

## Funding Inequities

February 2004

### *A Key Message from the Individualized Funding WorkFest*

## Understanding Funding Inequities

Disability supports can be provided in a variety of ways. Traditionally, citizens requiring supports because of disability have had to access congregate programs and services. Often, these supports have been tied to buildings, such as group homes, which has usually meant people with disabilities are “outsiders” in their own community. Also, the regional approach of the Ministry of Community and Social Services has evolved in a very uneven manner, with wide variations among the regions in term of funding and innovation. With the advent of more individualized options, the patch-work approach to disability supports in Ontario has worsened. As a result of all these factors, there are tremendous inequities across the province in two areas: access to individualized supports and the actual amount of funding that is available for supports. Inequities have serious impacts on families; some people have access to the supports they need, most do not. Families spend a huge amount of time “waiting for service” while better use of resources would allow families to plan, connect with other families, and access individualized supports they require. Within this provincial context, the government keeps control of limited information that could be the basis of some strategic change. As we build plans to expand Individualized Funding in Ontario, the government must address the serious inequities that exist in the disability funding structures.

## A Vision for Dealing with Inequities

*Government would deal with the demand that exists for individualized supports by making Individualized Funding available for families who want it:*

- The mechanism for applying for IF would be based on principles of equity
- Independent planning would be available for people on waiting lists

*Government would document and track how they spend their money for supports*

- This information would be available for planning how to shift the service system to more fairness and individualization

*Transition funding would be available for people who want to move from agency services to individualized support and funding arrangements or from school to work*

### *Some Examples of Inequities*

- Thousands of families are on waiting lists for services that they may or may not want, but nothing else is available.
- Some individualized programs that have been shown to be highly effective have not received increased funding for years.
- Most new government funding for residential supports can only be used for group homes and other congregate living.
- Individualized supports are seldom portable; they cannot be transferred from one program to another or from one community to another.
- Some areas of the province have access to individualized planning, while most do not.
- Many families with extensive support needs have to access funds from several sources.
- Direct funding officially exists only for people with physical disabilities who can self-manage.

## *Funding Inequities*

---

*Portability* would be a guiding principle of all government programs and supports:

- Individuals would be able to take their disability support funds to another program or to another community

There would be *equity across all regional offices* of the Ministry of Community & Social Services

*Families who require extensive support for their family member would be able to access one source of individualized funding*, whether the money came from MSCC or from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

## **Barriers to Reducing Inequities**

*Efficiency is the mantra of government, not equity*

- Equity language is often seen as no longer relevant
- There is confusion that equity means equal
- There are no government principles of equity to guide decision making.

*The Government does not track relevant information*

- MCSS data on how money is spent is not useful for equity analysis
- Deficit based approaches dominate spending, and are not compared with asset based approaches, which are seldom funded, despite being cost-effective.

*The Government Ministries do not work together*

- A minority of families draw funds for disability supports from different agencies or different Ministries, which is often very complex for families
- Ministries typically work in silos (e.g., Children's Services, MCSS and MOH)
- Belief within government that all support dollars must go through transfer payment agencies .

*Individualized support and funding cannot easily be standardized*

- Government prefer standardized approaches
- Successful programs have mastered the art and science of equity and individualized funding, but this knowledge is not well known.

## **Two Central Ideas about Funding Inequities**

The lack of equity in the funding of disability supports is both significant and serious.

First, *funding inequities often put the "burden of proof" on families and advocates of individualized funding to have to show that IF is cost effective and accountable*. The reality is that the existing system almost never has to show its benefits *and* harms.

Second, portability, equity, and related *principles* would benefit those who believe in IF, but could also *serve as the basis for an effective system of information gathering for the province*.

## Strategies for Reducing Inequities

*The following Strategies are designed to assist all stakeholders, including government, develop ideas and actions related to the issue of funding inequities and its impact on the move to Individualized Funding.*

1. The nature of inequities in funding for disability supports will be recognized, and mechanisms put in place to address the problem by:
  - Working with government to create a transparent system for tracking and analyzing budgets and expenditures related to disability supports
  - Working with government to make adjustments in terms of inequities across regions of Ontario, including the introduction of a province-wide IF program.
2. Policies and principles will be put in place to insure that all supports are portable throughout the province and across all community agencies by:
  - Creating scenarios of portability for government and other stakeholders
  - Families and the government working out the principles of portability and the implications for community services.
3. Principles of equity will guide the development of independent planning, benchmarking, accountability, and other actions required to build a system of IF by:
  - Building a strong family voice that understands the importance of equity
  - Working with government to develop detailed protocols based on the core values and principles, and based on best practice research from Australia, Europe and the United States.

### Outcomes by 2006

- Families will feel that the system is beginning to be more fair.
- Principles of equity will be well understood and practiced by government and organizations that provide support.
- Government will routinely make budgets and expenditures available for review by families and other citizens.
- An approach to Individualized Funding will be in place and will be guided by principles of equity.
- All funds for disability supports will be portable.
- Community agencies will support IF, in part because a transition fund will assist them in helping people to use funds in a portable manner.