

**Ministry of Children,  
Community and Social  
Services**

Minister's Office

7th Floor  
438 University Avenue

Toronto ON M5G 2K8

**Ministère des Services à l'enfance  
et des Services sociaux  
et communautaires**

Bureau du ministre

7<sup>e</sup> étage  
438, avenue University

Toronto ON M5G 2K8



March 30, 2022

Dear Families and Youth,

I am writing today to update you on the progress of the Ontario Autism Program (OAP).

I regularly speak with families, advocates and partners about the OAP, and it is clear how important it is to keep sharing information and updates with you. Our work continues to focus on helping children and youth on the autism spectrum to access the supports they need to reach their full potential.

To help children and youth registered in the OAP access and navigate services and supports more easily, I would like to let you know that the new Independent Intake Organization, to be officially called **AccessOAP**, will begin supporting families and youth next month.

AccessOAP will be the single point of access for children registered in the OAP and will support you at each step of the way. You'll be connected to knowledgeable care coordinators who will be available to answer your questions, help you understand services available to you, and help you find supports in your community.

In the coming weeks, my ministry will start sending families and youth registered in the OAP an email/letter that will require action. It will include instructions on how to:

- Create an account with AccessOAP
- Give consent for the ministry to transfer a child/youth's OAP record to AccessOAP

These instructions will be sent in phases, starting in April 2022. All families will receive their instructions in the order they registered for the OAP. Until you receive these instructions, you can continue to reach the OAP using the contacts listed on [ontario.ca/Autism](https://ontario.ca/Autism).

AccessOAP will be supporting families and youth next month, and we are on target to have 8,000 children and youth enter core clinical services by this fall.

We are currently supporting over 40,000 children who are receiving supports through our pathways of service including childhood budgets, interim one-time funding, Entry to School, and Caregiver Mediated Early Years. These children will also be transitioning to AccessOAP as they continue to receive supports.

At the same time, we are working to build, retain and develop the workforce that delivers core clinical services, including behaviour analysts, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and mental health clinicians.

To support this work, I awarded funding to 80 workforce capacity fund grants across Ontario in January. This funding is helping OAP service providers expand and innovate to serve more families. Grant applications will open again this summer so that we can continue to build capacity and make it easier for families to access services.

As part of this update, I am pleased to share that OAP urgent response services will be available to families across Ontario beginning April 1, 2022. These services will enable eligible children and youth who are experiencing a specific, urgent need to access supports to help stabilize the situation, prevent crisis, and reduce the risk of them harming themselves, or others. For more information, including eligibility criteria and steps to access these services, please visit [ontario.ca/Autism](https://ontario.ca/Autism).

Since launching in January, more than 1,440 children registered in the OAP, who will start kindergarten or Grade 1 this fall, are now participating in the Entry to School Program. This program focuses on helping children develop school-readiness skills in communication, play, social interaction, behavioural self-management and learning and attention. The program also provides children with individual transition supports as they enter school. By developing these skills and offering these supports, we can help children start school successfully.

We are continuing to make positive progress, and I would like to express my gratitude to you for all you are doing to support your children as they access services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M Fullerton".

Dr. Merrilee Fullerton  
Minister, Children, Community and Social Services