

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE
JUNE 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	Page
COVID-19, School Closures and Remote Learning	1
Special Education Funding	12
Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide (2017)	15
Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	15
Education and Community Partnership Program (ECP)	16
Developmental Disabilities Pilot: Student Transitions	17
Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities	17
Mental Health	19
Updates from other ministries	
- Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)	22
- Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU)	29
- Ministry of Health (MOH)	29
- Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA)	31

COVID-19, School Closures and Remote Learning

The government's response to COVID-19

- The government's priority has been and remains the health and safety of members of the school community. The government's aim is for every child – irrespective of ability, geography or socio-economic circumstance – to have a safe and successful 2020-21 school year.
- The Ministry of Education prioritized easing the transition back to school for students with special education and/or mental health needs by providing funding for new targeted transition programs in preparation for the current school year. These programs have helped students to remain on track during the 2020-21 school year with the confidence and knowledge they need to succeed.
- The government's [plan](#) supported the safe reopening of schools for all students, including students with special education needs. The plan is complemented by an investment of \$1.3 billion, including \$381 million in federal supports announced in Phase 1 of the Safe Return to Class Fund, and of which \$53.9 million is for special education and mental health.
- While the transmission of COVID-19 in schools remained low, all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools were directed to move to teacher-led remote learning when students returned from the winter break on January 4, 2021. This action was taken in support of the government's broader efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19. Remote learning was subsequently extended for students in southern Ontario.
- Most students with special education needs will be learning remotely during school closures. In-person learning should be reserved for exceptional cases where students with special education needs cannot be accommodated through remote learning.
- Schools must continue to make provisions to provide in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.
- School boards know their students and local conditions best and are in the best position to determine which students with special education needs may require this accommodation.
- Where in-person instruction is offered to support these students, schools must continue to adhere to EDU's updated return to school guidance, which was approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. This will help maintain a safe environment for students and staff.

- As students continue to navigate a challenging school year, we want to ensure that they have the tools they need to support their mental health and well-being. Educators are well-positioned to help promote student mental health each day at school and maintain a sense of hope during these difficult times.
- The ministry released a memo on January 12, 2021 asking School Mental Health Ontario to develop a Student Mental Health Action Kit. The Action Kit is available on the School Mental Health Ontario website and includes a series of lesson plans and resources designed to help educators with creating mentally healthy classroom environments, noticing students whom they may be concerned about and teaching students about maintaining good mental health.

Key Facts

- Throughout the period of school closures, the ministry remained in contact with students and their families, educators, school boards and other stakeholders to ensure that learning could continue while at home. This included providing regular updates, key resources and various supports such as the [Learn at Home / Apprendre à la maison](#) online portal.
- On July 30, 2020 in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the COVID-19 Command Table and pediatric experts, the government released its [plan](#) for the safe reopening of schools in September. The new guidance and requirements, built on previous government directives issued on June 19, continues to be re-evaluated regularly and, where required, updated based on public health advice.
 - This plan asks school boards to help students with special education needs return to school by:
 - Considering additional planning and transition time for students with special education needs to support a smooth transition.
 - Updating Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to take into account changes in the school environment and remote learning needs.
 - Continuing to provide access to assistive technology.
 - Offering daily attendance to students with special education needs for whom adapted timetables or remote learning may be challenging based on student needs. This includes students in secondary schools who are opening under an adapted model.
 - Consulting with families of students who are medically fragile and local public health on options for training and personal protective equipment to support students' safe return and potential continued remote learning where return is not possible.
 - Working with partners to develop local protocols for school access by regulated health professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services. Protocols should include support for remote delivery where in-school delivery is not possible.

- On August 12, 2020 the ministry communicated its expectation for the three Professional Activity days in preparation for school re-opening. The ministry's expectation was that professional learning on all topics, including remote and online learning, consider and incorporate the implications for teaching students with special education needs.
- On August 13, 2020 the Ontario government:
 - Made available a further half a billion dollars in supports to school boards to help schools across the province reopen safely in September. This support is enabling school boards to provide more physical distancing in classrooms and direct funding to utilize non-school community spaces and allows boards to make adjustments based on their local needs.
 - Issued [Policy/Program Memorandum No. 164, Requirements for Remote Learning](#), which provides direction to school boards on remote learning requirements. This includes requirements to support students with special education needs, such as providing additional synchronous learning time, differentiated support and instruction, adhering to IEPs, and providing access to assistive technology. Where any challenges arise, educators are expected to work with students and parents to determine workable solutions on an individual basis.
- On August 18, 2020 the ministry released a memorandum to clarify requirements for secondary school delivery models. This memorandum also communicated clarification on the permission for boards to adopt a staggered start to the school year.
- On August 26, 2020, as part of Ontario's plan for students to safely return to the classroom in September, the government released the [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#) document. This guide was developed in consultation with public health experts, including Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and aims to help schools identify and isolate COVID-19 cases, reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and prevent and minimize outbreaks.
- In response to reopening schools in September 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, a total of \$53.9 million was provided for the school year to help boards better meet the needs of students with special education needs and support their mental health. This includes the Safe Return to Class Fund and provincial investments, as follow:
 - \$10M mental health supports ([June 19](#)) – GSN Provincial Funding
 - \$10M additional mental health supports ([August 4](#)) – PPF Provincial Funding
 - \$10M additional special education supports ([August 4](#)) – PPF Provincial Funding
 - \$12.5M additional special education and/or mental health supports ([August 26](#)) – PPF Federal Safe Return to Class Fund (Phase 1); and

- \$1.4 million for the Education and Community Partnership Program (ECPP) to fund technology and technology-related costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic ([November 26](#)) – PPF Federal Safe Return to Class Fund (Phase 1); and
 - \$10 million to support of student mental health, including funding for Kids Help Phone to support children and youth across the province ([January 7](#)) – PPF Federal Safe Return to Class Fund
- On November 2, 2020, the Ministry of Education issued a memorandum to school boards reinforcing the ministry’s priorities with respect to supporting student mental health. The ministry also encouraged boards to sign-up for the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) virtual care platform, which is being offered to all boards at no cost from November 1, 2020 until October 31, 2021.
- In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, along with other health and education partners, the ministry made updates to its [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in schools](#) document based on the latest public health advice and to provide additional clarity, as needed. This updated guidance was shared with school boards on November 10, 2020.
- On December 10, 2020, the ministry released a memorandum reinforcing its expectation that school boards should now have local protocols in place to support school access by regulated professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services. This includes staff involved in the provision of services by Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) and Children’s Treatment Centres (CTCs).
- On December 16, 2020, the ministry encouraged school boards to continue to ensure that students and families are provided the resources required to successfully participate in remote learning, including ensuring the availability of remote learning devices for all students. Boards were also reminded that plans must also be in place to support students with special education needs to learn remotely.
- Ontario announced a province-wide shutdown to stop the spread of COVID-19 on December 21, 2020. As part of the broader effort to limit the spread of COVID-19, all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools were directed to move to teacher-led remote learning beginning January 4, 2021 and ending January 11, 2021, with secondary school students learning remotely until January 25, 2021. The announcement also required boards to make provisions for continued in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.

