



# Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders

## O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER

### June 2022

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## May is Speech and Hearing Month

Communication Disorders are invisible disabilities and as a result, require advocacy specific to raising awareness. The OAFCCD engages in this work twelve months of the year, but the month of May is of particular significance. This month, advocacy campaigns across Canada and internationally, raised awareness of the difficulties faced by individuals who struggle to communicate, and the professionals who are trained to help them. These initiatives are important to our organization as they provide another opportunity for parents and professionals to be aware of OAFCCD and consider membership. May's month of speech and hearing advocacy raises public awareness, and then for those who become aware and experience the impact of a communication disorder, the next eleven months focus on advocacy for speech and language services. And this is where OAFCCD can help.

**The Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders is the only community of parents who advocate for speech and language services for children with communication disorders.**

## OAFCCD Plans Forward as Crisis is Averted

In April, the OAFCCD sent the following open letter to its membership, the public and speech-language pathologists delivering preschool and school age services:

## Without more parent involvement, OAFCCD will fold at the end of 2022.

OAFCCD needs 3 or 4 parents to join the OAFCCD Board of Directors to keep this important organization alive. We need your voice to help in advocating for improvements to the speech and language system in Ontario. We welcome parents who have struggled with obtaining services for their child and those who have had a successful experience and positive outcome for their child. Parents on this board must have a child who has or has had speech and language difficulties.

This position requires that you are comfortable joining a committee, have personal experience with speech and language services and feel passion for improving children's services. Knowledge of the school system and special education or the preschool speech and language services and a commitment for 1-2 years is preferred.

## Message sent by President Lisa Archibald and Provincial Coordinator Alison Morse

*The OAFCCD was founded in 1994 when children's speech and language services were being reduced or eliminated in hospitals and schools. OAFCCD Advocacy was influential in the development of the Preschool Speech and Language System and increased the number of SLPs employed by school boards. Since 1994, it has reviewed provincial policies that govern provision of speech and language services. Its Board of Directors includes parents and SLPs advocating together for service improvements. The OAFCCD website includes articles about how parents can help their child and be involved in speech and language therapy programs, as well as resources to help families navigate the school and special education system. The government is currently revising legislation that*

will impact speech and language services for children in Ontario. The work of OAFCCD is still needed.

## Parents Heed the Call for Action

Several parents responded to the crisis message sent by OAFCCD and this will result in additional SEAC representatives as well as new Board members! We are excited to have the addition of new voices "***Speaking Out on Behalf of Children***".

On May 26, new parent members met with the OAFCCD Board of Directors to learn more about the organization and share their stories. The diversity among children with communication disorders was evident as parents spoke of their children with Developmental Apraxia of Speech, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, and learning disabilities. Despite differences in diagnoses, parents described similar experiences accessing publicly funded speech and language services. The following key issues were identified:

- Speech and language services at preschool and school level are inadequate
- Families are frustrated, don't know how to find services or navigate the services system
- The system is confusing and it is not clear what services are available or how each child qualifies for services
- Parents are not sure how to advocate for their child's needs
- French language speech and language services are inadequate or unavailable
- System does not provide enough support to students with complex needs
- Many families are paying privately for Speech-Language Pathology services

The list is very similar to the issues identified when OAFCCD was started 30 years ago, which means that the organization continues to be relevant. Many of the parents expressed an interest in helping to advocate and this has given us confidence that OAFCCD has a future.

## OAFCCD Annual General Meeting

**June 21, 2022**

7:00 to 7:30 pm

**The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on Tuesday June 21, 2022 by Zoom.**

**Guests are welcome but only members may vote. At the meeting there will be an update on activities over the last year and formal votes on the Financial Statements and Board membership. If you would like to attend, please contact Alison Morse at [Alison@oafccd.com](mailto:Alison@oafccd.com)**

## E-Transfers for Membership Fees and Donations

OAFCCD can now accept E-transfers sent to [alison.morse@outlook.com](mailto:alison.morse@outlook.com). OAFCCD receives 100% of the funds. Tax receipts can be issued within 30 days. [Membership form](#)

## Communication is...Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing

But, for students with Communication Disorders, it's not so simple. Instructional strategies, targeted interventions and technology are required to help the student convey and receive messages effectively.

For these students, success requires...

**Listening:** remote microphones, cochlear implants,

hearing aids, visual supports, chunked information, repetition, pre-teaching,

**Speaking:** augmentative communication devices, voice amplification devices, speech therapy, language intervention, clarification strategies, American Sign Language

**Reading:** phonological awareness, phonics instruction, comprehension strategies, text to speech technology

**Writing:** graphic organizers, spelling, speech to text technology, sentence combining, verbal rehearsal

### **And of course...Speech-Language Pathologists!**

Ontario preschool speech and language services address listening, speaking, and pre-literacy skills through prevention and intervention. These services are delivered in-centre or in the community. Over the last several years, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has mandated access to speech and language services for children at younger ages. This has resulted in children's treatment centres discontinuing speech and language services for children entering junior kindergarten. Despite recent funding enhancements to preschool services, there continue to be waitlists for accessing S-LP assessment and intervention.

In the school years, speech-language pathology services are provided through school-board employed speech language pathologists and speech-language pathologists employed by Childrens Treatment Centres. The division of labour between Board-employed S-LPs and Childrens Treatment Centre S-LPs is based on the arbitrary division of speech and language originating from the 1984 Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services [Policy/Program Memorandum 81](#).

Children's Treatment Centre S-LPs provide speech therapy services from a medical model. This means that services are referral-based and the goal of service is to remediate the student's speech

impairment. Services delivered within a medical model may be coordinated with the school setting. Board-employed S-LPs work within the educational model of service delivery. They provide tiered services that are integrated within the educational setting. S-LP services provided for speaking, listening, reading and writing address prevention and remediation within a collaborative team approach aligned with the Ministry of Education's [Learning for All](#) document.

Despite recent funding enhancements for speech therapy given to children's treatment centres, there continue to be wait times between 2-6 years across the province. Within education, there is also inequity with regard to accessing speech-language pathology services. The Ministry of Education's lack of dedicated and protected funding for speech language pathology services has resulted in disparity across school boards in their employment of speech-language pathologists. The OAFCCD (OAFCCD, 1996) has proposed a ratio of S-LP to school-age children be 1:1500, where school-board employed S-LPs provide speech and language services.

## **Stump the Summer Slump!**

The summer provides children with a break from school routines and the demands of structured group learning. Breaks are good. They can provide children with an opportunity to consolidate newly acquired skills. Unfortunately, for many children with communication disorders, the break from school is accompanied with a regression in hard earned speech, language, literacy and/or social communication skills. When skills are newly acquired, they need to be practiced. With practice, they become automatic. So, how can parents help stump that summer slump? First, it is important to know your child's goals. When you know what your child is working on, you can be creative about providing natural opportunities to rehearse a skill. OAFCCD reached out to the Association of Chief Speech-Language Pathologists in Ontario District School Boards (ACSLP) to see what tips they have for parents to support their children over the summer months. Thank you to the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, the Toronto District School Board and Waterloo Region District School Board and Greater Essex County District School Board for sharing your summer suggestions!