



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

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Preschool Speech and Language Services: OAFCCD Issues and Concerns (October 2004)

- The Preschool Speech and Language And Infant Hearing Program are excellent programs and in the last 7 years have increased the number of children provided service to over 60,000 annually. The average age of referral has also been reduced significantly.
- The Preschool Speech and Language program has increased public awareness about the need for early intervention and the development of a transition protocol has eased the transition to school for many children.
- Funding for the Preschool Speech and Language Program is inadequate and there has been no new funding since 2000. Many programs are under stress with long waiting lists and threatened cuts to service.
- Speech and language services for school age children are complex. Responsibility for services divided between Ministries and community agencies as per Policy/Program Memorandum 81 and the Inter-Ministerial Guidelines for Speech and Language Services.
- Speech and Language services are provided by 32 Preschool Speech and Language Systems, 72 school boards and 42 CCACs. Service for children and youth in "Care and Treatment" is the responsibility Children's Aid, Children's Mental Health and Young Offender agencies and programs.
- Services for school age children are divided between school boards and Community Care Access Centres (CCAC) depending on the student's diagnosis (language disorders are the responsibility of school boards and articulation, fluency and voice disorders are the responsibility of CCACs). Eligibility criteria and service delivery model vary between school boards and CCACs.
- Transition from the Preschool Speech and Language Service to school is difficult for many parents due to the complexity of the system, lack of understanding about school services and a lack of understanding about the value of sharing information.
- A significant percentage of children with speech and language disorders will not be detected until they start school, and students with language disorders might not be detected until Grade 2 or later.
- Speech and language disorders are often the first indicator of other problems, including autism, developmental disabilities, and learning disabilities.