- Schools located in the Public Health Unit regions listed below were to resume in-person instruction on January 11, 2021 for both elementary and secondary students:

The District of Algoma Health Unit
 North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
 Northwestern Health Unit

Porcupine Health Unit
 Sudbury and District Health Unit
 Thunder Bay District Health Unit
 Timiskaming Health Unit

- The Ministry of Education issued a memo on December 21, 2020, that:
 - Reinforced the expectation that remote learning be provided in alignment with [Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) No.164: Requirements for Remote Learning](#).
 - Directed boards to develop plans to support remote learning for students with special education needs, including leveraging the capacity of education workers and board professionals (e.g. behavioural experts, speech language pathologists, and other professionals).
 - Set limits on class reorganizations to give students greater stability, during this period.
- On December 23, 2020, the ministry provided boards with further information about supporting students with special education needs during the provincewide shutdown period, including:
 - Noting that most students with special education needs will be learning remotely during this period. In-person learning should be reserved for students that cannot be accommodated through remote learning.
 - Where in-person instruction is being offered to students who cannot be accommodated through remote learning, boards are encouraged to limit the overall movement and the number of sites that will be open through a central school location model, where students from different classes or neighbourhood schools attend class together at one site. As part of setting up in-person learning locations, school boards were asked to develop a plan for transportation during the provincewide shutdown period.
 - Encouraging school boards to consider how to support continuity of staffing for students while respecting collective agreement provisions.
 - Supporting remote learning by continuing to fully leverage the capacity of education workers and board professionals, including through involving these staff in planning for student supports as well as working with labour partners to proactively define roles and responsibilities for staff during this period.
 - Encouraging boards to communicate early with families, labour partners and service providers (e.g., Local Health Integration Networks, Children’s Treatment Centres) as they plan any in-person programming.
- On January 7, 2021, the Government announced, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts, that it was extending certain measures to keep students, education staff, and residents of Northern Ontario safe. These include extending remote learning until January 25, 2021 for

elementary school students in the 27 Southern Ontario public health unit regions and extending the shutdown in Northern Ontario for another 14 days, aligning with the shutdown period in Southern Ontario.

- On January 7th, 2021 \$10 million was announced to support of student mental health, including funding for Kids Help Phone to support children and youth across the province (January 7) – PPF Federal Safe Return to Class Fund.
- On January 9th 2021, the Government announced that it was [expanding eligibility for emergency child care in southern Ontario](#), which includes education staff who are required to attend schools to provide in-person instruction and support to students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.
- On January 12, 2021, in light of the current public health environment, and based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, it was announced that schools in the Windsor-Essex, Peel Region, Toronto, York and Hamilton public health units (PHUs) would not return to in-person instruction until February 10, 2021. By January 20, 2021, the Chief Medical Officer of Health was to advise the Ministry of Education on which public health units (PHUs) would be permitted to resume in-person instruction drawing on the most up-to-date data and modelling.
 - Schools must continue to make provisions to provide in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.
 - Where in-person instruction is offered to support these students, schools must continue to adhere to our updated return to school guidance, which was approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. This will help maintain a safe environment for students and staff. This includes ensuring that staff working with these students are outfitted with and using appropriate PPE including surgical/procedural masks and eye protection (e.g., face shields), other PPE based on their specific role/job functions (e.g., gloves, gowns), daily screening is adhered to by both students and staff before coming to school, students remain cohorted and direct and indirect contacts are limited, physical distance is maintained where possible, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette is reinforced and practiced, students or staff who become ill during the day are isolated from others and are able to go home, and all other practices identified in the return to school direction are followed.
- On January 12, 2021, the Ministry of Education released a memorandum that indicated:
 - Students in northern PHUs returned to in-person learning on January 11, 2021 and these schools would remain open. Some northern schools have been closed based on direction of local PHUs and school boards should continue to follow local PHU direction.
 - More information on screening will be available over the coming days. Students, staff and families can continue to access the COVID-19 school

and child care screening tool by visiting <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>.

- Masking will now be compulsory for all students in Grades 1-3. Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply.
 - The ministry will be expanding targeted testing for students, staff and their respective households. Testing will be voluntary and will also include childcare settings. Schools and childcare settings will be identified by local public health, with a focus on those experiencing outbreaks, with high case counts, or in high priority communities.
- On January 12, 2021, the ministry released a memorandum to school boards that included details on a student mental health action kit developed by School Mental Health Ontario and resources for staff well-being.
 - This Action Kit is available on the [School Mental Health Ontario website](#). In addition to learning resources for educators, the Action Kit includes student-friendly tools that can help students prepare for learning related to mental health.
 - The resources and lesson plans are being developed for both elementary and secondary students. Educators are not required to conduct formal assessment and evaluation of student work related to these resources and lesson plans unless the materials are directly connected to particular curriculum expectations.
 - It is the ministry's expectation that educators will continue to support learning on student mental health throughout the school year.
 - The ministry is providing additional one-time funding for school boards to support student mental health which may be used to help facilitate implementation. More details regarding funding will be provided soon.
 - The memo further notes that the Psychiatrist in Chief at Sinai Health and her team have developed a series of videos in response to the pandemic. These videos offer practical tips and strategies that can be shared with educators and also model strategies that adults may use with students. These relevant strategies are beneficial for both staff and students. These videos are available on the [Sinai Health website](#). These videos were not funded by the ministry and were independently developed by Sinai Health. The audio dialogue in the videos is available in English only; however, transcripts are available through the video settings in English and French. To access transcripts, users can turn on transcripts, and then select English or French language for subtitles from the settings button.
 - On January 20, 2021, the ministry announced that based on the most recent data and advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, elementary and secondary schools in the following Public Health Units would be permitted to resume in-person instruction on January 25, 2021:
 - Grey Bruce Health Unit
 - Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit
 - Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit
 - Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Health Unit
 - Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

- Peterborough Public Health
 - Renfrew County and District Health Unit
- On January 20, 2021, the Government also noted that that Northern PHUs that were permitted to open on January 11, 2021 would continue in-person learning unless otherwise directed by local PHU authorities. Schools located in all other PHUs were directed to continue to learn remotely.
 - On January 24, 2021, in advance of the return to school for seven Public Health Units, the Government announced that it would be implementing provincewide targeted asymptomatic testing, more comprehensive screening protocols, and mandatory masking for students in Grades 1-3 and outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained. These new safeguards were informed by medical leaders and the best available evidence in Canada.
 - On January 25, 2021, the Government [expanded eligibility](#) for the targeted emergency childcare program to additional workers who are performing critical roles in their communities. This included education staff who are required to report to work in person while their children continue with remote learning.
 - On January 28, 2021, the Government directed that elementary and secondary schools in four additional public health units (PHUs) would be permitted to return to in-person learning on February 1, 2021, including:
 - Eastern Ontario Health Unit
 - Middlesex-London Health Unit
 - Southwestern Public Health
 - Ottawa Public Health
 - As of February 1, 2021, more than 520,000 students across Ontario were able to learn in-person. To support their safe return, and on the best advice of experts, Ontario introduced additional measures to further protect students and staff, including:
 - Provincewide access to targeted asymptomatic testing for students and staff, using a combination of lab-processed PCR and rapid antigen tests;
 - Mandatory masking for students in Grades 1-3, including outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained;
 - Enhanced screening of secondary students and staff;
 - New guidance discouraging students from congregating before and after school; and
 - Temporary certification of eligible teacher candidates who are set to graduate in 2021 to stabilize staffing levels, following high levels of absenteeism.
 - On February 3, 2021, the ministry shared the return to in-person learning dates for the remainder of the Province. Elementary and secondary schools in all remaining PHUs were to return to in-person learning on Monday, February 8,

2021, with the exception of Peel, Toronto and York Region Public Health, which were scheduled to return on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.

