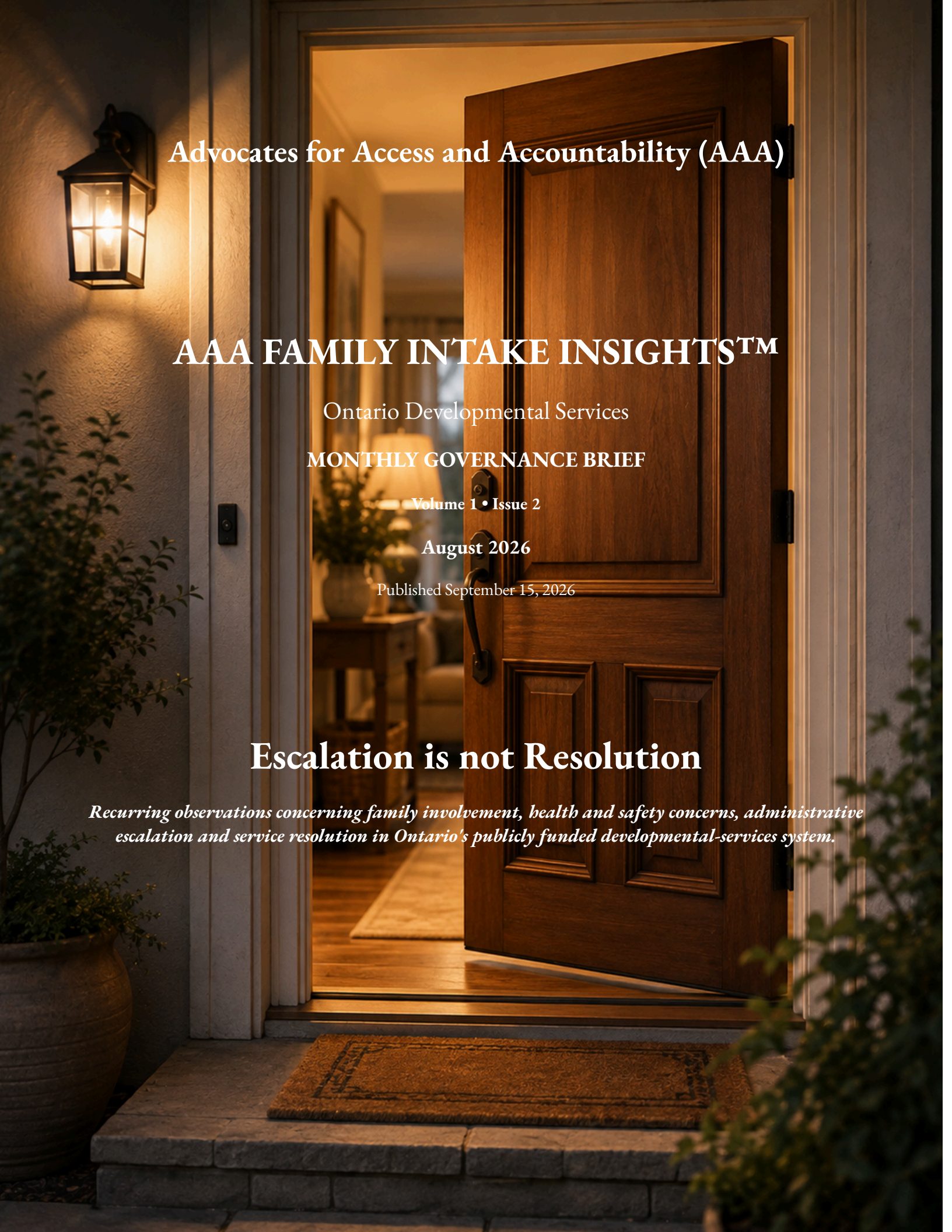




Advocates for Access and Accountability (AAA)

AAA FAMILY INTAKE INSIGHTS™

Ontario Developmental Services

MONTHLY GOVERNANCE BRIEF

Volume 1 • Issue 2

August 2026

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Escalation is not Resolution

Recurring observations concerning family involvement, health and safety concerns, administrative escalation and service resolution in Ontario's publicly funded developmental-services system.

Dedication

To Harlan, and to the voices that have too often gone unheard.

To every family who has reached out in desperation, believing no one was listening—

You are not alone.

May these monthly observations ensure that your experiences are documented, your voices are respected, and your stories contribute to a stronger system of accountability.

Together, these reports will become the foundation of the inaugural AAA State of Family Accountability™ to be published on March 1, 2027.

