



Public Policy Roundup

Spring 2018

Funding announcements from the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education announced on March 26, 2018 that over the next three school years, it will provide approximately \$125 million in funding to address current waitlists for assessments, beginning with a projected \$20 million in 2018-19. School boards will have to apply for the funding, based on their needs, in order to build capacity and/or develop local approaches to provide timely, responsive assessments. The issue of addressing access to psychoeducational assessments is one that has been raised by LDAO, People for Education, and the 2017 report of the Provincial Auditor General.

Over \$170 million in funding, over the next three years, is to be allocated through the Special Education Grant, to support increased special education programs and services, including:

- Funding for a multi-disciplinary team or equivalent for all boards (four additional FTEs per school board) to build board capacity and help teachers, education assistants, and other staff better understand and adapt to the unique needs of their students;
- Funding for other staffing resources to support students with special education needs;
- Funding to build capacity and provide direct support to students with special education needs in recognition of the increase in demand for services

These funding announcements are in addition to the ongoing funding within the Special Education Grant.

AODA Standard Development Committees

The **Accessible Employment Standard Development Committee** has reviewed the current standard and submitted its Initial Recommendation Report to the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, Minister Responsible for Accessibility. The Committee is now seeking public comment, prior to finalizing its recommendations to government. The report has been posted on the ministry's website at www.ontario.ca/page/improving-accessibility-standards-employment for public review and feedback. A survey is also available on this page for the public to provide feedback on the recommendations. The survey will be available until **May 5, 2018**.

The **Accessible Information & Communications Standard Development Committee** has been reviewing the current standard, and is preparing its initial recommendations to the Minister. Public consultation will take place in the next few months.

The **Accessible Education Standard Development Committee** has begun to meet to develop recommendations for a new standard. The committee is divided into two sections, one looking

at K–12 education, and one at postsecondary education. There will be a joint subcommittee set up of members from the K-12 group and the postsecondary group, to look at overlapping issues.

Mental Health Initiatives

On March 10, 2018, the Government of Ontario announced \$2.1 billion in new mental health funding over four years to improve care, reduce waitlists and increase access across the province. Some of the initiatives announced include:

- Increased base funding for core services providers of child and youth mental health services so they can provide support more quickly and meet the growing demand for mental health and addictions services.
- Additional mental health workers in secondary schools, to support mental health and addiction issues early on and provide a bridge to community services; and more mental health promotion workers for college and university students.
- Creation of at least 15 additional youth wellness hubs over four years to improve access to services, fill critical service gaps for youth aged 12 to 25 and improve transitions to adult services.
- 24/7 same-day screening, crisis counselling and referral to services for mental health and addictions issues, through a new "help line" accessed by phone, email, text or chat.
- Access to publicly funded psychotherapy, including cognitive behavioural therapy, for up to 350,000 more people with mild to moderate anxiety and depression.

According to [LDMH: A Handbook on Learning Disabilities and Mental Health](#), by the Integra Program of the Child Development Institute, “We know that persons with LDs are two to three times more likely to experience mental health challenges (Wilson et al., 2009)” and “We know that persons with LDs have higher rates of mental health challenges and stress than do individuals without LDs (Vedi & Bernard, 2012)”. LDAO welcomes the announcement of increased mental health services that may benefit children, youth and adults with learning disabilities.