- On February 11, 2021, the Ministry of Education announced that it was postponing March break until April 12-16, 2021 in an effort to reduce community transmission of COVID-19. This decision was made with the best advice of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and public health officials, including consultations with many local Medical Officers of Health.
- On March 25, 2021, the ministry released its memo on 2021 spring and summer learning opportunities, which includes:
 - Nearly \$8.32 million to support students with special education needs in summer program offerings in both credit and non-credit granting courses, this additional funding may be used by school boards for additional staffing resources such as special education resource teachers, and educational assistants;
 - Approximately \$7.6 million to provide summer transition programs for students with high special education needs who may find the return to school challenging, with a focus on closing gaps in skills development, learning, and on establishing classroom routines prior to the opening of schools; and
 - \$11.76 million in funding for struggling readers who are at risk for falling behind due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year as well as for the delivery of summer programs.
 - \$17 million for in additional in-year and summer Mental Health Supports
- The Province made an announcement on March 31, 2021 that it was providing parents with \$980 million in direct support as part of the [Ontario COVID-19 Child Benefit](#). Under this new round of funding, payments were doubled to \$400 per child and \$500 for a child with special needs to help offset additional learning costs. This investment is part of the [2021 Budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy](#).
- On April 7, 2021, the Government announced that education workers who provide direct support to students with special education needs across the province, and all education workers in select hot spot areas, would be eligible to register for vaccination the following week. Vaccinations commenced during the April break starting with priority neighborhoods in Toronto and Peel, then began rolling out to priority neighborhoods in other hot spot regions, including York, Ottawa, Hamilton, Halton and Durham. The rollout is being extended across the province as supply allows.
- On April 8, 2021, the Government announced it was introducing new measures to protect schools against COVID-19, which include:
 - On-site confirmation of self-screening;
 - Refresher training upon return from April break;
 - Outdoor instruction when possible;

- Enhanced cleaning during the April break;
 - Curriculum-linked activities for students;
 - Asymptomatic testing expansion; and
 - Letter to parents promoting best practices for a safe April break.
- On April 12, 2021, the ministry notified school boards that in consultation with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, it was determined that elementary and secondary school students province-wide will participate in remote learning following the April Break. Boards were directed to:
 - Ensure that plans were in place to support students with special education needs to learn remotely that leverage the capacity of education workers and board professionals (e.g. behavioural experts, speech language pathologists, and other professionals) to support remote learning; and
 - Make provisions for in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning based on student needs.
- Following the province's decision to move elementary and secondary students across the province to remote learning, the Government announced on April 15, 2021 that it would be providing [eligible health care and other frontline workers](#) with free emergency child care for school-aged children, starting Monday, April 19, 2021. Eligibility included education staff who are required to attend schools to provide in-person instruction and support to students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.
- On May 3, 2021, the ministry provided an update that, beginning May 6, 2021, remaining eligible education staff province-wide would be eligible to register for vaccination appointments. These eligible staff include any school board staff or student transportation partners who typically work in-person in elementary and secondary schools. Examples include educators, custodial staff, administrative staff and school bus drivers.
- Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for 2021-22 was announced on May 4, 2021 in [Memorandum 2021 B08](#); and further details, such as the [Technical Paper 2021-22](#) and [Memorandum 2021 SB06: Special Education Grant and Mental Health Funding Changes for 2021-22](#).
- The ministry released a 2021-22 school year planning memorandum on May 4, 2021. Among several other topics, the memorandum noted that:
 - As in 2020-21, school boards have been instructed to plan to operate elementary schools full time in-person. Elementary students should continue to be cohorted with their classmates and homeroom teacher. Specialized teachers, for classes such as French as a second language/English (in French-language school boards), the arts, and health and physical education, are still able to go into classrooms to provide full programming for students. Students may be pulled into smaller groups for supports with students from other cohorts based on local health advice.

- In secondary schools, school boards have been told to adopt secondary timetabling methods that emphasize cohorting of students as much as possible and to limit the number of student-to-student contacts. School boards will be required to limit schedules to two in-person classes (such as quadmastering) with exceptions for schools where contacts can be limited by cohorting grades or if the overall size of the school is small, making contact tracing manageable. The intention is to plan for full time in-person learning for secondary schools. However, school boards are also asked to have plans in place to pivot to adapted timetables and full remote delivery while still providing students with access to the full breadth of courses.
- Full guidance on 2021-22 health and safety measures will be communicated to school boards in Summer 2021. This will include guidance on requirements such as masking, hand hygiene, cohorting for clubs and other extracurriculars and screening, as well as the designation of school boards that would need to open with an adapted secondary school delivery model in September.
- On May 4, 2021, Ontario communicated its learning recovery and renewal plan for 2021-22. This plan is informed by Ontario data, other jurisdictions and stakeholders, including school board leaders, teachers, principals, parents, students and community partners. In addition to spring and summer investments, the ministry announced that its approach will include:
 - A math pilot on early intervention supports for students with special education needs in Grades 4-6 to support math learning in up to 20 select school boards. School boards will be invited to apply in the spring.
 - A Remote Learning Guide for Students with special education needs to support students whenever they are learning remotely.
- On May 13, 2021, the government announced that with the new, more contagious variants continuing to pose significant risks, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has extended the Stay-at-Home Order ([O. Reg. 265/21](#)) until at least June 2, 2021. This includes continued remote learning for all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools, with in-person learning available for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.
 - In addition, beginning the week of May 31, youth in Ontario between 12 and 17 years of age and their family members who have not received a vaccine will be eligible to book an appointment to receive their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, including at special dedicated youth and family clinics throughout the weeks of June 14 and 21.

Special Education Funding

Special Education Grant (SEG) Investments

Key Facts

- Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for 2021-22 was announced on May 4, 2021 in [Memorandum 2021 B08](#); and further details, such as the [Technical Paper 2021-22](#), [Memorandum 2021 SB06: Special Education Grant and Mental Health Funding Changes for 2021-22](#) and [2021-22 Education Funding: A Guide to the Special Education Grant](#).
- The government is committed to ensuring that every student, including students with special education needs, has access to the supports they need to succeed in school.
- This commitment is demonstrated by investments in the Special Education Grant (SEG), which provides boards with funding for programs, services, and/or equipment for students with special education needs. Boards may use the grant only for special education and must set aside any unspent funding to use for special education in a future school year.
- For 2021-22, SEG funding is projected to increase to over \$3.21 billion. The highest amount ever provided in SEG funding, this represents an increase of approximately \$68.6 million, or 2.2 per percent, over 2020-21 SEG funding.
- This 2021-22 increase in SEG funding is a result of the following:
 - Benchmark increases throughout the Special Education Grant (SEG), consistent with other GSN allocations.
 - The transfers of the \$1.44 million Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC) and the \$6.1 million After-School Skills Development (ASSD) programs from Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) into the GSN.
 - Increasing the maximum individual Special Incidence Portion (SIP) claim funding amount to \$28,518.
 - Continued support for the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) claim-based applications.
 - Projected increases to average daily enrolment (ADE).
- For further information regarding special education funding please visit the ministry's [Education Funding page](#).