Executive Summary

During August 2026, Advocates for Access & Accountability (AAA) continued to receive and document concerns from parents, guardians and families navigating Ontario's publicly funded developmental-services system. The circumstances differed. The recurring governance question did not.

Families described concerns involving restricted access to loved ones, exclusion from care and health-related decision-making, personal-care practices, access to health information, residential arrangements, financial obligations, service continuity and the ability to obtain meaningful administrative resolution.

Several families described escalating concerns beyond frontline staff to management, organizational leadership, government or external oversight mechanisms. Yet escalation did not necessarily result in an identifiable person or body assuming responsibility for bringing the underlying concern through to resolution.

This distinction matters.

A complaint can be received without being resolved.

A concern can be referred without being determined.

A family can be heard without the underlying problem being fixed.

Where the concern involves the health, safety, dignity or care of a vulnerable person, administrative movement should not be confused with an outcome.

Intake Snapshot

About the Evidence

The significance of recurring observations is not determined solely by the number of submissions received. AAA Family Intake Insights™ identifies governance questions arising from independently reported and documented experiences; it does not use those observations to estimate prevalence across Ontario's developmental-services system.

Observations reflect confidential family intakes, consultations, advocacy support and governance correspondence. Individual experiences may contribute to more than one recurring observation.

August Intake Snapshot

Recurring Observation	August Evidence
Family Access & Involvement	Documented
Health, Care & Decision-Making	Documented
Safety & Personal Care	Documented

Fear of Consequences	Documented
Administrative & Service Resolution	Documented
Residential & Service Continuity	Documented
Financial Transparency	Documented

Emerging Observation

Families can escalate concerns about health, care and safety without an identifiable decision-maker assuming responsibility for achieving resolution.

The August observations suggest that the existence of complaint, referral and oversight processes does not, by itself, demonstrate effective accountability. The governance question is therefore not simply whether families have somewhere to complain. It is whether the system has a reliable mechanism for ensuring that serious concerns ultimately reach **determination, action and resolution.**

Governance Observations

AAA Family Intake Insights™ documents recurring family observations to identify emerging governance patterns within Ontario's publicly funded developmental-services system. These observations are not findings of fact about individual cases or service providers. They are presented to keep recurring governance questions visible and contribute to informed discussion, accountability and continuous improvement.

1. Escalation Is Not Resolution

Families described moving concerns through frontline staff, management, organizational leadership, government and external complaint or oversight mechanisms. The August evidence raises an important distinction between **processing a concern** and **resolving the problem that produced it.**

Governance Question

When concerns involving health, care or safety remain unresolved after repeated escalation, who is responsible for assuming ownership of the matter through to resolution?

2. Family Involvement Can Be a Natural Safeguard

AAA received reports involving restricted visits, advance-notice requirements, exclusion from residences, reduced communication and exclusion from care or health-related decisions. For vulnerable individuals who may have limited ability to communicate concerns independently, family relationships may provide more than companionship. They can contribute to continuity, observation, advocacy and protection.

Governance Question

How should publicly funded services distinguish reasonable operational boundaries from restrictions that diminish meaningful family involvement and natural oversight?

3. Fear Can Silence Accountability

Some families reported concern that raising issues publicly—or continuing to challenge provider decisions—could affect access, services or relationships. A complaint framework cannot be evaluated only by whether a complaint mechanism exists. It must also consider whether people believe they can use it **without adverse consequences**.

Governance Question

How can Ontario ensure families and guardians can raise good-faith health, safety and care concerns without fearing loss of access, deterioration of relationships or consequences for the person receiving services?

From Complaint to Resolution

4. Oversight Should Reduce Harm — Not Compound It

Families described circumstances in which disputes concerning services expanded into additional administrative, regulatory or legal processes. Regardless of the merits of any individual proceeding, navigating multiple institutions can impose significant emotional, mental, practical and financial burdens upon families already attempting to address concerns involving a vulnerable person's care.

AAA does not suggest that ministries, regulatory bodies, tribunals or other oversight institutions should not become involved where their mandates require it. The governance issue is different.

A regulatory or oversight process should clarify responsibility and protect vulnerable people. It should not inadvertently become another layer through which an unresolved service concern simply continues.

Governance Question

When a family or guardian raising health, safety or care concerns becomes involved in multiple regulatory, administrative or legal processes, who ensures that the original service concern remains visible and is ultimately resolved?

5. Service Status Must Mean Something in Practice

August raised questions concerning the relationship between residential arrangements, administrative service status and actual service delivery. AAA documented circumstances in which questions concerning a publicly funded residential service remained unresolved while significant changes involving the physical residence were being contemplated.

The broader governance issue extends beyond any particular individual or residence.

