

## **Family FAQs**

### **Ontario Autism Program**

#### **February 6, 2019**

#### **1. When will my child be able to access the Ontario Autism Program?**

Families will begin applying for Childhood Budgets on April 1, 2019.

How families transition to the program will be different depending on whether they are:

- currently receiving behavioural services
- developing a plan to receive behavioural services
- entering behavioural service before March 31, 2019
- currently on the current waitlist

#### **2. My child is receiving behavioural services. Will we continue to receive service?**

All children who currently have a behaviour plan will continue to receive the services outlined in that plan their behaviour plan until its end date.

#### **3. If my child's behaviour plan ends before March 31, 2019, will we be able to renew it?**

If your child's behaviour plan ends before March 31, 2019, you will be able to renew it for a maximum of three months. The service hours your child receives per week in their renewed behaviour plan must be equal to or less than the service hours they received per week in their previous plan.

All renewed plans must be signed and submitted to a Single Point of Access by March 31, 2019.

If you have questions about the intensity and duration of your child's behaviour plan, you are encouraged to speak to your clinical supervisor.

If you have a concern about your child's behaviour plan, you should speak with your service provider to discuss these concerns. As you get close to the end of your child's renewed behaviour plan, you will receive information and will be supported to apply for a Childhood Budget.

#### **4. What happens if my child's behaviour plan ends after March 31, 2019?**

All children who have a behaviour plan will continue to receive the services outlined in their plan until its end date.

As you get close to the end of your plan, you will receive information and will be supported to apply for a Childhood Budget.

**5. My family is working with a service provider to develop a behaviour plan. Will I still be able to receive services?**

If your family is currently working with a service provider to develop a new behaviour plan, but it has yet to be signed, your family will still be able to enter into a new behaviour plan. The plan will be for a maximum of three months and must be signed and submitted to a Single Point of Access by March 31, 2019.

As you get close to the end of your child's behaviour plan, you will receive information and will be supported to apply for a Childhood Budget.

**6. What happens if my child's spot in the program becomes available before March 31, 2019?**

If your spot becomes available before March 31, 2019, you can enter into a new behaviour plan for a maximum of three months. Your chosen service provider will work with you to develop an Ontario Autism Program Behaviour Plan. All new behaviour plans must be signed and submitted to your Single Point of Access by March 31, 2019. As you get close to the end of your child's behaviour plan, you will receive information and will be supported to apply for a Childhood Budget.

**7. What happens if my child is on the waitlist on April 1, 2019?**

Childhood Budgets will be available for children up to age 18 and will be subject to annual income testing. All eligible families who are on the waitlist on April 1, 2019 can expect to receive their Childhood Budgets within the next 18 months.

As you approach the top of the waitlist, you will receive information and will be supported to apply for a Childhood Budget.

**8. If my child is already registered for the program, do we need to register again?**

If you are already registered for the program, you do not need to register again.

**9. My child has been diagnosed with autism, how do we register for the Ontario Autism Program?**

All children and youth under the age of 18 with a written diagnosis of autism from a qualified professional can register for the Ontario Autism Program.

You can register your child for the program by contacting your local Single Point of Access.

Once you have registered with the Single Point of Access, your child will be added to the waitlist.

As you approach the top of the waitlist you will receive information and will be supported to apply for a Childhood Budget..

## Childhood Budgets

### 1. What is a Childhood Budget?

New Childhood Budgets will provide more families with access to a broader range of eligible services that they believe are most helpful for their child and family. Childhood Budgets will be available for children up to age 18 and will be subject to annual income testing. Families currently on the waitlist for services can expect to receive their budgets within the next 18 months.

The amount of the budget will depend on the length of time a child will be in the program and household income. For example, a child entering the program at age two would be eligible to receive up to \$140,000, while a child entering at age seven could receive up to \$55,000, during their time in the program.

Families with an annual household income under \$250,000 will be eligible to receive funding. Eligibility and the amount of funding a family receives will be reviewed annually.

### 2. How are Childhood Budgets determined?

All children and youth under the age of 18 with a written diagnosis of autism from a qualified professional can register in the Ontario Autism Program.

Once your spot in the program becomes available, you will be contacted by a program representative to apply for a Childhood Budget and to determine your budget amount.

Budgets will be determined by the length of time your child will be in the program and your household income.

Families with an annual household income under \$250,000 will be eligible to receive funding. Eligibility and the amount of funding a family receives will be reviewed annually.

### 3. If I have two children with autism, how will this impact the funding I receive?

If your family has two children with autism, you can apply to receive a Childhood Budget for each child. The total Childhood Budget for each child will be determined by the length of time the child is in the program and your household income.

### 4. Can I appeal my Childhood Budget amount?

The total Childhood Budget amount for each family will vary based on the length of time a child is in the program and household income.

These factors will be applied in the same way for all families, and exceptions cannot be made for individual families. As a result, Childhood Budget amounts may not be appealed.

## **5. What services and supports will we be able to purchase?**

Through Childhood Budgets, families will have control and more options to purchase the eligible services they value most from the providers of their choice on a fee-for-service basis.

This will include behavioural services including assessments and consultations, family/caregiver capacity building and training, respite services, technology aids and travel.

A complete list of eligible and non-eligible expenses will be available in April 2019.