2021-22 Priorities and Partnership Funding Investments

- In addition to SEG funding, school boards can use other GSN funding and Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF) transfer payments funding to meet their responsibility to support students with special education needs. The PPF provides support for a variety of time-limited, high-impact initiatives that directly support students in the classroom.

Regular School Year Pilots and Programs (\$1.86 million)

- For the 2021-22 school year there is approximately \$1.86 million provided to school boards for non COVID-19 related school year pilots and programs to benefit children and youth with special education needs, as well as their families and educators. These investments include:

- Educators Autism Additional Qualifications (AQ) Subsidy \$1.01M
 - Pilot To improve School-Based Supports for Students with ASD \$0.37M
 - Developmental Disabilities Pilot: Student Transitions \$0.48M

Additional Third-Party Investments (over \$5.88M)

- Further to the PPF special education funding for school boards, the Ministry is making the following third-party special education investments:
 - Geneva Centre for Autism – Online Training \$2.0M
 - Geneva Centre for Autism – Synchronous Educator Training \$2.5M
 - Principals' Associations AQ & Webinar \$0.43M
 - Learning Disabilities Assoc. of Ontario \$0.75M
 - Post-Sec. Opportunities & Transition Supports for students who are D/deaf and Hard of Hearing \$0.20M

Learning Recovery and Renewal & 2020-21 Spring and Summer Learning Opportunities

Learning Recovery and Renewal (2021: B07)

- Over the past two school years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of education in Ontario and across the globe. School boards, educators, students and their families have demonstrated resiliency and flexibility in responding to changes in their learning environments and we have come a long way in embracing new ways of teaching, learning and connecting.
- As we look ahead to the 2021-22 school year, the ministry is committed to supporting the health and safety, mental health, well-being and achievement of all students. This includes building on the skills and capacity students and educators have gained, while ensuring that students who experienced learning disruptions are prepared for their future.
- To understand the impact of learning disruptions, the ministry has reviewed Ontario data, looked to other jurisdictions and has heard from stakeholders, including school board leaders, teachers, principals, parents, students and community partners.
- While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected students differently, there are key themes emerging including the need to focus on student mental health and well-being, supports for early reading and math and the re-engagement of students. These themes make up the foundation of the ministry's plan to support learning recovery and renewal.
- The ministry is allocating \$85.5 million to support learning recovery and renewal. This funding includes:
 - \$62 million for summer learning ([2021: SB04 Federal Safe Return to Class Fund: 2020-21 Spring and Summer Learning Opportunities for School Boards, March 25, 2021](#));
 - \$20 million for re-engaging students and reading assessment supports ([2021: B07 Planning for the 2021-22 School Year memo](#)); and
 - \$3.5 million for professional learning
- Funding for learning recovery and renewal is in addition to ministry investments of \$80 million in student mental health supports, over \$40 million in math strategy

funding, and over \$3.21 billion in special education funding, as well as additional resources through the \$550.5 million Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) and other allocations within the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) for the 2021-22 school year.

2020-21 Spring and Summer Learning Opportunities (2021: SB04)

- On March 25th, the government announced funding to support school boards on expanded spring and summer learning opportunities.
- As part of this investment, \$44.68M was announced for in-year and summer 2021 special education, reading intervention and mental health supports. This includes:
 - \$8.32M for Summer Staffing Supports: Special Education Needs
 - \$7.6M for Summer Transition Programs: Special Education Needs
 - \$6.76M for Summer Evidence-Based Reading Intervention Programs
 - \$5M for In-Year Evidence-Based Reading Intervention Programs
 - \$9M for Additional In-Year Mental Health Supports
 - \$8M for Summer Mental Health Supports

Note: *These special education, reading intervention and mental health investments in-year and summer learning investment are part of the Learning Recovery and Renewal Plan (\$85.5M).*

Planning for the 2021-22 School Year: Continued COVID-19 Funding Supports

- Since the start of the pandemic, the Ontario government has made over \$1.6 billion in resources available to support the safe reopening and operation of schools across Ontario, including \$763 million in funding through the federal Safe Return to Class Fund.
- Although the evolving public health landscape is difficult to predict, we recognize that the next school year may require similar health and safety measures as those implemented this year. To support the continued safe operation of schools in 2021-22, the ministry will continue to provide temporary ongoing COVID-19 funding supports, with more than \$1.6 billion in resources available to school boards throughout the year. The ministry will continue to work with the Ministry of Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health to determine when public health measures in schools can be eased or lifted.
- Investments through Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) totalling \$487.9 million, include [\\$49.0 million for special education, mental health](#) and well-being and equity initiatives.
 - \$16.25M for special education supports
 - \$25.25M for mental health
 - \$1M for Kids Help Phone
 - \$6.45M for Equity Initiatives

Note: *the \$10.1M Supporting Student Mental Health Allocation in the Mental Health and Well-Being Grant of the GSN for 2021-22 (described in [Memorandum 2021: B08](#)), was initially introduced as a response to COVID investment in June 19, 2020 through [Memorandum 2020: B08](#).*

Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide (2017)

Key Facts

- *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Resource Guide* was released in August 2017 as a draft in electronic form only.
http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/onschools_2017e.pdf
- The Guide updates and consolidates information currently found in: *Standards for School Board's Special Education Plans (2000)*; *IEP Standards for Development, Program Planning and Implementation (2000)*; *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide (2002)*; *Special Education: A Guide for Educators (2001)*; and *Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide (2004)*.
- The document is intended for school and school board administrators but will be of interest to the broader educational community.
- Technical changes were made and posted in Fall 2018 including a HTML version.

Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Key Facts

- The Ministry of Education (EDU) is committed to supporting successful outcomes for all students, including students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- EDU is also committed to working with Ontario's families, educators, school boards, and partner ministries to help students find success inside and outside of the classroom.
- EDU is supporting the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) in implementing the Entry to School program, part of the Ontario Autism Program (OAP).
- The entry to school program will be delivered by OAP community providers and will be a six-month group-based skill-building program for young children on the autism spectrum (three to five years of age), who are entering school for the first time. Eligible children will participate in this program during the six months preceding their school entry. The focus of the program will be on preparing children to enter school. Strong partnerships between community-based OAP organizations and their local school boards will be critical to support families as they prepare to transition to school.
- A Call for Applications for providers to operate the program was issued in March 2021.

Funding

- Beginning in 2021-22, the \$6.1 million in funding for After-School Skills Development (ASSD) Programs is being transferred into the Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) as part of the GSN's SEG funding. This will support the ministry's efforts to streamline funding while also reducing the administrative burden for transfer payment recipients. It enables school boards to plan strategically in implementing the ASSD Programs.
- The BEA allocation focuses on supporting students with autism through providing funding for school boards to hire board-level Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

expertise professionals, including Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBAs); and provides training opportunities that build school board capacity in ABA. The BEA Allocation is projected to be \$37.2 million in 2021-22. It is now made up of the following three components:

○ ABA Expertise Professionals Amount	\$25.1M
○ ABA Training Amount	\$6.1M
○ After-School Skills Development (ASSD) Amount	\$6.1M

- In addition to GSN funding, the following \$6.274 million in PPF investments are being provided to support students with autism in 2021-22:
 - A \$1 million subsidy for the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)-specific Additional Qualification course;
 - Continuing to support the Geneva Centre for Autism through a \$2 million investment to provide more online training opportunities for educators, including access to the Registered Behaviour Technician (RBT) course;
 - \$2.5 million to Geneva Centre for Autism in 2021-21 to provide a synchronous virtual training program for educators and education workers;
 - Continuing the \$0.37 million funding the provision of dedicated space on school site for external ABA practitioners to provide direct service to students with ASD in eleven pilot school boards; and
 - \$0.43 million to provide a subsidy to administrators for completing the Additional Qualification course, *Special Education for Administrators (ASD focus)* offered through one of the three Principals' Associations and to support the implementation of a Leadership Webinar Certificate Series in Special Education (ASD focus).

