

Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table

Update – Issue #11



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Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy Planning Table - A Story of Working Differently for Families

It's not every day that you get the opportunity to do transformational work in the child and youth system. Or rather, get the push. As organizations all working hard to help children, youth and families access special needs supports we like to think of ourselves as doing good work – of being helpful, of making a difference for the better. However, when stories from families across the province challenge this perspective, it's time to challenge ourselves to do better, and to have some tough conversations that lead to change. That's where we started 3 years ago when the province rolled out the Special Needs Strategy work. We sat across the table from each other (many of us having never met in person before – only knowing each other via organization name) and started unraveling the complex system of special needs supports.

With the voices and images of local families alongside from the start (and literally in front of us at each meeting on the back of our name cards), we started questioning the practices that had been in place for years. Why do

families end up making multiple calls before finding the right organization for help? How can services more easily be accessed and provided in the school system? Just because we've always done something one way....does that mean we have to continue it? The experience of the Special Needs Strategy Planning Table has been a fortunate opportunity to pull back from the status quo and look at doing things differently – with the child/youth/ family right at the centre.

We know we need a system that works for families (not just service providers). We know that special needs services need to clearly fit in and among universal services for children and youth. And, we know that there is more to do. This work will continue to evolve and it may never be fully done. However, we also know that we are done with siloing our organizations, and accepting the status quo as good enough. We are excited to embark on a journey of greater coordination and collaboration.

Special Needs Strategy

Vision:

A Waterloo Region where children and youth with special needs get the timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, at school, in the community, and as they prepare to achieve their goals for adulthood.



Looking for More Information?

For the most up-to-date information, you can also visit our dedicated webpage at <http://waterlooregionspecialneedsstrategy.weebly.com/> or the Provincial webpage at <http://specialneedsstrategy.children.gov.on.ca>

Special Needs Strategy – the Background

In 2014, the Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Education and Health and Long Term Care launched the Ontario Special Needs Strategy (SNS) with the vision of an Ontario where children and youth with special needs get the timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, at school, in the community, and as they prepare to achieve their goals for adulthood.

The SNS is in alignment with other government transformations such as Moving on Mental Health, the Ontario Autism Program and Patients First. The three component of the Special Needs Strategy are:

- (1) Standard Developmental Screen to identify risks and introduce early supports. The tool is being developed by a provincial working group and is scheduled to be piloted in the coming months.
- (2) Coordinated Service Planning (CSP) for children and youth with multiple and/or complex needs. In Waterloo Region Developmental Services Resource Centre (DSRC) is responsible for the implementation and delivery of coordinated service planning.
- (3) The Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services concerning the delivery of occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech language therapy from birth to school exit.

Integrated Rehabilitation Update

The Waterloo Region Integrated Rehabilitation (IR) Steering Committee (see Planning Table membership on next page) has been working to develop a new model of service delivery that is family-centred, has no wrong door, takes a life course approach, supports seamless services, is evidence informed and builds capacity.

The Ministry outlined very specific expectations for the model:

- Children and youth with special needs are at the centre of all decisions;
- Families, youth and professionals work together to determine service needs;
- Services are delivery using a holistic view of needs and strengths at home, in school and in the community;
- Services are seamless from birth to school exit;
- Services will be delivered using a broad range of intervention types;
- Speech and language services are unified;
- Parents and youth have transparent access and can self refer;
- Children can access services regardless of age, severity of need and/or diagnosis;
- A single wait list for each rehabilitation service is maintained;
- The services will be inclusive of First Nations, Metis, Inuit, Francophone and other culturally diverse children, youth and families;
- Some funding such as in home rehabilitation and service in home and private schools was considered out of scope.

In Waterloo Region the Steering Committee has refined its model and was poised to engage in community consultation on the model.



Effective April 1, 2018, existing contracts for the delivery of occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy provided in the schools will be transitioned from the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), formerly known as CCAC, to children’s treatment centres. In Waterloo Region, this means that effective April 1, 2018, KidsAbility will now oversee the delivery of these services currently contracted with Saint Elizabeth. During this time there will be no changes to service providers for children receiving services in publicly-funded schools. Any future changes are expected to take effect outside the school year so that children will not experience gaps in service during the school year. Families currently waiting for services will maintain their place on the waitlist.

This is considered the first phase in the move to a seamless, integrated service system.

Phase Two of implementation will follow as a result of the direction of the province.

This phased approach to moving forward in collaboration between service providers in the community and schools is to implement changes to better support children’s development and make it easier for families to access services.

The ministries appreciate the collaborative work completed over the past two years in communities across the province as sector partners engaged in proposal development and remain committed to implementing IR and getting it right for children and youth with special needs and their families.

As a Steering Committee, we remain committed to working with the ministries, community partners, children, youth and families to ensure a smooth and seamless transition.

In our last communique update in June, the Waterloo Region SNS Steering Committee had outlined that this fall it was our expectation and intent that we would begin consultations with staff groups, current service providers, labour unions, families and other stakeholders to complete the implementation plans for submission to the Ministries. At this time, these plans have been put on hold to give the province the necessary time to provide further direction and policy development as requested by the Steering Committees. A Provincial Advisory Group will be established to provide guidance and evidence-based direction to assist in preparing for phase two of implementation. Although we do not have a sense yet on what our new timelines will be, we will continue to keep you informed. We are confident that we are on the right path and will continue to work together towards implementation of a new integrated and family-centred service system in Ontario.

- ### Planning Table Members
- Carizon/Lutherwood
 - Children's Planning Table
 - Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
 - Conseil scolaire Viamonde
 - Erinoakkids
 - Family and Children's Services
 - First Nation, Metis and Inuit of Waterloo Region
 - Kerry's Place
 - KidsAbility Centre for Child Development
 - KidsAbility School Authority
 - KW Habilitation
 - Region of Waterloo
 - Sunbeam
 - Waterloo Catholic District School Board
 - Waterloo Region District School Board
 - Waterloo Region Family Network
 - Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)

For more information on the Waterloo Region Special Needs Strategy please contact one of our Chairs or visit <http://waterlooregionspecialneedsstrategy.weebly.com/>. This document is available in alternative formats upon request and questions in French can be answered via our Chairs.

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