

Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario

About the 'Coalition'

Established 10 years ago, the Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario (IFCO) continues to be a growing coalition of people, families, friends, organizations and agencies who are working together to make individualized funding a reality in Ontario. Members of the coalition sign the following 'Accord' when they join.

Our Accord

"The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario supports the self-determination of persons with disabilities. We believe that all people should have control over decisions concerning where they live, with whom they live, with whom they associate, and how they spend their lives. In order to achieve this we recognize that Ontario must develop a system of funding whereby the person requiring assistance, supported as appropriate by family and/or significant others, has access to and control over the funds allocated for his/her supports."

Our History

IFCO, due in large part to its committed volunteers across the province, has accomplished a number of things - from research and research reviews, to community capacity building events, and the publishing of written materials based on the movement and our declared values. We have studied the world-wide trends, paradigm shifts in thinking and changes being requested in the provision of supports to individuals. Our history, our membership and our integrity as an independent organization is what gives us the credibility to contribute toward the dialogue and planning for transformation in Ontario. Some of our specific accomplishments are included here.

As the 'Individualized Funding Coalition of Ontario', we have proudly:

• **SPONSORED** a two-day symposium in 1998 that provided a framework for change. More than 150 people - serv-

ice providers, government, families, people themselves and others attended the event. In the symposium report entitled *Individualized Funding: a New Vision*, the coalition identified five building blocks that are necessary for successful individualized outcomes: 1) person-centred planning, 2) personal support relationships 3) management of supports 4) community development and 5) individualization of funds.

• **PUBLISHED** a 'Round Table Report', a policy framework for an individualized system of disability supports. *"The Ontario Round Table on Individualized Funding (2000) places person-directed planning and network building at the heart of a reformed system. They envision individuals and families coming together with assistance of a facilitator, expanding their network and developing a plan for personal supports. This plan would go to government or an independent body that would provide individualized funding. People could then use their money to create supports or buy existing ones. Infrastructure support for families and individuals would be available at all stages of the process including a supply of workers and personal support services."*

(Quote from IFCO's: *Transformation and Disability Supports, The Role of Individualized Funding*, 2004)

• **PARTNERED** with communities throughout Ontario to hold conferences and training workshops building capacity for individualized planning, funding and supports and the development of support networks or circles (2001-2004).

• **HOSTED** a *Workfest* - a work weekend in February 2004 - where families, people, facilitators and others came together to develop goals and strategies for ensuring citizenship and choice and control for people who have a developmental disability in Ontario. More than 125 people attended.

An Emerging Paradigm of Disability and Community

"Some of the features of the emerging paradigm of disability and community;

- people with disabilities have control and choice in the way their disability supports are provided.
- there is a focus on individualized planning, support and funding, that are designed to facilitate natural, informal supports (family and friends) and to build citizenship opportunities.
- there is a focus on positive social roles that involve personal relationships, participating in the community and opportunities to contribute. These domains are seen as critical to reducing the vulnerability of people with disabilities and safeguarding quality of life.
- planning and support are emphasized to include both formal and informal support. Formal support is paid support, with the person and their network determining whom they will hire. Informal support includes family, friends and others in the network of the person.
- funding is often dedicated to the individual. The person and/or their designate have control over the funds and choose how the money is to be administered. Funding moves with the person; and people with disabilities live and work where they choose.
- planning for the individual tends to be unencumbered and kept separate from service provision. Infra-structures, such as facilitators are in place to assist individuals and their networks to plan and access their disability supports.

With the exception of *In Unison*, there are only a few national or provincial policies that currently support the emerging paradigm."

Quoted from *Transformation and Disability Supports, The Role of Individualized Funding* (IFCO, 2004)

• **WORKED** closely with existing innovative programs, agencies and organizations who have been implementing features of a transformed system that includes: individualized funding/approaches, independent planning and the building of support networks (1996 - 2005).

• **DEVELOPED** a 'huge' library of resources that are available on our web-site. Articles and briefs on: citizenship values, self-determination, participation in community, individualized funding approaches, current research, examples from around the world and more. **IFCO Web site:** www.individualizedfunding.ca

• **PARTICIPATED** in the MCSS Transformation process.

• **BEEN** a strong voice for individualized funding and independent planning in Ontario for the last ten years!

IFCO . . . on the Transformation of Service Systems

Service systems are being pushed to create more responsive disability supports as a result of the focus of families on having control over supports as well as inclusion in community life. Consumer demands are framed in many ways but what they have in common is a strong desire for choice and control.

IFCO believes that citizenship approaches by their very nature demand that supports be individualized. This means, as reflected in the Round Table Report of the 'Coalition', that *infrastructure supports such as independent planning and facilitation must be available along with individualized funding in every community in Ontario*. Housing and support should be de-linked, no longer dependent one upon the other. Expanding consumer control and choice, building community capacity and shifting traditional services has proven to be a challenge but is essential as part of a process of transformation.

IFCO Recommendations on Transformation in Ontario

Our recommendations made to the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) during the current transformation process are based on solid research, the knowledge of paradigm shifts emerging in our province and around the world, actual outcomes and experiences - and knowing it is the right thing to do. The research can no longer be denied. The move toward more choice and control, and supports that are individualized for adult citizens who have a developmental disability, along with the desire for more community involvement is not only exciting -- it's credible!

Our Recommendations:

1. Develop a new initiative that enhances choice and control for people with disabilities and their families, including options for individualizing disability supports.

2. Utilize the Round Table Report (IFCO, 2000) as a foundational guide for the development of this new initiative.

3. Establish local infrastructures and direct funding as part of this new initiative, including independent planning and facilitation.

4. Embed this new initiative in legislation that ensures local, independent planners separate from service provision and an adjudication process for direct funding.

5. Develop this new initiative in collaboration with experts in individualized approaches and with the 'Coalition' (which has close relationships with several on-the-ground successful projects that are individualized.)

6. Consider phasing in this new initiative over three years. (There are several possible starting points for phasing this in.)

7. Insure that local infrastructure supports are independent of service provision. (Given the bureaucratic nature of the access centres, it is unlikely that infrastructure supports could be placed there either. Finding truly community based existing organizations, and twinning that with local steering committees and strong provincial leadership will help insure that independence is maintained.)

8. Look to innovative service providers, researchers, self-advocates, and family members who have studied systems and created spending frameworks for individualized funding.

9. Be strategic in the analysis of current funding mechanisms in order to fund a new Individualized Funding Initiative. (Strategies could include carrying out a savings audit on existing access centers and transfer payment agencies, re-framing the current residential services spending approach, and providing cost effective incentives for innovation.)

10. Introduce Portability. Ensure that all supports/support dollars are portable so that those who would like to make a change in their lives are able to (just like any other citizen of Ontario), using a negotiation and planning process that is respectful and fair to all: service providers, families and people.

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For Ontario*

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This document was pulled together by Michelle Friesen, IFCO co-chair, utilizing previously published material and the summary report entitled: 'Transformation and Disability Supports, The Role of Individualized Funding' (IFCO 2004)