Next Steps

- EDU is continuing to work with MCCSS on the implementation of the new Ontario Autism Program, including the Entry to School Program.

Education and Community Partnership Program (ECP)

Key Facts

- ECPs are provided for children and youth who are unable to attend the regular school setting due to their primary need for care, treatment or because of a court order to serve a custody or detention sentence.
- ECPs are voluntary, partnership programs developed between school boards and government-approved facilities such as custody and correctional facilities, mental health agencies or hospitals.
- The Ministry of Education (EDU) funds costs related to the education component of the program. The education component is delivered by teachers employed by the district school board.
- The Ministries of Children, Community and Social Services, Health, and Solicitor General fund costs related to the care, treatment or youth justice component of the program.
- 60 school boards are involved in the delivery of ECP Programs. There are no new ECP programs in the 2020-21 school year.

Funding

- The government is investing approximately \$103 million for 550 (regular and Summer) ECPP programs and roughly 7,000 spaces in the 2020-21 school year. The actual number of students may be higher because students may either enter or leave the program throughout the year.
- As part of the Future Pandemic Response Fund, the Ministry of Education is providing school boards with ECPPs, a one-time investment of \$1.4 million in the 2020-21 school year to fund technology and technology-related costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic to support continued student learning.
- ECPP Guidelines, applications and associated materials for the renewal of existing ECPPs for the 2021-22 school year were release on May 4, 2021. This year, a new streamlined application process is in place for the Spring applications for ECPPs that have no program changes. For these programs, a 1% increase is automatically prepopulated to salaries and wages and boards are not required to complete anything further. This process will reduce the amount of time required to complete the application. The process for the October revised forecast remains unchanged.

Developmental Disabilities Pilot: Student Transitions

Key Facts

- Pilot to support select school boards to explore successful practices in transitioning students with developmental disabilities to work through the use of an intensive job-placement program.

Funding

- \$478,000 for the 2020-21 school year.

Next Steps

- Ministry staff will continue with process of board selection and roll-out of project.

Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

Key Facts

The ministry continues to support students with learning disabilities through the following:

- Policy Program Memorandum 8 (PPM8): *Identification of and Program Planning for Students with Learning Disabilities, 2014*
- Learning Disabilities Pilot Project:
 - The objective of the Pilot Project is to increase the availability and responsiveness of supports for students with LDs in their local communities.
 - An external research team is lead by Dr. Rhonda Martinussen, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), to conduct a developmental evaluation. Data is in the process of being analyzed to inform the ministry on key findings.
 - We are currently planning on how to best share key lessons, research and tools arising from the pilots with school boards.

- Learning Disabilities Reference Group (LD RG), whose mandate is to provide support to the Pilot Project. The LD RG met on March 18 with the Pilot boards and OISE researchers to hear and discuss OISE findings on the Pilots.
- Funding the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) to develop comprehensive digital resources for educators and students on the LD@school (English) and TA@l'école (French) including evidence-informed teaching tools, as well as conduct Educators' Summer Institute.
- On October 3, 2019 the OHRC launched a public inquiry to find out if students with reading disabilities have meaningful access to education as required by the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.
- The OHRC has been reviewing a number of areas, including:
 - **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Whether Universal Design for Learning, an approach to education that meets the diverse needs of every student, is being applied within Ontario's reading curriculum and in classroom teaching methods
 - **Mandatory early screening:** Whether all students are being screened for reading difficulties in Kindergarten (or in Grade 1, where a child does not attend public school for Kindergarten) using scientific evidence-based early screening tools
 - **Evidence-based reading intervention programs:** Whether students who have been identified as having reading difficulties through early screening or psycho-educational assessment have access to timely, scientific evidence-based reading intervention.
 - **Accommodation:** Whether students who have been identified as having reading difficulties through mandatory early screening or psycho-educational assessment have access to timely and effective accommodation and assistive technology
 - **Psycho-educational assessments:** The role of psycho-educational assessments and whether students have access to timely and appropriate psycho-educational assessments where needed (in addition to mandatory early screening for reading difficulties).
- The ministry followed the OHRC's public hearings and interim updates with interest. We look forward receiving its final report and recommendations in the coming months, and we anticipate that what we have learned from the LD pilot projects will also help to inform the Ministry's response to the Inquiry.

Funding

- For the 2020-21 school year the ministry continues funding of \$1.75 million for the Intensive Reading Pilot Projects.
- For 2020-22 school years LDAO has been provided with a total of \$1.5 million in funding to develop various on-line resources for educators and students and host an Educators Institute. LDAO has developed additional resources for students/parents to support learn at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The current COVID pandemic has exacerbated challenges for students who are struggling with reading, including those with special education needs. In the Spring 2021, EDU has provided \$11.75M in-year and summer funding for school boards to provide evidence-based reading intervention programs or programs that have been

shown to be efficacious in improving student outcomes for struggling readers who are at risk for falling behind due to the COVID pandemic. School boards have flexibility in the design of their local evidence-based intervention programs. Programs/supports would ideally be provided in-person, consistent with public health advice, but may be provided wholly or in part remotely. The ministry shared a list of Effective Implementation of Reading Intervention Programs informed by advice from researchers.

Next Steps

- School boards will continue implementing in-year and summer programs students who are struggling with reading.

Mental Health

Key Facts

- The government has made a commitment to build:
 - a comprehensive and connected multi-year mental health and addiction system across the lifespan; and
 - a system that supports careers, promotes well-being and prepares every student for the future.
- COVID-19 has impacted all students and their families. It has made circumstances especially challenging and it has meant that many more families and students face new vulnerabilities.
- Student mental health and well-being is a top priority for our government. We know that good mental health is fundamental to a student's ability to learn, succeed, and reach their full potential.
- Schools will continue to provide mental health promotion supports to all students and offer timely clinical interventions for students that require school-based mental health services.
- To address learning disruptions during this unprecedented and uncertain time, the ministry has reviewed research, looked to other jurisdictions and engaged with stakeholders, including board leaders, teachers, principals, parents, students and community partners. While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected students differently, there are key themes emerging including mental health challenges, decreases in physical activity and widening inequities.
- As announced in the Spring 2021, the Ministry has developed a learning and renewal plan and student mental health is a foundational element. As part of the plan, the ministry will be releasing a provincial Student Mental Health Strategy and Policy/Program Memorandum prior to the 2021-22 school year which outlines the role of school-based mental health within the broader provincial system of mental health services.
- The ministry made student mental health and well-being a core element of the re-entry to school plan for the 2020-21 school year and will continue the same focus for 2021-22 school year.
- The ministry, through its implementation partner, School Mental Health Ontario, will continue to provide professional learning opportunities, ongoing coaching support

and a suite of evidence-based resources to all publicly funded school boards in the province.

