

## OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION – A NEW VISION FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES IN ONTARIO

The province of Ontario has provided services to people with a developmental disability for over a century. Ontario's developmental services system has changed greatly over this time, with the most significant shift being from provincially-operated, institution-based services to community-based services that promote greater inclusion, independence and choice for individuals.

Today, a whole generation of Ontarians who have a developmental disability have grown up in an increasingly inclusive society. As their support needs and service expectations continue to change, the people who provide those supports and services – families, communities and government – must find a way to respond so that the developmental services system is in a strong position to meet the needs of future generations.

To meet this challenge, the Ontario government launched a major policy review of Ontario's developmental services sector in September, 2004. Since that time, the government has consulted extensively with individuals who have a developmental disability, their families, organizations that provide support, as well as advocates and community leaders.

Their opinions and ideas are at the root of *Opportunities and Action: Transforming Supports for People Who Have a Developmental Disability*. This paper outlines the government's vision for Ontario's developmental services transformation, based on six underlying principles:

- Citizenship – supports for people who have a developmental disability promote self-determination and participation in all aspects of community life.
- Fairness and equity – supports are equitable and people with similar situations receive similar supports across the province.
- Accessibility and portability – funding and supports are flexible and go with the person if he/she moves to another community.
- Safety and security – supports are designed to balance appropriate supervision, especially for those who are most at risk, with the right to self-determination, privacy and confidentiality.
- Accountability – service delivery will include mechanisms to hold service providers accountable to the people using their services and the province for the quality and outcome of the supports they offer.
- Sustainability – funding and supports are based on assessed needs and available resources.

The paper proposes the following key directions to deliver on this vision:

- Establishing a fair system where people with similar needs, in similar circumstances receive similar supports across the province. Currently, the level or type of support can vary significantly because funding levels and demand for service vary from community to community as does the process for determining who receives services.
- Providing funding and supports that are more flexible and individually tailored so that people who have a developmental disability and their families can either purchase what they need directly from service providers, use existing agency programs, or a combination of both. This responds to families who have been asking for more choice in the type of support their family member receives, including some supports that may exist outside of traditional community agencies.
- Creating a more streamlined and consistent way to access a broader range of supports, including specialized services for people who have a developmental disability and mental health issues and/or challenging behaviour. Currently, individuals and families have to find and apply for a variety of supports options that may differ greatly based on where they live.
- Developing clearer roles of individuals, families, agencies and the government, on the one hand, and better information about support needs, on the other, resulting in greater accountability and greater empowerment for individuals and families who use developmental services.

*Opportunities and Action* also asks all Ontarians with an interest in developmental services to provide their input on a range of important topics, including:

- How to encourage and support community participation for people with a developmental disability
- Features of respite or relief programs that work well for families
- Options and opportunities for residential supports
- Unique support needs of youth transitioning from school to adulthood
- Care and support of aging adults.

In addition to accepting written responses, the government will be holding round table discussions with individuals and families to encourage further discussion.

The consultation paper is available on-line at [www.mcass.gov.on.ca](http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca), along with an executive summary, plain language version and a discussion guide.

Comments may be submitted via e-mail, fax or mail until June 30, 2006. The government will use the feedback received in response to the paper to create a transformation plan for Ontario's developmental services sector – one that creates new opportunities for people with a developmental disability to be included in their communities and builds a fair, accessible and sustainable system of supports for people who have a developmental disability.

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