



May 2017

Dear Families



As a family whose child may be receiving or waiting for rehabilitation services (speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy), we are writing to provide you with an update on upcoming improvements to the delivery of children's rehabilitation services in your community.



As you may know, in 2014 the government launched the Special Needs Strategy in response to feedback received from families to improve the timeliness, effectiveness and coordination of the services that children and youth with special needs require to fully participate at home, at school, in the community and to achieve goals for adulthood.



A key initiative of the Special Needs Strategy is the integrated delivery of rehabilitation services, including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology, for children and youth from birth to school exit.



Over the past year, service providers – including community-based Preschool Speech and Language providers, District School Boards, Community Care Access Centres and Children's Treatment Centres – in communities across the province have worked to develop locally integrated, family-centred ways to deliver children's rehabilitation services to improve family service experiences and outcomes for children and youth with special needs. In doing so, service providers have engaged with families and youth in our communities to seek their input.



### What is Changing?

Once the improvements are implemented, children and youth with rehabilitation service needs and their families will have:



- A seamless service experience from birth to school exit, with no gaps in service as children transition to school or between service providers;
- Child, youth and family centred service as parents and children/youth work together with service providers and educators to set goals based on their individual needs and strengths;
- Access to a broad range of high quality interventions (classroom, parent training, educator consultation) in settings that are most appropriate to their needs, and as convenient as possible to families; and
- Continuous and consistent services throughout the calendar year regardless of who delivers them in the community.



Following the ministries' review of initial local proposals, service providers are now beginning to refine their proposals based on consultation with stakeholders. Based on feedback gathered, they will then begin to develop local plans for implementation of their new local models for the integrated delivery of rehabilitation services in each community.

### **When Will These Changes Take Place?**

These changes will be phased in so that they will not disrupt any services your child may currently be receiving in the community or school. Families currently waiting for services will maintain their place on the waitlist. There will be no reduction in service capacity as a result of this change. Implementation of new service delivery models is expected to begin as early as Fall 2018.

We will continue to work together across service providers in the community to ensure that there will be no gaps in services for your child and that any changes will be seamless for you and your family.

### **How Can I Get More Information?**

We will continue to keep you informed as the new model is developed in your community.

You can also visit the Ministry of Children & Youth Services website at [www.children.gov.on.ca](http://www.children.gov.on.ca) for more information about the special needs strategy in Ontario.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact: the organization you are working with or the District School Board your child attends.

Sincerely,



Diane Walker, Chief Executive Officer  
Children's Centre Thunder Bay  
Co-Chair, Integrated Rehabilitation  
Steering Committee



Tina Bennett, Client Services Manager  
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