit their expense form by up to six months, if necessary. Families now have up to 18 months to spend their childhood budget and submit their expense form.
 - The ministry extended the March 31, 2020 deadline for families to submit their OAP registration form and supporting documents to be eligible for interim one-time funding. The ministry continued to provide interim one-time funding to all new applicants whose registration forms and supporting documents were submitted by March 31, 2021.
 - Additionally, to support children and youth on the autism spectrum and their families, the ministry provided greater clarity about what expenses are eligible under the Ontario Autism program for childhood budgets and interim one-time funding for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak. The current list of eligible expenses for the OAP allows for a broad range of services and supports, to support the clinical needs of children with Autism. This includes evidence-based behavioural services, other therapies and services (e.g., Speech language therapy, Occupational therapy, and Physiotherapy), additional autism services and supports (e.g., curriculum-based interventions, life skills and social skills training programs, employment supports, and parent and caregiver capacity building and training), respite services, family service planning and support (e.g., interpretation and translation services, individualized family service planning), travel, and technology.

- For families receiving funding under the OAP – Direct Funding Option, resources approved for a child's existing behaviour plan can be used flexibly to support families to access eligible services through remote or virtual service delivery during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The ministry temporarily expanded the list of eligible expenses for families accessing the Special Services at Home (SSAH) and Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technology Dependent Children (MFTDC) programs to allow families to use funding for goods and services that may make it easier for them to stay at home and practice physical distancing.
- These programs provide direct funding for families to purchase respite services and/or opportunities for personal growth and development for children and youth. The [temporarily expanded list of eligible expenses](#) includes the following categories of goods and services:
 - sensory items to alleviate anxiety/stress;
 - technology items to help children and youth with special needs to remain connected and/or engage in e-learning;
 - Items to support home-based recreation and fitness activities such as:
 - craft and hobby supplies
 - home-based fitness and sports equipment that children and youth would otherwise access through day programs or community-based programs;
 - personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies;
 - essential service fees such as grocery and pharmacy fees; and
 - behavioural support plans and related interventions.
- These changes are temporary and the existing program terms and conditions will continue to apply upon the government providing notice.
- For the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD) program, families who have already received pre-approval for ACSD expenditures may temporarily, for the duration of the pandemic period, use pre-approved ACSD funding to purchase items/services from the expanded list of admissible expenditures without pre-approval from the ministry. For example, if a family is temporarily not using their funding for a pre-approved expense such as transportation, they can use that funding for the expenses outlined above. These changes came into effect April 1, 2020. ACSD families who are eligible to receive program funding in 2022/2023 can purchase support according to existing program guidelines and these temporary changes.
- As of April, 2022, the Ontario government has made the [wage enhancement](#) for direct support workers (DSW) and personal support workers (PSW) who care for vulnerable people of all ages, including children and youth, in residential, community and home settings permanent.
- To support this initiative, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) is providing additional funding to families who receive direct funding from the following programs:
 - Special Services at Home (SSAH)
 - Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technologically Dependent Children (Enhanced Respite)

- Ontario Autism Program (OAP) Childhood Budget or Interim One-time Funding
- Passport program (for adults with a developmental disability including adults aged 18 to 21 who may be in school)
- Permanent wage enhancement for personal support workers and direct support workers came into effect for direct funding programs as of July 1, 2022. Families in receipt of Special Services at Home (SSAH) and/or Enhanced Respite will receive increased funding of 10% and 18% respectively, (prorated to nine months for the 2022-23 fiscal year). Letters to families in receipt of SSAH and Enhanced Respite were sent starting on June 22, 2022.
- For the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD) program, the ministry has increased the maximum monthly amount of financial assistance that may be paid on behalf of a child with a severe disability.
- On July 8, 2022, MCCSS issued communications to families in receipt of an OAP Childhood Budget and Interim-One Time Funding. The communication noted that effective July 1, 2022, the revised OAP funding amounts will be increased by 10% and will be applicable to the following OAP Childhood Budgets and Interim One-time funding agreements:
 - Families who received a \$5,000 OAP payment and whose current funding agreement has not expired as of July 1, 2022, will be eligible for an additional top-up payment of \$500.
 - Families who received a \$20,000 OAP payment and whose current funding agreement has not expired as of July 1, 2022, will be eligible for an additional top-up payment of \$2,000.
 - Families entering into a new funding agreement, as of July 1, 2022, will be eligible to receive a payment of \$5,500 or \$22,000 based on the age of their child or youth as of April 1 of the funding year.
- Families are not required to apply for this increase in funding and families eligible for a top-up payment will receive a payment within 4-6 weeks of July 1, 2022. The ministry will follow up with families if additional information is required.

