

MCCSS DS Reform (Journey to Belonging: Choice & Inclusion) Update

Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 12:56 PM

Dear partners,

My name is Karen Glass and I am the new Assistant Deputy Minister of the Community Services Division at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). My division is responsible for provincially funded adult developmental services (DS) in Ontario.

As you may know, the government released a plan to make developmental services and supports work better for the people that use them. This plan is called [Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion](#). You can also find an easy read version of it [here](#).

We know that many people would like to hear about progress on Journey to Belonging. That is why I am sending this email and future updates to developmental services providers, umbrella organizations, families, caregivers and self-advocates, as well as people who have participated in engagements with the Ministry. Please share this email with anyone who you think would like to read it.

The ministry is taking a phased approach to developmental services reform to carefully plan, engage our partners, and support people and service providers to transition as different elements of the reform plan are introduced.

We are in the design phase of reform, and we are developing the key commitments outlined in the plan. I am writing to share some updates about that work. In this email, you will read about:

- Developing a new funding approach for adult developmental services
- Engagements with self-advocates, family members, service providers and academics about future workforce needs
- Some actions the ministry has taken to improve services and supports.

Update: Developing a new funding approach

The government is developing a new way to fund services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. We are aiming to provide funding that is based on people's assessed support needs. We also want people to have more choices about how they receive the services and supports they need.

To do that, we need to establish a fair and equitable funding model to determine a funding amount for each person. This means developing a fair way to identify what supports a person needs based on their assessment, and then determining how much money the government will pay for those supports.

Right now, the consulting firm KPMG is leading a study of developmental services and costs. The purpose of the study is to help the government understand the real costs of

services, including where and why they vary across the province. KPMG is analyzing the information they collect and will inform the government about what they learned. I would like to thank all the service providers who participated in the study for their time and effort.

We will keep sharing updates with you on the developmental services costing study and our progress developing the funding approach.

Update: Workforce strategy

Through the Developmental Services Workforce Strategy, the government is developing a plan for the workers who support people with developmental disabilities. Our goal is to help the workforce develop their skills further so they can do the best job possible helping people live the lives they choose and be part of their communities.

Last Fall, we had meetings with different people to get their thoughts and ideas on what the strategy should focus on. We talked to self-advocates, family members and caregivers, service providers and academics.

We heard about many interesting topics and ideas around the four main areas of focus of the draft strategy. The four areas are:

- **Grow and stabilize the workforce:** how we will find, grow and retain a workforce that reflects Ontario's diversity
- **Enhance skills and training:** how we will offer staff opportunities throughout their career to learn, grow and adapt
- **Modernize employment and workforce landscape:** how we will proactively support the workforce, service providers, individuals and families to adapt to more individualized supports
- **Advance professionalization:** how we will build a professional workforce over the long term that is valued for the critical service it provides to individuals and communities

We will take what we heard and continue to develop the workforce strategy.

Update: Immediate actions

The government is making improvements to developmental services now, while we work on longer-term reform. Here are some highlights since the government published Journey to Belonging in May 2021:

- **Communication:** we updated our website to provide clear information about developmental services and the application process on [Ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca). Our Passport agency partners also created a new website for the Passport program (www.passportfunding.ca)

- **Passport program:** we are implementing permanent changes to the Passport program guidelines, effective April 1, 2023. These changes include addressing the temporary list of eligible expenses that were introduced to support recipients in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes give Passport recipients more choice and flexibility about how they purchase the services and supports that meet their unique needs, participate fully in their communities and live as independently as possible. Passport recipients will receive more information directly from Passport Agencies. The ministry's website ([Ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca)) and www.passportfunding.ca will be also be updated in March with the new guidelines, as well as resources for recipients.
- **Education and awareness:** we worked with self-advocates and family members on the Community Living Ontario Council to develop a social media campaign to promote welcoming communities for people with developmental disabilities, and created a web page on how to build more welcoming and inclusive communities: [Ontario.ca/seemyabilities](https://www.ontario.ca/seemyabilities)
- **Housing initiative:** we are helping more people find housing in the community and live more independently through an [investment](#) in housing navigation at Developmental Services Ontario and in the Adult Protective Services Worker program. That investment is \$13M over three years, starting in 2021-22.
- **Supports for families and caregivers:** Recognizing the value of peer supports, we are providing grant funding through the Ontario Caregiver Organization, to family support groups to support them in, strengthening and expanding local capacity, share information and connect and support caregivers. In 2022, the Ontario Caregiver Organization awarded 29 new, emerging and existing family support networks grants of up to \$4,500, and seven Impact and Collaboration Grants of up to \$10,000.
- **Workforce:** we collaborated with sector partners, including self-advocates, family members, service providers, and bargaining agents, to introduce three new initiatives to support the workforce:
 - A [recruitment-focused marketing campaign](#) to promote developmental services as a career choice
 - Modernized [core competencies](#) for developmental services workers to reflect the skills and competencies they will need to provide more individualized, person-directed supports in future. Core competencies are the values and behaviours that workers demonstrate in how they do their work
 - A leadership training program to help leaders develop their skills and better support organizations to attract and retain skilled direct support staff and management

Thank you for taking the time to read this update; I hope you found it useful.

If you have any questions or comments on the content of this update, or if you would like to be added or removed from our distribution list, please contact dscsengagements@ontario.ca.

You can also visit the [Developmental Services page](#) on [Ontario.ca](#) for more information about developmental services and Journey to Belonging.

I look forward to sharing more information with you in the future, as we continue working with our partners on developmental services reform.

Sincerely,

Karen Glass