

**Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Table**

*Stakeholder Engagement Plan*

**February 20, 2015**

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**Background**

***What is Ontario's Special Needs Strategy?***

The goal of Ontario's Special Needs Strategy is to connect children and youth to the services they need as early as possible and improve the service experience of families in three key areas:

1. Identifying children earlier and getting them the right help sooner
2. Coordinating service planning for children and youth with multiple or complex special needs
3. Making service delivery seamless for occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech and language therapy.

Four ministries are working with communities to improve outcomes for children with special needs: Children and Youth Services; Community and Social Services; Education; and Health and Long-Term Care.

***Establishment of the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table***

Waterloo Region is one of 34 planning areas in Ontario. Across our region, organizations that have a passionate interest in improving the service experience for children and youth with special needs and their families (see Appendix A), have come together to prepare two proposals for the Ontario Special Needs Strategy:

- *Coordinated Service Planning* – Children with multiple and/or complex special needs, who require service from more than one agency or sector may be referred to a Service Planning Coordinator to support the creation of a single plan of care;
- *Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services* – Children will receive seamless speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services from birth to school exit.

For further information, the provincial government webpage is:

<http://specialneedsstrategy.children.gov.on.ca>

The Waterloo SNS Planning Table's webpage is:

[www.waterlooregionspecialneedsstrategy.weebly.com](http://www.waterlooregionspecialneedsstrategy.weebly.com)

**Goals of Stakeholder Engagement**

The purpose of stakeholder engagement is to inform the decisions of the Waterloo Regional Special Needs Strategy Planning Table in the development of its proposals to the provincial government.

We wish to ensure that the proposals:

- reflect the voices, needs and goals of families and youth; and
- reflect the implementation suggestions made by families, youth and service providers.

Our process will ensure that we place the needs of children, youth and their families at the centre of all our work, including our proposals to government.

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**Guiding Principles**

Stakeholder engagement will be:

*Participatory* – Engagement will be interactive. Youth and family members should feel comfortable sharing their views and not feel that they are being judged or that they are in danger of losing services.

*Accessible* – Engagement activities will be accessible so that children and youth with various physical, intellectual and sensory needs can participate in a meaningful way.

*Inclusive* - Participants should feel that they and their views are respected and that they are being listened to.

*Accountable* – Participants will be provided with opportunities to provide input and feedback regarding the engagement process.

*Focused* – The focus will be on how to make service coordination and integration of rehabilitation services work best for children and youth with special needs and their families. This will mean identifying changes needed to current local services.

*Ongoing* – While the initial focus of engagement will be the creation of models for both service coordination and integration of rehabilitation services, engagement will continue after the local Table submits its proposals to the provincial government, so that there is continual evaluation of the models' implementation.

**Topics for Stakeholder Engagement**

- *Information* – Stakeholders will be given information about: the provincial government's Special Needs Strategy, including its vision and goals; issues identified by Waterloo region stakeholders; and how the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table is responding to these issues
- *Input* – Stakeholders will be asked for input on what is and is not currently working well in serving children and youth with complex needs, with a focus on developing an ideal model for the future
- *Feedback* – Stakeholders will be given opportunities to provide feedback on preliminary service models
- *Additional input and feedback* – Additional engagement will be conducted for particular aspects of the models as required, prior to the proposals being finalized and submitted to the provincial government
- *Once proposals are approved* – Stakeholders can expect to be contacted for feedback on implementation, once the proposals are approved and are put into operation

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- *Ongoing feedback on implementation* – Stakeholders will be asked to evaluate how the new models are being experienced by stakeholders, areas of strength, and areas for improvement

#### **List of Stakeholders**

There are two major groups of stakeholders: the users of the services; and the providers of the services. There are also parties whose work will be impacted by the proposals including policy planners and ancillary service providers.

##### **a) Service Users**

Key user groups are youth (including young adults) and families. To welcome the views of groups who may desire or require specific forums for engagement, we will reach out to the Francophone, Aboriginal and Mennonite communities, and any others identified as our work continues.

##### **b) Service Providers**

Staff from the following service organizations will be most directly affected by any changes contained in the proposals for service coordination and integration of rehabilitation services:

- Members of the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Table (see Appendix A)

Interested service partners include:

- Primary care providers
- Other direct services

#### **Methods of Engagement**

There will be some forms of engagement that will be common to all stakeholders, and other forms that are unique to particular groups.

We want as many families as possible involved in our engagement. Family engagement will be promoted through the Waterloo Region Family Network and through the website. All members of the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Table will also encourage participation by their service users and staff.

Our plans include:

- An online **survey** available to everyone (containing both common questions, and questions specific to service users vs. service providers and other stakeholders); this format is helpful for those unable to take part in other engagement activities or those who wish to remain anonymous; the survey will be administered by an independent consulting firm (Lough Barnes Consulting Group, Toronto). *Note: For those who wish to complete the survey manually, hard copy survey forms and self-addressed envelopes will be available in service locations.*

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- **Focus groups** will be held with family groups and direct service staff (separately and in combination); groups will be held in a central location within Waterloo Region, including evening meetings to accommodate families
- Reviews of **written submissions**, for those organizations that want to provide a more detailed presentation of their views than would be afforded through the online survey or focus group discussions
- **Social media** may be used for youth consultation (e.g. webinar or chat line)

Information from all of the above sources will be synthesized and reported back to the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table for the various stages in the development of the two proposals to the provincial government.

#### **Schedule of Engagement Events**

- January/February – initial conversations with parents and staff
- Early to mid-March –feedback on initial model of coordinated service planning and identification of outstanding issues
- Late March - Early April - feedback on revised coordinated service planning model and feedback on initial model of integrated rehab services and identification of outstanding issues
- Mid to Late April - feedback on revised integrated rehab services model
- June - September – as needed, additional engagement for integrated rehabilitation proposal
- Ongoing – post-approval of proposals, input/ feedback on implementation; dates to be announced

#### **Logistics**

The Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table will ensure the widest possible participation in engagement activities, through promotional and information materials (for websites, meeting hand-outs, etc.), accessible venues; translation as required, and transportation and child care reimbursement as required.

#### **Accountability/feedback on the engagement process**

In keeping with its commitment to accountability, the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Table will seek feedback from stakeholders about their experience with the engagement process.

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Feedback will be obtained through:

- Brief evaluation forms that will be distributed and collected at focus group meetings
- “Poster boards” at focus group meetings where participants can write or draw their views on the process.

### **Ongoing Communication**

The focus of stakeholder engagement in the first half of 2015 will be information to support the proposals to government for coordinated service planning and integrated rehabilitation services. While our individual organizations have engaged our clients in the past, we will now collectively and proactively engage with stakeholder groups on an ongoing basis. This will be partly to obtain feedback about the implementation of our proposals (once they have been approved by the provincial government), and partly to stay up to date with issues that are of major importance to stakeholders.

The timing and format for this engagement will be the subject of future meetings with stakeholders, so that we ensure our processes are as effective as possible.

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**Appendix A**

**Members of the Waterloo Region Special Needs Planning Table**

- Carizon/Lutherwood
- Children's Planning Table
- Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud
- Conseil scolaire Viamonde
- ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development
- Family and Children's Services
- Kerry's Place
- KidsAbility Centre for Child Development
- KidsAbility School Authority
- KW Habilitation
- Region of Waterloo
- Sunbeam Residential Development Centre
- Waterloo Region Catholic District School Board
- Waterloo Region District School Board
- Waterloo Wellington Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)
- Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)