Ministry of Colleges and Universities

Key Facts

- Universities, colleges and Indigenous Institutes, as direct providers of educational services, have a legal duty to accommodate persons with disabilities under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (AODA) 2005*.
- The Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) provides targeted funding through special purpose grants to assist publicly-funded colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes to meet their legislative obligations. These supports are intended to supplement institutions' general operating costs in support of students with disabilities.
- In 2021-22, over 96,000 postsecondary students were registered with Offices for Students with Disabilities (OSDs) at publicly-assisted colleges and universities.

In the last ten years, the total number of students with disabilities registered for services with OSDs more than doubled. **Funding**

- In 2022-23, the ministry is investing approximately \$55 million to assist publicly-assisted colleges, universities and Indigenous Institutes in meeting their legal requirements to provide academic accommodations to students with disabilities.
- The government also provided support directly to postsecondary students with disabilities through the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Through OSAP, the ministry provided almost \$2 million in 2021-22 to help students with their disability-related educational costs (e.g., services and equipment such as braille displays and assistive listening devices).
- Additionally, for 2022-23, the government is investing \$24.53 million in mental health supports for postsecondary students. These funds will enhance mental health supports at publicly-assisted colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes.
- The Ministry of Colleges and Universities also funds the Ontario Postsecondary Access and Inclusion Program (OPAIP).
- OPAIP provides funding to Ontario publicly-assisted postsecondary institutions to deliver on the following three objectives of outreach, transition and retention services to students facing barriers in accessing and successfully participating in postsecondary education. More specifically:
 - **Outreach:** Encouraging eligible students to appreciate the value of Postsecondary Education (PSE).
 - **Access/Transition:** Helping eligible students with admission to PSE programs and transition into PSE studies, as well as employment.
 - **Retention:** Ensuring students enrolled in PSE continue to succeed and graduate.
- The ministry is providing \$34.11 million over three years (or \$11.37 million annually) in OPAIP funding beginning in 2021-22.
 - The ministry held a call for proposals in 2021 and received proposals from 45 publicly assisted postsecondary institutions for over 500 projects. All 45 institutions received some level of OPAIP funding.

Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee

- MCU is committed to identifying opportunities to make a positive impact on the lives of students with disabilities participating in postsecondary education in Ontario. Through the Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee (PSE SDC), the ministry is participating in a process to prevent and remove barriers at postsecondary institutions
- The Chair of the Postsecondary Education (PSE) Standards Development Committee submitted the Final Recommendations Report on March 4, 2022. The PSE Final Report makes nearly 200 recommendations on measures to address accessibility barriers. A final version of the recommendations was also posted on [ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca) in April for public viewing. The ministry is currently conducting a review of the recommendations.

