

Getting Buy-In for Individualized Funding from Government: A Call for Political Action

February 2004

A Key Message from the Individualized Funding WorkFest

Getting Buy-In From Government

Effective initiatives that use Individualized Funding in the provision of disability supports are almost always based in policy and legislation. It is clear from a review of initiatives in several countries that the role of government is critical to ensuring that individualized options are available to individuals and families who want them. *More Choice and Control for People with Disabilities*, a research study funded by the Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy, showed that paid disability supports funded by government work best when they are grounded in policy. The Ministry of Community and Social Services in Ontario claims that Special Services at Home is Individualized Funding. While this is true for those families that self-administer, the province also needs a far more comprehensive IF initiative. MCSS and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care have both been reluctant to recognize that the current system of disability supports fails to meet the needs of many citizens with disabilities. It is time for both Ministries, as well as the Ministry for Children's Services, to buy-in to these ideas, and to engage leaders in the IF movement to assist them in creating viable policies and approaches throughout Ontario. There is now ample evidence to show that individualized supports work for people, and a recent court case showing that the Ministry was negligent in not providing adequate individualized disability supports to two families is further support for the need for change.

Vision of Government Buy-In: Ministry of Community & Social Services

The Ministry trusts families and works with them:

- Families have a mechanism to influence Government, both regionally and provincially
- Agencies have less influence over policy
- Disability policy is family friendly.

The Ministry, families & other stakeholders work together to create alternatives:

- Partnership between Ministry and stakeholders
- Politicians and civil servants buy-in to process
- Evidence from successful jurisdictions is used.

The Ministry is knowledgeable about the need for flexible, portable, individualized supports:

- Principles guide regional implementation
- Mechanisms for IF and portability in very region
- SSAH is expanded in scope for portability and for people with physical disabilities
- Accountability mechanisms are family friendly and well understood.

What is Happening Elsewhere

- The Ontario Direct Funding Project is grounded in Long Term Care Legislation of 1993, which enables citizens with physical disabilities who can self-manage to access direct funding to hire their own attendants.
- In other countries, such as Australia and Great Britain, legislation is now in place that enables anyone with a disability to access direct funding if they want it for their disability supports.
- British Columbia has developed several innovative policies and is about to enact new legislation that will set up 17 planning centres throughout B.C., where facilitators will assist individuals and families to develop plans for applying for individualized funding.
- Most states in the US now have some form of direct funding or cash subsidy for people who choose this way of providing for disability supports.

Barriers to Getting Government Buy-In

Lack of political will and limited social vision

- Previous government showed little respect for families and had limited vision
- Current government has an opportunity to collaborate. Do they have the will?
- Civil servants have shown little leadership on significant issues affecting families.

MCSS uses agencies as a buffer against families

- MCSS goes through community agencies for planning and service delivery
- Civil servants often refuse to talk with families, but consult with agencies on a regular basis
- Most community agencies are protective of their resources, so do not support IF with government.

MCSS fails to admit that current system is not working very well

- MCSS continues to fund congregated, expensive projects
- Little or no support for innovation in the current system
- Serious regional disparities that show glaring inequities
- Lack of portability and flexibility limits local initiatives.

Strategies to Get MCSS Buy-In

The following strategies are designed to get MCSS to buy-in to new concepts and ideas related to Individualized Funding. Ultimately, the success of the government's commitment will be related to their ability to build effective policy, initiatives, and infrastructures that enhance citizenship through individualized approaches.

1. The Ministry, families & other stakeholders will work in partnership to develop a Plan for Individualized Funding for the province of Ontario, by:
 - Politicians being persuaded that individualized options make sense for families
 - The Ministry deciding to work with families and others on a task group to implement a Plan that will create more individualized options for families
 - Parents, researchers, and other key stakeholders of the community living movement providing leadership to the provincial Plan.
2. The Ministry will make a commitment to portability and flexibility with all its transfer payment agencies, by:
 - A public relations campaign that emphasizes the unfairness of the current system
 - All provincial disability organizations standing together and speaking with one voice on this key issue for change.
3. The Ministry will make more funds available for individualized disability supports, by:
 - Government being responsive or by court action that forces the government to act.