

RESPONSE TO TRANSFORMING SERVICES IN ONTARIO FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

Submitted respectfully by:
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The families of the Durham Family Network are pleased that we are able to comment on the questions put forth in the Document –Transforming Services in Ontario.

The Durham Family Network is a growing network of families who connect with one another in the Durham Region. They learn from each other and are supportive and assist one another in discovering the best available for our sons and daughters. *Our mandate is families committed to each other.*

We ask that individualized Funding become available to families in Ontario. We ask that it be adequate, flexible, individual and portable.

We ask that mechanism can be put in place so that families may hire facilitators/coordinators. The facilitator would work with a small number of families. A facilitator would assist families to form support circles, discover community opportunities, and assist with finding the best supporters. Facilitators would grow in their position as they became in tune with a family/individual.

We ask that the government proceed carefully, using clear principles set out in the document. People must be safe, not congregated or secluded. We must not revert to ways of the past; we must not stay as we are where only a few have support. Government needs to follow through and safeguards need to be in place to ensure people know they have choices.

1. What should be the roles and responsibilities of different parts of society in supporting individuals who have a developmental disability?

Each of the following has responsibilities and roles

- Individual/family/support network need to be aware of their options and rights to plan and determine the best for their family. They need to realize that not all is the responsibility of the government but that they can expect assistance to achieve their individual plan.

- Governments should work with community people to know and understand the needs. They should set clear policies and determine the best mechanisms for delivery of adequate funding.

- Service Providers should work with families to know and understand best ways of delivering adequate support and funding. New innovative, entrepreneur ideas need to be considered. People need choice and to be heard.

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Other parts of the community cannot be forced, it must be freely given. Inclusion is beginning to happen; if it were imposed all that has begun would be lost. The best changes would be that all players become more aware of the best practices. If adequate dollars individualized, portable support were in place all players would be able to support each other to ensure that the best happens for people.

2. *What strategies and resources would help individuals receive seamless supports throughout their lives, including points of transition?*

Adequate, individualized portable funding would ensure seamless support to families no matter what transition period they were in.

Recognize the need for further education opportunities, affordable housing, and the ways and means for families to receive tax breaks, and transportation that is accessible and affordable.

3. *What supports and services that are currently available work well and should be built on for the future?*

SSAH needs to continue and expand. It is a proven program where parents have been able to plan and have trusted people to engage with their children. At the present time there are waiting lists and not adequate dollars to insure the best for individuals. Day programs are full and often a place to spend time rather than a place to expand one's self and grow in their community. There is very little time that can be given to one's individuality.

Foundations appear to have become another program in many areas of Ontario. Individualized Funding is working for those who have been fortunate to receive a small portion of dollars. Families have been able to put plans in place and their children are experiencing the richness of days full of meaning and discovery.

4. *How should a reasonable level of government funding for an individual be determined?*

There are many positive stories of how Individualized Funding is working in Ontario. A study was conducted by the Central East Region in year 2000. We know internationally IF works and nationally it is in place in Alberta and British Columbia.

5. *Services are changing in Ontario for People who have a developmental disability. What would you like to see happen?*

The need now in the early years of the 21st century is to realize and put in place mechanism to ensure adequate, individualized portable funding for those who want it. 25% of all new dollars should be directed to this area. 25% of all existing dollars within agencies should be used for people within the existing programs to have a choice to plan differently if they so choose. Waiting lists for individuals should not exist. Families need the opportunity to engage with a facilitator or coordinator who would work with small numbers of families to assist in planning and building support networks.

6. *What do you think are the priorities the government should address?*

All of the areas laid out are priorities that need to be addressed as set out in the Unison agreement on Page 8. Government needs to focus on the Vision and principles that guided the process to develop this document. All of these areas would ensure a good life for an individual if a personal plan was developed along with adequate flexible-portable support.

7. *Is there anything else you would like to say about the ideas in this discussion paper, or ideas not included in the paper that you feel are important?*

The Durham Family Network has a strong history of families working with each other. Many models and examples of the following:

- planning with an individual/family member
- how to create support circles
- planning for meaningful days
- how to hire support workers
- how to work along with a facilitator
- how to plan for when parents are no longer alive
- housing
- engaging with educators
- engaging with governments/funders/policy
- how to create work opportunities
- relationship-importance and how to build
- community development
- family groups working together
- committees creating innovative ideas

Thank you