Ministry of Health

Home and Community Care Modernization

- On May 1, 2022, the government put in place new legislation and regulations for home and community care.
 - The government brought into effect:
 - Bill 175, the *Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020*; and
 - the new Home and Community Care Services Regulation (O. Reg. 187/22) under the *Connecting Care Act, 2019*; and
 - The government repealed the *Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994* (HCCSA) and its regulations.
- The new legislation and Regulation carry forward and expand:
 - the list of publicly fundable home and community care services (e.g. professional services like nursing and rehabilitation therapies and personal support services), and their patient eligibility criteria
 - delivery requirements for providers, and
 - patient rights and protections
- The new legislative regime continues to include the same home and community care services for students to support learning in their homes or in private or publicly schools, i.e. 'school health professional services' and 'school health personal support services'. Patient eligibility criteria for these services also remain unchanged, except that the new Regulation explicitly makes students who are participating in virtual learning eligible for school health services.
- Home and Community Care Support Services (the business name of the Local Health Integration Networks) continue to arrange home care services, including school health professional services.
- The Ministry of Health continues to carefully plan health system transformation to preserve continuity of home and community care while working toward improvements. This planning will continue to be done in collaboration with patients, caregivers, workers, employers, associations and unions.

Ontario Health Teams

- As noted in the Ministry of Health's update to MACSE in January 2022:
 - The Ontario government is building a connected health care system centred around patients, families and caregivers. These changes will strengthen local services, making it easier for patients to navigate the system and transition between providers.
 - Ontario Health Teams are being introduced to provide a new way of organizing and delivering care that is more connected to patients in their local communities. Under Ontario Health Teams, health care providers work as one coordinated team - no matter where they provide care.
 - There are currently 54 Ontario Health Teams that have been approved by the ministry, and four more teams invited to complete an application to become approved.

School Health Support Services

- As noted in the Ministry of Health's update to MACSE in January 2022:
 - In 2021, the Ministry of Health provided guidance to Home and Community Care Support Services organizations regarding the delivery of school health professional services. The guidance was delivered in a memorandum that emphasized the following parameters for the delivery school health professional services during the pandemic:
 - It is the Ministry of Education's expectation that school boards should work with partners to develop local protocols for school access by regulated health professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services.
 - Eligible students registered for in-person learning continue to be eligible to receive school health services.
 - Eligible students can also receive school health services while engaging in remote learning. The Ministry of Health has outlined parameters to support the delivery of care outside of schools.
 - Some families have elected to transition to home schooling and will need to engage with Home and Community Care Support Services to establish services for home-schooled students.
 - All services will continue to be provided in alignment with public health guidance.
- These parameters still apply during the 2022-23 school year.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- As of Thursday, July 28, 2022, parents and caregivers of children aged six months to under five years have been able to book appointments for the paediatric COVID-19 vaccine. [Immunocompromised](#) youth aged 12 to 17 also became eligible to schedule their second booster dose (fifth dose) if at least six months has passed since their first booster (fourth dose).
- "The approval of a lower dose paediatric Moderna vaccine will give families the opportunity to provide an additional layer of protection against COVID-19 for the youngest members of their families," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Getting vaccinated remains the best defence against COVID-19 and I encourage parents with questions to reach out to their health care provider, the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre or the SickKids COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service to make an informed choice for their family."
- Paediatric vaccines have been and are continuing to be distributed across the province and will be available through public health unit clinics, as well as participating paediatricians, primary care providers and pharmacies.
- Starting July 28, appointments have been made available through the [COVID-19 vaccination portal](#) and the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre, directly through [public health units](#) using their own booking system, participating primary care providers and paediatricians, as well as at [participating pharmacies](#) and Indigenous-led vaccination clinics.

- Parents and caregivers with questions are encouraged to speak with their health care provider or call the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 to speak to a health specialist or visit [COVID-19 Vaccine Consult Service](#) to book a confidential phone appointment with a SickKids Registered Nurse.

