

Transformation and Disability Supports

A summary of responses received from members of the Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and participants at the Coalition's most recent event "Workfest"

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Individual Summaries

A total of 22 submissions were received. Two of those submissions have been submitted to the Ministry directly. While the contents of the submissions have been summarized; the actual submissions are not attached

The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario distributed the “Transforming Services in Ontario for People who have a Developmental Disability Preliminary Discussion Paper, October 2004” to all of its members. The document was also circulated to the participants of ‘Workfest’ which was a very successful weekend of intense work identifying needs, visions, strategies and barriers to Individualized Funding in Ontario.

Being a provincial wide volunteer organization, it was extremely difficult for everyone to come together to develop a response to this discussion paper. We therefore relied on written submissions from members from the groups previously identified. Submissions were prepared by individuals with disabilities; families of individuals with disabilities; service providers; advocates and family networks. There was also a core group of members of the Coalition who prepared a summary of Individualized Funding. These submissions are attached to this summary of responses.

The overwhelming message received from the submissions to this discussion paper is that the new generation of family who have chosen to keep their loved ones at home and fully included in society will not accept segregation as the next step. These families strongly desire **CITIZENSHIP AND INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTS/FUNDING**. We need progress toward this goal. However, the current system is unable to provide the continuation of true citizenship for these individuals and their families. Therefore, the Ministry of Community and Social Services must develop policies, which continue to empower individuals with disabilities and their families, rather than empowering agencies to take control of the lives of individuals who have become accepted and contributing members of their community.

First and foremost, the submissions stress that individuals with disabilities (be they physical or intellectual or both) are people first and must be recognized as valued, contributing members of society. As citizens, they must be afforded the same rights as everyone else. However, because of the nature of their disabilities, income supports are often necessary. As well, disability supports are required for individuals to fully access their community and to take their rightful place in society.

Many submissions emphasized that the current level of the Ontario Disability Supports Program does not enable individuals to live above the poverty line nor does it take into consideration the additional expenses associated with having one or more disabilities. The traditional system of disability supports imprisons individuals in segregated day supports, group homes and institutions, preventing individuals from effectively participating in and contributing to society.

The current developmental services delivery mechanism of funding transfer payment agencies to provide services designed to protect the individual with a disability from society is limited as a mechanism for inclusion. Several submissions noted the limitation of agency driven approaches as the only way to meet the needs of individuals. Agency funding does assist some individuals, but it fails to meet the needs of a vast number of people with disabilities. In addition, as long as funding is attached to programs, not individuals, segregation will continue. Segregation does not allow for true participation in the community. Segregation does not allow for self determination as the individual's life is reliant on the group of people they have been linked to within the program. Segregation severely restricts an individual's ability to learn life's lessons because they have no opportunity to make choices which affect their life. Without the opportunity to make choices and learn from those choices, there can be no growth. Without learning there is no growth, without growth there is no progress. Therefore a life without inclusion is a stagnant life.

In the following section, we highlight the main themes that come from our submissions. These themes are organized under each of the discussion paper's questions.