- For instance, on January 12, 2021, the Ministry of Education released a memorandum providing additional information to support educators' efforts to promote student mental health and well-being at school during these difficult times. This included information on a Student Mental Health Action Kit, developed by School Mental Health Ontario, which includes student-friendly tools that can help students prepare for learning related to mental health. The Action Kit is available on the [School Mental Health Ontario](#) website. To support implementation the Ministry also announced a further \$10M investment.
 - The Student Mental Health Action Kit (MH Action Kit) is designed to help educators support students in the following areas through a series of modules (lesson plans and supplementary materials):
 1. Promoting wellness during challenging times
 2. Supporting student mental health learning
 3. Encouraging early help-seeking when mental health problems arise
- Implementation of the Action Kit will continue to be a part of the Ministry's plan for re-entry to school in the Fall whether that be in-person or remotely.
- For 2021-22 the following key priorities for school-based mental health, as articulated for the 2020-21 school year, will remain:
 - Implement a tiered approach to mental health
 - Provide ongoing professional learning
 - Provide enhanced tier two prevention and early intervention services
 - Collaborate with local child and youth mental health agencies and local healthcare partners
 - Update and enhance suicide prevention, intervention and postvention protocols
 - Focus on issues related to mental health of underserved populations
 - Continue to provide supports to students remotely
 - To support the provision of mental health services remotely, the ministry entered into an agreement with Ontario Health (Ontario Telemedicine Network – OTN) to provide school boards with access to their virtual care platform until October 31, 2021.

Funding

- Ontario is investing \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years to develop and implement a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions strategy.
- The ministry is providing school boards with more than \$80M in dedicated funding to support student mental health in 2021-22. More than \$35M of this funding can be used to respond to local priorities such as employing new mental health professionals, providing professional learning and training for educators and mental health professionals, collaborating with community mental health providers for students requiring more intensive treatment, student engagement opportunities in the area of mental health, and the collection, analysis and reporting of student mental health related information.

- Additional funding has been provided to school boards for students requiring continued access to school-based mental health services over this summer.
 - Following the OTN pilot and between November 1, 2020 and October 31, 2021, the ministry continues to offer school boards free access to Ontario Health’s virtual care platform (OTN).
 - Since June 2020, more than 500 regulated school-based health professionals (e.g., social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists) used the virtual care platform to provide services to students remotely and conducted about 5,500 virtual health care visits.

Next Steps

- Continued work with school boards and stakeholders on releasing and implementation of the provincial student mental health strategy and Policy Program Memorandum.
- Continue Working with School Mental Health Ontario and school boards to facilitate implementation of the Student Mental Health Action Toolkit and implementing supports and resources for summer 2021 and into the 2021-22 school year.
- EDU is working closely with other ministries including the Ministry of Health (MOH) to support the effective alignment of the education sector in the government-wide mental health and addictions strategy being led by MOH.
- Schools are part of the broader system of integrated mental health care and by working together we can ensure the best use of provincial mental health resources.
- Throughout the 2021-22 school year, the ministry expects school boards to continue to implement a tiered approach to mental health that will support the mental health and well-being of all students and target intensive help to those who need it most and/or who have been most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

UPDATES FROM OTHER MINISTRIES

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Investment in Early Intervention and Rehabilitation Services and the Preschool Speech and Language Program

- In the 2021 Budget, the Ontario Government announced new investments to support children and youth with special needs to live happier and healthier lives.
- The government has committed to new funding of \$60 million annually, over four years, beginning in 2021–22. This investment will ensure that more children and families have access to critical services when they need them and build additional service capacity in early intervention and rehabilitation services, and the Preschool Speech and Language (PSL) program.
- The funding will support Children’s Treatment Centres (CTCs), PSL lead agencies and their local partners to build capacity and address waitlists for assessments and speech and language pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services for children and youth. in the PSL program and in CTC community- and school-based rehabilitation services.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Key Facts

- The ministry has invested in expanded FASD services including:
 - Funding an additional 20 FASD workers in 2020-21 and another additional 6 FASD workers in 2021-22, for a total of 60 FASD workers funded annually to deliver services through special needs Coordinating Agencies across the province.
 - Contracting with Health Nexus to provide service provider training in 2020-21 to strengthen providers’ understanding of FASD and promote more informed approaches to service delivery for children, youth and families impacted by FASD.
 - The training provides a self-guided online training for a range of service providers including health care providers (e.g. nurses, doctors), mental health practitioners, developmental service workers, justice workers, housing and Ontario Works staff, and educators.
 - Four2021-22, learning modules within a self-guided web-based platform will be made available in English and French on the FASD Ontario website in May.
 - Contracting with Surrey Place Centre on behalf of the Provincial Network of Coordinating Agencies in 2020-21 to develop and implement online family capacity building workshops through which families can learn helpful and practical skills and strategies to support their children and youth with FASD.
 - In February and March 2021, seven online sessions with 296 participants were held, including a session in French and a session with an Indigenous focus.

- Online materials including videos of the sessions, the PowerPoint presentation used for each session and a community resource tool are available on the Surrey Place website at <https://csptoronto.surreyplace.ca/resources/>

Regulation of Applied Behaviour Analysis

Key Facts

- On [August 13, 2019](#), Ontario announced its intention to strengthen the oversight of behaviour analysts who provide Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), and that the professionals would be regulated through an existing college under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*.
- Behaviour analysts provide services to a wide range of clients, including children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities and autism, those with mental health challenges or behavioural difficulties, seniors with dementia, and those in substance abuse treatment, brain injury rehabilitation and rehabilitative programming in correctional facilities.
- Currently in Ontario, if there are issues with services, clients and families have limited mechanisms to make a complaint about a provider because the majority of clinicians are not regulated and do not have a local governing body to handle complaints or discipline.
- Regulation of ABA will result in:
 - Consistency in ethical and professional standards to promote a higher level of trust between families and practitioners.
 - Clearly defined educational and ongoing quality assurance requirements for clinicians to improve consistency in treatment.
 - A mechanism for families to report complaints about providers to reduce the risk of harm.
- Behaviour analysts are not currently regulated in any Canadian province or territory; however, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have online lists or registries of qualified behavioural service providers for children and youth with autism.
- In the United States, there is a growing trend to regulate behaviour analysts. Thirty-one states have licensed behaviour analysts, while a further four states have proposed licensing legislation for behaviour analysts.

Next Steps

- In February 2021, the government announced that it will introduce legislation to regulate ABA as a new profession under the College of Psychologists of Ontario, beginning with behaviour analysts in supervisory and assessment-focused roles. Next steps will include:
 - drafting proposed legislation that, if passed, would enable this change; and
 - working with the College to develop regulations.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnostic Hubs

Key Facts

- The five regional Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnostic hubs were implemented in January 2017 to support timely access to diagnostic assessments for autism and to increase capacity to diagnose autism across the province.
- As part of the February 3, 2021 autism announcement, the government announced that it is making a \$3.8M one-time investment in diagnostic hubs in 2021-22, in addition to \$5.5M in annual funding for the hubs, to improve families' access to an assessment for their child by reducing waitlists and wait times, resulting in families being able to register for the Ontario Autism Program and access services as quickly as possible.
- With their funding, ASD diagnostic hubs are required to:
 - Conduct diagnostic assessments by partnering with other organizations and professionals;
 - Develop and implement a provincially-consistent screening and tiered-assessment approach;
 - Increase the number of health professionals in local communities able to conduct ASD diagnostic assessments by offering training and capacity building; and,
 - Connect families with the appropriate services in their communities as quickly as possible following a diagnostic assessment.
- The five regional hubs are:
 - Children's Treatment Network (Central Region)
 - Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (East Region)
 - Child and Community Resources (North Region)
 - Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital (Toronto Region)
 - Hamilton Health Sciences / Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre (West Region)
- Since November 2019, the hubs have been offering training opportunities to support health care professionals in local communities to build their expertise in autism diagnosis, including screening for early signs of autism and training on specific diagnostic assessment tools.

