



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

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Speech and Language Services: Transition and Co-ordination Issues

OAFCCD is very pleased with the announcement of additional funding for the Preschool Speech and Language and Infant Hearing Program. These new funds will help to reduce waiting lists and increase the number of children who are able to get speech and language services before they start school.

Early identification and intervention services are critical, although many children will continue to need services when they start school. In addition, a significant number of children will not be identified until after they start school. Consequently, it is essential that speech and language services are available in school for children and that there is adequate transition planning for students starting school.

Speech and language disorders are often the first indicator of other problems, including autism, developmental disabilities, and learning disabilities. It is critical that services are in place for the early identification of speech and language problems and that the services are connected to other services and programs for children with long term challenges, such as autism and developmental disabilities.

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 (PPM81) and the Inter-Ministerial Guidelines for Speech and Language Services. The system is difficult for families to understand and navigate.

OAFCCD Concerns and Recommendations

Transition Planning:

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.

OAFCCD Recommendation:

- Ministry of Children and Youth to investigate improvements to the transition planning process for speech and language services. Ensure that transition planning includes a parent education component.
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services to work in collaboration with Ministry of Education to ensure that schools have adequate services to meet the needs of children who are transitioning from Preschool Speech and

Language Services, and to identify students who have not been identified with speech and language problems before they start school.

OAFCCD would like to assist families with the transition and has developed parent resources and a workshop series for parents, *Parents as Partners*. The interactive workshop series, which is currently only available in Oxford County and York Region, provides parents with information about transition planning, and the school special education system. Using the Parent Binder and workshop activities parents become more knowledgeable about school services and their role in helping school staff to plan effectively to meet the child=s needs. *Parents as Partners* focuses on the importance of developing positive relationships and sharing information.

OAFCCD Recommendation:

- Ministry of Children and Youth Services consider the OAFCCD *Parents as Partners* program as a model for improved transition planning.

Co-ordination of Speech and Language Services:

Speech and language services for school age children are complex. The system is difficult for families to understand and there are gaps and duplications created by the current division of responsibilities between Ministries and community agencies as per Policy/Program Memorandum 81 (PPM81) and the Inter-Ministerial Guidelines for Speech and Language Services.

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.

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 ACare and Treatment@ is the responsibility Children=s Aid, Children=s Mental Health and Young Offender agencies and programs.

OAFCCD Recommendation:

- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to review Policy/Program Memorandum 81 and consider the development of a new policy for speech and languages services.
- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care to improve co-ordination of speech and language services between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