Governance Question

When a residence used to deliver publicly funded developmental services changes or is proposed for sale, who ensures timely communication, transition planning, continuity of developmental services and clarity concerning the individual's residential and service status?

6. Compliance and Resolution Are Different Measures

Regulatory compliance and individual service resolution are not necessarily the same measure. A service organization may participate in regulatory and compliance processes while an individual or family continues to report unresolved concerns about health, safety, care, access or quality of life.

The existence of policies, inspections, complaint processes and administrative requirements is important. But their public value ultimately depends upon how those systems affect the people they are intended to protect.

Governance Question

How should oversight frameworks connect regulatory compliance with actual service outcomes, unresolved individual concerns and quality of life?

AAA Governance Analysis

The August observations point to an important distinction between **access to an escalation process and access to resolution**.

Complaint mechanisms, referrals, regulatory processes and administrative correspondence may each serve legitimate purposes. However, where concerns involving health, care or safety move repeatedly between organizations without an identifiable decision-maker assuming responsibility for the underlying issue, the existence of those processes alone does not demonstrate effective accountability.

AAA's emerging analysis is that an effective accountability framework requires four elements: **identifiable responsibility, a defined resolution pathway, timely action and verification of the outcome**.

Family involvement should also be considered within this framework. For individuals who may have limited ability to communicate concerns independently, meaningful involvement by families, guardians and other natural supports can contribute to continuity, observation, advocacy and oversight.

The August observations further suggest that accountability mechanisms should be assessed not only by whether families are able to raise concerns, but also by whether concerns can be raised without fear of consequences to access, relationships or services.

These observations identify potential **governance gaps with implications for program refinement, oversight and service delivery**. They do not determine findings in individual circumstances. Rather, they identify areas in which clearer responsibility, stronger resolution pathways and outcome-focused accountability may warrant further consideration.

Escalation is a process. Resolution is an outcome. Accountability requires both.

Governance Considerations

The recurring observations documented during August raise broader questions for Ontario's publicly funded developmental-services system. These considerations are not intended to assign responsibility or determine findings of fact. Rather, they are presented to encourage thoughtful discussion, strengthen administrative and care service resolution, and support continuous improvement through informed public policy.

1. **Who owns resolution?**

When concerns move between provider management, government, regulators and other bodies, who remains responsible for ensuring the original health, care or safety concern is actually resolved?

2. **Can families raise concerns safely?**

What safeguards ensure families and guardians can raise concerns without fearing reduced access, service consequences or deterioration of relationships?

3. **Who protects the original issue when processes multiply?**

When regulatory, legal or administrative processes develop around a dispute, how is the underlying health, safety or care concern kept at the centre?

4. **How is accountability measured?**

Should success be measured by complaints processed, referrals completed and compliance requirements satisfied—or by whether identified problems affecting vulnerable people are actually resolved?

Closing Observation

Publicly funded systems should not require extraordinary persistence from families simply to obtain ordinary accountability.

Escalation is a process. Resolution is an outcome. Accountability requires both.

For vulnerable people whose health, safety, dignity and quality of life depend upon publicly funded services, accountability requires more than receiving, referring or processing a concern. It requires identifiable responsibility for determining what must happen, acting upon that determination and verifying the outcome.

Accountability requires ownership of resolution.

Escalation is not resolution.

About AAA Family Intake Insights™

Families experience publicly funded systems one interaction at a time. AAA documents those experiences one observation at a time.

Over time, those observations become patterns. Patterns become evidence. Evidence informs accountability. Accountability strengthens public policy.

AAA Family Intake Insights™ is a monthly governance brief. The publication documents anonymous recurring observations reported by families, guardians, caregivers, and community members navigating Ontario's publicly funded developmental services system.

Its purpose is not to investigate individual cases or determine findings of fact. Rather, it seeks to identify emerging governance patterns, encourage informed discussion, and contribute to transparency, accountability, quality of care, quality of life, and continuous improvement.

Grounded in AAA's practice model of See • Document • Act, each Monthly Governance Brief contributes to a growing body of evidence that will inform the inaugural AAA State of Family Accountability™ – Ontario Developmental Services Annual Report, to be published on March 1, 2027, and future public policy work.

Share Your Experience

Families, guardians, caregivers, and community members are invited to confidentially share their experiences through the AAA Intake Form.



Advocates for Access & Accountability (AAA)

See • Document • Act

Observe consistently. Publish concisely. Build cumulatively.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Lori Ann Comeau", with a stylized, flowing script.

Lori Ann Comeau
Founder & Executive Director
Advocates for Access & Accountability (AAA)