Family-Managed Home Care Program

- The Ministry of Health amended the Self-Directed Care Program Specifications for the Family-Managed Home Care (FMHC) program to extend the option for students who require nursing services to attend school for the 2022-23 school year until June 30, 2023.
- As in the 2021-22 school year, this exception applies only in circumstances where Home and Community Care Support Services organizations (the business name of the LHINs) or the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) are unable to provide timely and reliable nursing services in school through traditional care.
- Through the FMHC program, eligible clients or, if applicable, their Substitute Decision-Makers may purchase nursing services provided as nursing services in schools for eligible clients in the following cohorts:
 - Children with complex medical needs,
 - Adults with an acquired brain injury, and
 - Clients in extraordinary circumstances.
- Clients will only be eligible for the FMHC program for nursing services provided as nursing services in a school if the child's school and the applicable school board permit the nurse to provide the services in the school.
- The definition of Substitute Decision-Maker in the Family-Managed Home Care program was updated effective September 1, 2022. In addition to the pre-existing categories of who may qualify to act as a Substitute Decision-Maker to receive funding to purchase home and community care services on behalf of a client who is 18 or older (which include an attorney under the *Powers of Attorney Act* and a Guardian of Property appointed under Part 1 of the *Substitute Decisions Act, 1992*), the following two additional categories of individuals may be eligible to act as a Substitute Decision-Maker:
 - a. An individual managing Ontario government funding from MCCSS specifically from the Passport Program, Ontario Works (OW), and/or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) on behalf of the client who is an adult.
 - b. For a period up to twelve (12) months from the date that the client who is enrolled in the Self-Directed Care Program turns 18 years old, the person who was receiving Self Directed Care funding on behalf of the client when the client was a child and who has committed to taking steps to manage Ontario government funding from the MCCSS specifically from the Passport Program, Ontario Works, and/or the Ontario Disability Support Program on behalf of the client who is an adult if the client is incapable of entering into an Self-Directed Care Template Agreement.
- The Substitute Decision-Maker must also meet the eligibility criteria for participating in the Self-Directed Care Program
- The ministries appreciate the continued partnership between schools, school boards and Home and Community Care Support Services and CHEO, care providers and

families in supporting students who require nursing services at school. Where applicable, the Ministry of Education encourages school boards to enter into Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with families and providers to set out expectations for access to school sites. The Ministry of Education understands that some boards have previously developed MOUs for similar purposes and encourages boards to share lessons learned.

Nursing Services Capacity in Schools

The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education have communicated the following messages to school boards in June 2022:

- In light of limited nursing capacity across the health care system and province, early planning for the new school year in September is more important than ever to support a smoother transition for students.
- We know that supporting access to school-based nursing for students requires strong collaboration and diligent planning between school and school board staff and Home and Community Care Support Services organizations. As the current school year ends, we encourage the continuation of these relationships and joint planning to support existing and new students expected to need school-based nursing in September.
- Principals or other staff are encouraged to reach out to their local Home and Community Care Support Services organizations to share information, as appropriate and in accordance with applicable privacy legislation, about school nursing needs for the upcoming school year. School boards can also connect with Home and Community Care Support Services in the summer as new school registrations are submitted to identify any additional needs that may be identified prior to September. Home and Community Care Support Services organizations should also reach out to the appropriate contacts at school boards if they believe there may be gaps in planning information.

Community-Based Child and Youth Mental Health Program (CYMH)

- CYMH services are funded under the authority of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* (CYFSA) and delivered by more than 230 community based, not-for-profit agencies that deliver a range of mental health services to children and youth up to the age of 18, and their families. Services are primarily based on a set of provincially defined CYMH “core services,” ranging from prevention services, counselling and therapy to intensive and specialized services.
- Most agencies delivering CYMH services are multi-service agencies that are funded by both MOH to deliver CYMH services and other ministries to deliver services and supports such as child welfare, youth justice and special needs such as Autism. Some CYMH agencies also provide services across the lifespan, and some are Indigenous owned and operated organizations.
- The total funding allocation for CYMH services is \$510 million and approximately 120,000 children are served annually by the CYMH sector, with the average wait time for core services ranging from two days for crisis services to 105 days for

intensive treatment services. These numbers are likely exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and youth.