Next Steps

- The hubs will continue to provide diagnostic assessments and offer training opportunities for health care professionals in local communities in 2021-22.

Implementation of the new Ontario Autism Program

- On December 11, 2020, the ministry released an update on the next steps to implement the program, including the upcoming release of several call for proposals to select service providers to deliver elements of the needs-based Ontario Autism Program:
 - **Caregiver-mediated early years programs** are time-limited services for young children to help them learn new skills and meet individualized goals in the areas of social communications and play, and to build the capacity of caregivers to support their children. The call for applications was released on December 11

- with a deadline of January 29, 2021. Selected service providers were notified on April 15, 2021, and will begin offering services to families in spring/summer 2021.
- **Independent Intake Organization** will be accountable to MCCSS for the oversight and administration of key elements of the OAP provincially and within each of the five MCCSS defined regions. Key responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, intake, registration and waitlist management, employing and training Care Coordinators, allocating and reconciling funding and establishing an integrated and coordinated network of service providers. The call for applications launched in December 2020 with a deadline of February 26, 2021. Evaluation of applications is underway with the selected organization to begin operating in Spring 2021.
 - **Urgent Response Services** will provide time-limited services and supports to eligible children/youth to respond rapidly to a specific need and prevent further escalation of risk of harm to a child/youth, others and/or property. The ministry will initiate a regional-based proposals process to support the implementation of urgent response service across the province.
 - **Entry to School Program** will be a six-month group-based skill-building program for young children, 3 to 5 years of age, who are entering school for the first time and will be focused on preparing them to enter school. A Call for Applications to select service providers to deliver the entry to school program was distributed on March 30, 2021. Applications are due to the ministry by June 25, 2021.
 - On February 3, 2021, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services provided updates on the ongoing implementation of key elements of the needs-based OAP including the launch of core clinical services. These services include applied behaviour analysis, speech language pathology, occupational therapy and mental health services.
 - Beginning in March 2021, approximately 600 children and youth from across the province, representing a diverse sample of OAP registrants, started to receive invitations from the ministry to participate in the launch of core clinical services. This includes children and youth of different ages, genders, and geographic areas from across the province. The initial launch and feedback received from families on their experience will be critical in helping the ministry evaluate and refine delivery of the process before we move towards full implementation.
 - Eligible families on the OAP waitlist who submitted their registration form and supporting documentation by March 31, 2021, will receive interim one-time funding to purchase eligible services and supports.
 - Additionally, eligible families who received a childhood budget or interim one-time funding may be eligible to receive an additional payment of \$5,000 or \$20,000 based on their child's age as of April 1, 2021. Accepting this funding will not impact a family's eligibility for the needs-based program and their position on the OAP waitlist will be maintained.

Next Steps

- The Implementation Working Group continues to meet virtually to provide input to the government on key elements of the needs-based program.
- Implementation of the program is underway and ongoing throughout 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Virtual/Remote Service Delivery in Response to COVID-19

- Many service providers are offering some services through telephone or video applications where appropriate, building their capacity to deliver services remotely, or may be considering other remote and virtual service delivery options.
- Agencies have been encouraged to explore opportunities to implement alternative service models during this time, where appropriate for children and families.
- Service providers continue to take pragmatic and innovative approaches to keep children and youth safe and families supported, including delivering services through innovative modalities such as virtual tele-practice and remote services, to avoid or minimize service disruptions to children and families, all while following the guidance of local public health authorities.
- Empowered Kids Ontario (EKO) played a key role in supporting agencies across Ontario to prepare for virtual service delivery, including the development of a comprehensive Virtual Care Resource Guide and checklist.
- In 2021-22, EKO will conduct an evaluation of virtual service delivery that will include both process evaluation and outcome evaluation. Given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued need for virtual service delivery, this evaluation will help to inform future program and service delivery not only for the OAP, but broader special needs services.

Next Steps

- In 2021-22, EKO will conduct an evaluation of virtual service delivery that will include both process evaluation and outcome evaluation. Given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued need for virtual service delivery, this evaluation will help to inform future program and service delivery not only for the OAP, but broader special needs services.

Temporary Changes to Direct-Funding Programs in Response to COVID-19

- Due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services has announced a number of updates for the Ontario Autism Program:
 - An [extension for the amount of time families have to spend childhood budget and interim one-time funding](#) and submit their expense form by up to six months, if necessary. Families now have up to 18 months to spend their childhood budget and submit their expense form.
 - The ministry extended the March 31, 2020 deadline for families to submit their OAP registration form and supporting documents to be eligible for interim one-time funding. The ministry continued to provide interim one-time funding to all new applicants whose registration forms and supporting documents were submitted by March 31, 2021.
 - Additionally, to support children and youth on the autism spectrum and their families, the ministry provided greater clarity about what expenses are eligible under the Ontario Autism program for childhood budgets and interim one-time funding for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak. The current list of eligible expenses for the OAP allows for a broad range of services and supports, to support the clinical needs of children with Autism. This includes evidence-

based behavioural services, other therapies and services (e.g., Speech language therapy, Occupational therapy, and Physiotherapy), additional autism services and supports (e.g., curriculum-based interventions, life skills and social skills training programs, employment supports, and parent and caregiver capacity building and training), respite services, family service planning and support (e.g., interpretation and translation services, individualized family service planning), travel, and technology.

- The ministry has temporarily expanded the list of eligible expenses for families accessing the Special Services at Home (SSAH) and Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technology Dependent Children (MFTDC) programs to support families while community-based activities and settings are closed. These changes allow families to use funding for goods and services that may make it easier for them to stay at home during this time and practice physical distancing.
- These programs provide funding for families to purchase respite services and/or opportunities for personal growth and development for children and youth. The temporarily expanded list of eligible expenses includes the following categories of goods and services:
 - technology items to help children and youth with special needs to remain connected and/or engage in e-learning;
 - sensory items to alleviate anxiety/stress;
 - craft and hobby supplies;
 - home-based fitness and sports equipment that children and youth would otherwise access through day programs or community-based programs;
 - personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies;
 - essential service fees such as grocery and pharmacy fees; and
 - behavioural support plans and related interventions.
- These changes are temporary and the existing program terms and conditions will continue to apply upon the government providing notice.
- For the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD) program, families who have already received pre-approval for ACSD expenditures may temporarily, for the duration of the pandemic period, use pre-approved ACSD funding to purchase items/services from the expanded list of admissible expenditures without pre-approval from the ministry. For example, if a family is temporarily not using their funding for a pre-approved expense such as transportation, they can use that funding for the expenses outlined above.
- The Government of Ontario is also providing a temporary wage enhancement for direct support workers who care for vulnerable people of all ages, including children and youth, in residential, community and home settings. The temporary wage enhancement was originally scheduled to end on March 31, 2021, but has been extended to June 30, 2021.
- If families employ or buy services from a worker(s) to care for their children or youth with special needs using funding from one or more of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCCSS)-funded children's direct funding programs, these worker(s) may be eligible for a temporary wage enhancement.

