



MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 20-001

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services

DATE: 3 January 2020

RE: **Update to Needs Based Ontario Autism Program**

This memo is provided as an update to trustees on changes to a new needs-based Ontario Autism Program (OAP).

On 17 December 2019, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), Todd Smith, provided an update regarding the government's plan to implement a new needs-based OAP. Mr. Smith announced that the government is adopting the Ontario Autism Panel's key recommendations for a needs based autism program including the following service pathways:

- **Core services** that include Applied Behaviour Analysis, speech language pathology, occupational therapy and mental health services;
- **Foundational family services** for all families in the program, to build their capacity to support their child's learning and development;
- **Early intervention and school readiness services** to help young children access critical services when they will benefit most, and to prepare them to enter school; and
- **Urgent and complex needs services** to support children and youth who are in service, or are waiting for service, and have significant and immediate needs.

The new program will introduce care coordinators to support families, including orientation to the program, service planning and navigation, and managing transitions.

In addition, MCCSS has created an [Implementation Working Group](#) to provide input on key elements of the needs based autism program including service caps and the transition of children into service. It is anticipated that the implementation of the new OAP will begin in April 2020 followed by additional phases throughout 2020 and 2021.

Before the end of March 2020, all families on the waitlist, who have not yet received a childhood budget will receive an invitation for interim one-time funding of either \$5,000 or \$20,000, so they can begin purchasing services for their child.

As was highlighted in Memo No. 19-131 Release of the Ontario Autism Advisory Panel Report, the [Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel \(the Panel\) Report](#) made several recommendations for both the Ministry of Education (EDU) and Ministry of Health (MOH). Staff have not received a response from EDU regarding the recommendations of the Panel. Staff have reached out to EDU to determine if/when a response or additional information can be expected.

At this time, there is no change to the District's practices regarding our programs and services to support students with autism. Learning Support Services continues to monitor MCCSS and EDU announcements and will provide updates as details become available.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Peter Symmonds at peter.symmonds@ocdsb.ca

cc Senior Staff
 Manager of Board Services
 Special Education Advisory Committee
 Corporate Records