- CYMH program funding, includes \$41 million in base funding to Indigenous organizations and communities to support culturally safe mental health and wellness services to Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities in Ontario.
- Under the authority of the CYFSA, designated Lead Agencies plan for the delivery of core services and coordinate services and supports for clients across various sectors, including health, education and child welfare within their respective service areas.
- The Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence (COE) within Ontario Health has a legislated mandate to establish a high-quality MHA program for the province grounded in provincial standards, performance metrics and data.
- Part of the COE's role will be to work with the CYMH sector to weave them into this broader provincial program and ensure that CYMH services are fully connected with the rest of the MHA care continuum and health system.

Other Community Mental Health and Addictions Services and Supports for Children and Youth

- Ontario funds a wide range of community-based mental health and addictions services outside of the CYMH program, including direct, in-person, virtual or online services and supports, as outlined below:
 - In response to the pandemic's impact on children and youth mental health that has led to a surge in eating disorders, Ontario flowed significant investments in 2021 to four pediatric children's hospitals to support intensive services for children and youth who are presenting in greater numbers and are more ill than before.
 - Breaking Free Online, an innovative online therapy tool, makes it faster and easier for Ontarians to access safe and effective addictions supports. Breaking Free is available free of charge to all Ontarians ages 16 and up, and provides support and resources for individuals who want to reduce or stop their use of over 70 addictive substances, such as tobacco, alcohol, and prescription drugs, including opioids. Visit [Breaking Free Online](#) for more information, including how to register.
 - In June 2021 and again in March 2022, the province announced expansion of the [Youth Wellness Hubs](#) across Ontario, bringing the total number of Youth Wellness Hubs across Ontario to 22. These hubs provide developmentally tailored supports for people between the ages of 12-25, by offering walk-in access to primary care and addressing their needs related to mental health, substance use, primary care, education, employment, training, housing and other community and social services.
 - In August 2021, Ontario announced an expansion of the Substance Abuse Program for African Canadian and Caribbean Youth (SAPACCY), establishing 7 new satellite locations across the province. A program started at the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, SAPACCY provides a wide range of culturally safe services and supports to African and Caribbean-origin youth, offering assessment, individual and group treatment, and counselling to assist youth in

reducing harm and making the best choices for themselves and their families on the path to recovery

- In September 2021, Ontario announced additional funding to support the expansion of up to 30 new youth treatment beds for Pine River's Institute's mental health and addiction treatment program for youth. Pine River is a not-for-profit facility for youth aged 13-19 living with addictive behaviours and often other mental health issues. Youth and their families have tailored, individualized plans that combine therapy, a structured environment and life skills with an educational program and are grounded in best practices for addiction treatment for youth and based on their developmental needs.
- Students and families looking to learn about services are encouraged to contact ConnexOntario, which offers 24/7 support to people who are looking for information about community MHA services near them. Connex provides free and confidential information to individuals experiencing problems with mental health, alcohol or drugs, and/or problem gambling and their families. You can reach Connex Ontario at 1-866-531-2600, at www.connexontario.ca, or through the ConnexGO app, which can be downloaded on mobile devices. There are services offered for both individuals experiencing mental health and addictions issues and their families.
- Information on where to find mental health services for children and youth up to the age of 18, is also available from Kids Help Phone's [Resource Around Me online web portal](#), which provides information about publicly funded child and youth mental health, addictions and related services across the province. This information is also available on our [Health Care Options web portal](#).

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

Development of a proposed Accessibility Standard for Education under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Key Facts

- The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA) has the lead to establish a proposed accessibility standard for education under the AODA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (EDU) and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU).
- In February 2018, two separate Education Standards Development Committees (ESDC) were established to support the development of the standard; one committee to focus on the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) sector, and a second committee to focus on the postsecondary education sector.
- The K-12 ESDC included people with disabilities, as well as individuals from organizations from the affected sectors.
- With the submission of its report, and that of a joint K-12/PSE sub-committee on transitions earlier this year, the work of the SDC was complete. The reports are posted on the MSAA's web site.

Next Steps

MSAA and EDU are now reviewing the report and its recommendations.