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**Submission by**  
**Family Alliance Ontario**  
**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs**  
**February 2010**

## **Executive Summary — Recommendation**

*Family Alliance Ontario* requests that the 2010-2011 Ontario budget include the following priorities for Developmental Services funded through the *Ministry of Community and Social Services*:

It is recommended that funding of \$100 million, separate from funding for traditional agency services, be targeted for the option of direct funding, as offered in the Transformation of Developmental Services. This will enable full citizenship and participation in community, for people with disabilities through

- enhancement of the Special Services at Home and Passport programs to provide much needed supports, and to eliminate waiting lists;
- additional funding for individualized living supports, as well as the unbundling of traditional residential programs, to make it possible for people with disabilities to be supported in their own homes or in their family homes;
- allocations for wage increases for support staff hired directly by people with disabilities and their families.

## **Introduction**

Family Alliance Ontario is a province-wide alliance of citizens that offers knowledge, tools and networking opportunities to individuals with disabilities and their families, to assist them to realize a vision that includes having valued relationships, choice and control in their lives, and enables inclusion through meaningful contribution and participation in their communities.

Affiliated with Family Alliance Ontario are regional networks of families dedicated to the fostering of the strength, stability, confidence and knowledge that families can offer each other.

Throughout our history and as members of the Partnership Table established by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, we have consistently and strongly advocated for supports that enable people with disabilities to achieve full citizenship and participation in community. We support the Ministry's blueprint for Transformation of Developmental Services, which is founded on the principle of choice that allows people to opt to direct their own supports as an alternative to reliance on agency-operated services.

## **Individualized funding**

The funding mechanism that enables citizenship and self-determination is direct funding. It simply consists of funding allocated to meet approved individualized budgets based on plans for self-directed support. An example of a program of this type is the Special Services at Home program established 28 years ago. It has consistently maintained its primacy as the most effective and most popular program for achieving personal outcomes that enable inclusion and participation in community. In the last 15 years there have been a number of other individualized funding programs funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).

The recently introduced Passport Program (2006) also allows for direct individualized funding and has been highly favoured in addressing the needs of young people after graduation from school.

MCSS has allowed a small number of families to apply individualized funding to supporting a family member through self-directed living supports, supporting a family member to live in their own home and to choose what they do with their lives. These families are fully committed to supporting their family member — they have invested in housing and are freely contributing their time and effort to the management of supports. These pioneers have been very successful in achieving the most desirable personal outcomes for the person being supported. The blueprint for the transformation of Developmental Services recognizes these advancements and lays the foundation for more opportunities of this kind in the future.

## The challenges

It is time for a distribution of Developmental Services funding that is consistent with the direction of the transformation and the opening of doors for those who opt for self-directed supports. Self-directed individualized programs have up to now been funded at a very low level compared to agency-operated programs. This injustice needs to be addressed.

Shifting the ratio towards individualized funding would operationalize the principle of choice that is expressed in the blueprint for the transformation — that the individual decides whether to opt for agency-operated services or self-directed supports, or a combination of both.

The pressures on current individualized programs is evident in a number of ways:

- The Special Services at Home (SSAH) program is highly successful and cost-effective, but is underfunded in comparison with agency-operated services.
- In 2004, the SSAH program was 6% of the developmental services budget. In 2009, it is still 6%. Twenty years ago, the average SSAH contract per family was \$2300. In 2009, the average is \$3457. When adjusted for the consumer price index, the average contract in 2009 is 2% lower than in 1989. In these respects, SSAH has not changed much over the last 20 years. There is no evidence of any significant shift toward direct funding as promised in the blueprint for the transformation.
- Note: there are many families on waiting lists. The above averages only include those who have contracts. The real but unknown averages are significantly lower as they should include everyone who is eligible but who has been awarded zero dollars. Since April 2009, neither new applications for SSAH, nor appeals to meeting changing needs have been accepted.
- In the last two years, no new money has been injected into the SSAH program nor to the newer but smaller Passport Program that also allows direct funding. During this time the Ministry added \$105 million to the base funding of service agencies. Since 2004, the total developmental services budget has grown by \$458 million, i.e. from \$1.174 billion to \$1.632 billion, an increase of 39%. More than 90% of this is for agency services and agency administration.
- From 2007 to 2010, \$ 181 million will have been added to agency budgets for wage-gap funding and for inflation. During this time there has been no wage-gap funding available for families who hire support staff directly. The Ministry has ignored requests for a correction of this injustice.
- People supported through individualized funding, whether SSAH or other, have not been allowed to have a share of the funding allocated to agencies for wage increases and staff training in the last decade. Staff hired directly by people with disabilities and their families have been excluded from the “wage-gap funding” targeted for employees of agencies.
- Let us be very clear. We are not against funding of agencies. We respect the choices that people make and recognize that some people truly choose agency services. But we strongly oppose Ministry policies that stand in the way of choice. People who choose not to become clients of agencies have as much right to access support funding as those who do. We expect the Ministry to allow people to choose the kind of supports that best fit their personal life plans. We oppose funding policies that force people to use agency services in order to be supported. as in the case of residential programs.