## **Behavioural Services**

### **1. Will behavioural service still be available?**

Using their Childhood Budgets, families will be able to purchase the eligible services they value most, including behavioural assessments, consultations and services.

### **2. What are behavioural services?**

Behavioural services involve studying a person's behaviour and developing strategies to:

- increase helpful behaviours, such as getting dressed, or talking to other people;
- discourage harmful behaviours that interfere with learning, such as self-harm or aggression towards others.

Behavioural services are flexible and involve many techniques, such as positive reinforcement. These services often include teaching parents and family members' skills to support a child or youth with autism.

More information is available in the Ontario Autism Program guidelines.

### **3. Who provides behavioural services?**

Professionals who provide behavioural services are called behavioural clinicians. They often work in teams.

A clinical supervisor leads the team and develops and oversees behavioural services. This person may be called a clinical supervisor, a clinician-in-charge, a clinical director, or something similar. All behavioural services must be supervised by a behavioural clinician at the clinical supervisor level.

Front-line therapists help to deliver the behavioural services and may work directly with children. They are trained and supervised by the clinical supervisor and have varying levels of experience and responsibility.

#### **4. Are behavioural clinicians regulated like doctors and nurses?**

No. Most behavioural clinicians at the clinical supervisor level are voluntarily certified as Board Certified Behavior Analysts through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board in the United States.

To become certified, someone must earn a master's degree or PhD in psychology or behavior analysis, have work experience and pass a certification exam.

Some behavioural clinicians are regulated as a different kind of professional such as a psychologist or psychological associate, speech-language pathologist or teacher.

#### **5. What qualifications should I look for in a behavioural clinician?**

Behavioural therapy is an evolving profession and qualifications standards can vary. The program guidelines have established requirements so families are working with professionals who have the minimum training and experience needed to practice safely, ethically and competently.

Autism Ontario's SPIRALE website, has information about the various professionals who work with children and youth with autism, and what qualifications to expect.

#### **6. What is the Ontario Autism Program Provider List?**

The provider list will include verified behavioural clinicians who have all the qualifications to be a clinical supervisor of behavioural services in the OAP. It will be available for families online beginning in April 2019.

Clinical supervisors will go through a verification process so families can have confidence that their behavioural clinician has met a minimum set of standards needed to practice safely, ethically, and competently. Clinical supervisors who meet all the program qualifications requirements can choose to join the provider list when it becomes available.

Clinical supervisors who are still working towards achieving the qualification requirements will not be able to join the provider list until they meet all requirements. By April 2021, the list will be mandatory for all clinical supervisors.

## **7. Can I work with a clinical supervisor who is not on the provider list?**

Before April 1, 2021, families can work with a clinical supervisor who is not on the provider list as long they have, or are working towards, the qualifications requirements.

After April 1, 2021, it will be mandatory for all clinical supervisors providing services in the program to be on the provider list.

## **8. What resources can I use to find a behavioural clinician until the provider list is available?**

Autism Ontario's ABACUS website is a good place to start looking for a clinical supervisor. This website contains a searchable list of behavioural clinicians in Ontario, including those qualified to be a clinical supervisor in the program. As each professional self-reports their qualifications, Autism Ontario and the ministry do not monitor or verify their credentials.

You can verify the credentials of Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) or registered psychologists / psychological associates at the following websites:

- [Behavior Analyst Certification Board Registry](#)
- [College of Psychologists Registry](#)

## **9. Where can I make a complaint about a behavioural clinician?**

You can make a complaint about your clinical supervisor with their professional organization. Beginning April 1, 2021, your clinical supervisor must belong to one of the following organizations:

- [Behavior Analyst Certification Board](#)
- [College of Psychologists of Ontario](#)

You can also consider filing a complaint with the clinician's employer, or a third-party, such as:

- Consumer Protection Ontario, for billing or other business matters,
- The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, for matters related to discrimination
- Local police services, for criminal matters.

## Other Services

### 1. Can my child continue to access other services that are not part of the Ontario Autism Program?

Families of children with autism who are eligible can access other ministry programs for children with special needs, such as:

- healthy child development programs including Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Early Years Check-In, Infant Development Program, Preschool Speech and Language;
- rehabilitation services delivered by Children's Treatment Centres, including speech-language services, occupational therapy and physiotherapy; and,
- special needs resource teachers in child care settings.

Families, where eligible, can also continue to access the Special Services at Home and the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities programs.

Youth with developmental disabilities, including eligible youth with autism who are preparing for adulthood, can access integrated transition planning. Beginning at age 14, every young person with a developmental disability can have a written plan developed that:

- informs educational planning
- helps the young person transition from secondary school and from youth services to adulthood
- helps prepare family members for these transitions
- Identifies goals for work, further schooling, and community living

### 2. How will my child or youth be supported so they can succeed in school?

Autism service providers are encouraged to continue to collaborate with educators to support children to build the skills they need to be ready for school, to transition to school and participate fully in school.

The ministry will continue to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to provide transition services and supports to children and youth with autism through the Connections for Students program.

For students who have been identified as an exceptional pupil by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), the school board must develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for them. School boards may also develop IEPs for students who are receiving special education programs and/or related services but who have not been identified as exceptional by an IPRC.