- Eligible workers provide support with daily living tasks and personal care (such as feeding, changing) and ensuring the safety and welfare of children and youth with special needs. This includes workers who provide respite services. This care may be provided in-person, or virtually/online (for example, where a support worker engages in activities with the child online to provide the caregiver with respite).
- To be eligible, the worker must be doing some or all of the following in their work with a child or youth with special needs:
 - providing personal care (such as feeding, dressing, personal hygiene, toileting, managing medication),
 - providing necessary supports required to access and participate in community activities, and/or
 - observing, planning daily living routines, supervising and monitoring safety risks.
- Families can apply for funding from the ministry to pay eligible worker(s) \$3 per hour on top of their existing hourly wages, for all hours worked within the eligibility period. Families can request funding for eligible workers that worked (or will work) any time during the eligibility period.
- Families can apply for the wage enhancement funding by completing and submitting an online application. Wage enhancement payments are retroactive to October 1, 2020.

Early Developmental Surveillance - Early Years Check-In and Play & Learn

Key Facts

- From 2014-18, the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services (MCCSS), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, worked with researchers at the University of Toronto and McMaster University to develop and evaluate two resources to support developmental surveillance for children 18 months to 6 years of age:
 - [Early Years Check-In \(EYCI\)](#): a simple parent self-report tool relating to key developmental domains (social & emotional, thinking & learning, language, and movement) that parents can complete to note any areas of concern and share with early years professionals. The EYCI has been validated for use with children 18 months to 6 years of age.
 - [Play & Learn \(P&L\)](#): This separate, complementary website includes expert-reviewed, age-appropriate play-based activities that parents and caregivers can use to learn about and foster their children's skill development in key developmental domains at home.
- These resources were informed through implementation evaluation activities in which the U of T research team received feedback from parents and caregivers and collected information and best practices from early years professionals including registered early childhood educators in EarlyON Child & Family Centres, childcare, public health, and other community settings.
- In response to requests from early years professionals, MCCSS worked with the research team in 2019-20 to develop the EYCI Implementation toolkit, a

comprehensive guide to support implementation in community-based settings which includes real-life examples, tips and case studies from professionals who are already using the EYCI and P&L with families. The Toolkit and other resources including free online training are now available through the [McMaster University professional portal](#).

- Given the ongoing need for alternative service provision during the pandemic, some EarlyON Child and Family Centres are using Play&Learn activities in virtual group sessions with families, or are inviting parents who complete the EYCI online to connect with an educator in their centre for a confidential follow-up discussion about any concerns they may have about their child's development.
- The ministry continues to explore opportunities to promote these resources and strengthen developmental surveillance practice and early identification in communities across the province.

Ministry of Colleges and Universities

No Update Received

Ministry of Health

Home and Community Care Modernization

Key Facts

- On February 25, 2020 the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, the Honourable Christine Elliott, introduced Bill 175, the *Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020* in the legislature. Bill 175 received Royal assent on July 8, 2020 and will be proclaimed into force at a later date.
- The *Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020* integrates home and community care into broader health system legislation, by leveraging existing authorities in the *Connecting Care Act, 2019* for its funding and oversight. This approach recognizes that home and community care is part of an integrated system.
- The legislation lays the groundwork for the integration of home and community care into Ontario Health Teams over the coming years.
- The regulations required to support the new framework are currently being developed in close collaboration with stakeholders.
 - The regulations will include programmatic elements of the home and community care program, including the scope of services, eligibility provisions, oversight of care, and a Bill of Rights. Like the *Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994*, the new regulations will include requirements regarding school health professional services and school health personal support services.
- The Ministry of Health originally posted a summary of proposed regulations to the Regulatory Registry from February 25 to April 14, 2020.
 - Since Summer 2020, the Ministry of Health has been engaging with home and community care stakeholders to seek additional input on the regulations.
 - The ministry plans further engagements in spring/summer 2021.

- The Ministry of Health is carefully planning health system transformation to preserve continuity of home and community care while working toward improvements. This planning will continue to be done in collaboration with patients, caregivers, workers, employers, associations and unions.

Ontario Health

Key Facts

- On April 1, 2021, non-patient care functions of the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), such as health system funding and planning functions, transferred to Ontario Health. As a result, Ontario Health has assumed responsibility for community services funding agreements with health service providers, including hospitals and community services providers.
- The mandate of the LHINs has been narrowed to direct patient care. To reflect this change, the LHINs now operate under a new business name – Home and Community Care Support Services. These continue to be Crown agencies.
- Patient care functions including home care services, long-term care home placement services, and referral to community services, remain in place with Home and Community Care Support Services. Patients and families will continue to access care through the same contacts.
- Home and Community Care Support Services will continue to employ care coordination staff and deliver home and community care services – including in schools – as responsibility for providing and arranging those services is transitioned to Ontario Health Teams and other points of care over the coming years. This transition is expected to take place in a gradual, phased manner.
- The ministry will work with Ontario Health and Home and Community Care Support Services and other partners to map out the transition of home and community care to OHTs and points of care in the health system.

Ontario Health Teams

- The Ontario government is building a connected health care system centred around patients, families and caregivers. These changes will strengthen local services, making it easier for patients to navigate the system and transition between providers.
- Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) are being introduced to provide a new way of organizing and delivering care that is more connected to patients in their local communities. Under Ontario Health Teams, health care providers work as one coordinated team - no matter where they provide care.
- There are currently 42 OHTs that have been approved by the ministry, and more teams across the province are working to become approved. All OHTs, even those that are approved, are in the early stages of implementation.
- Home and Community Care Support Services will be a stable platform for transitions of home and community care services to OHTs over the coming years. Once this process is complete, it is anticipated that these organizations will be wound down.

School Health Support Services During COVID-19

Key Facts

- The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education affirm their commitment to supporting students to participate in public schooling, including by providing access to school health services both in school and for remote learning.
- On September 21, 2020, the Ministry of Health provided guidance to LHINs (now Home and Community Care Support Services) regarding the delivery of school health professional services. The guidance was delivered in a memorandum that emphasized the following points:
 - As outlined in the Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools, it is the Ministry of Education's expectation that school boards should work with partners to develop local protocols for school access by regulated health professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services.
 - Eligible students registered for in-person learning continue to be eligible to receive school health services.
 - Eligible students can also receive school health services while engaging in remote learning. The Ministry of Health has outlined parameters to support the delivery of care outside of schools.
 - Some families have elected to transition to home schooling and will need to engage with Home and Community Care Support Services to establish services for home-schooled students.
 - All services will continue to be provided in alignment with public health guidance.

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

Development of an Accessibility Standard for Education under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*

Key Facts

- The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility (MSAA) has the lead to establish an accessibility standard for education under the AODA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (EDU) and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU).
- In February 2018, two separate Education Standards Development Committees (ESDC) were established to support the development of the standard; one committee to focus on the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) sector, and a second committee to focus on the postsecondary education sector.
- The K-12 ESDC includes people with disabilities, as well as individuals from organizations from the affected sectors.
- In March 2021, the ESDC submitted its initial report to Minister Cho (MSAA).

Next Steps

- MSAA is expecting to post the committee's Initial Recommendations Report for public feedback in early June (TBC).

- The report would be accompanied by a survey, developed in consultation with EDU, to aid the public in commenting on the report.
- The committee will take this public feedback into consideration as it revises its initial report into a final report for submission to the MSAA minister.