



Daily Provincial Network meetings on COVID-19: March 18th through 27th

As the COVID-19 pandemic ramped up here in Ontario, the Provincial Network began meeting daily, effective March 18th. Our role has been to look at the overarching issues of the sector and develop a coordinated approach to providing information, resources and collaboration between our networks and government.

Our Key Priorities:

- Maintaining staff levels and morale:
 - Need essential worker status and to be treated like health and LTC staff, including access to child care;
 - Critical to have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which is in short supply.
- Funding to meet the needs of the pandemic;
- Look 3 weeks out for potential impacts on people, families and supports;
- Resources for people and families;
- Create and sustain channels of clear communication with MCCSS and the government's Emergency Operations Committee (EOC).

Here is some information and outcomes thus far:

Maintaining Staff Levels and Morale:

The HR Committee has put together a hub of pandemic information for agencies:

<http://www.ontariodevelopmentalservices.ca/>

This resource is being continually updated.

You also would likely have received a number of social media tiles in support of DSP's and the work they're doing.

ED's/CEO's: Please continue utilizing the CLO and OASIS listservs, to ask questions and share relevant information and resources.

Funding:

In this week's economic update, the government committed an additional \$20 million, for a total of \$40 million to the sector. How this funding will be allocated and deployed, has been left intentionally vague in order to be as flexible as possible to meet current needs. We take this as an excellent phase one response to the current crisis and thank Minister Smith and his team for securing much needed stability to meet the challenges.

Organizational budgets, including stabilization funding, will be continued through fiscal 2020/21. Also maintained is the minimum \$5000 in Passport funding for those turning 18. As well, money is being provided for an additional 4700 children to receive SSAH funding.

Note: Time-limited project funding will not be carried over beyond established dates.

MCCSS has committed to providing flexibility on budget lines and accountability protocols.

Impact Report:

Several members have created an Impact Report, looking 3 weeks from now at the most likely, as well as worst-case scenarios and the impacts they are likely to have on people, agencies, staff and families. This report has been shared with MCCSS so that they are aware and can advocate and coordinate with MOH for needed PPE, crisis response for people with complex needs, families in crisis, common health response protocols and staff supports. Stay tuned for this report.

Resources for People and Families:

Two excellent online resource hubs have been created to address issues relating to social isolation for people and families, as well as access to the latest information:

<https://communitylivingontario.ca/en/staying-connected/>

<https://connectability.ca/en/>

These hubs, as well and the HR hub, are cross-linked with each other, as well as other online resources and are being updated continuously.

Communication with government:

To date, we have had good attendance at our meetings by senior staff at MCCSS, as well as ADM Rupert Gordon and most recently, Minister Smith's Chief of Staff, Sarah Letersky.

ADM David Remington has been appointed to the EOC. As a former Regional Director, he has an excellent grasp of the DS sector and is bringing our issues to the table. In addition, Eugene Versteeg, Senior VP from Christian Horizons, has been attending the calls and reporting back.

Thanks to Minister Smith and the MCCSS for their time, flexibility, funding and commitment to collaboration at this most challenging time.

As each of you continues to connect with each other through your local planning tables, Program Supervisors, DSO and your broader communities, please know that the members of the Provincial Network are with you in navigating this unprecedented situation. We will continue meeting as needed, in order to advocate for the needs of people, families, support organizations and their incredible staff during this unprecedented pandemic.

Stay strong. Stay healthy. Stay connected.

The Provincial Network.



Photo courtesy of Participation House, Durham. Some of the folks they support painted rocks of support and placed them in the rock garden at the local hospital.