



Formerly SSAHPC- Special Services at Home Passport Provincial Coalition!

Bulletin from PFPF

March 9, 2021

The Ontario government is keeping thousands of children with disabilities waiting for help

Special Services at Home (SSAH) is an extremely important and cost-effective way to improve the lives of Ontario children and youth with disabilities. Families receive funding for workers or other supports so that young people can participate in and contribute to their communities, lessening the likelihood of paid supports as adults.

Unfortunately, the Ontario government has kept thousands of children and youth unserved on waiting lists, waiting for help.

Data from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services¹ shows that:

- At the time when they announced additional SSAH funding for this year, the Ministry knew it was inadequate. They left 6400 eligible children on the waiting list.
- A year later, that number may be estimated to climb to 11,000.

Minister Todd Smith has now indicated to us² that over the next 2 years the government expects the SSAH waiting list to grow. **They will keep thousands more eligible children and youth waiting even longer.**

Using the data they provided, we calculate that:

- 13,640 eligible children would be waiting by next spring.
- 16,210 eligible children would be waiting by the following year.

The pandemic has brought great hardship for many families, especially for families caring for children with physical and developmental disabilities. It has compounded the pressure and stress on parents who are often the sole caregivers. Isolation and loneliness have complicated the lives of their children, often precipitating mental health crises. Waiting for supports that never come threatens the health and well-being of families and children.

For families who do get SSAH, the government spends so little - on average, \$7 a day per child. The average annual SSAH allocation would now provide a child with disabilities just one quarter of the support it did 25 years ago.

When SSAH funding is not stretched too thin, it provides wonderful and very welcome support to strengthen families and communities. When children are denied help, they lose important opportunities and face greater risk later in life. Thousands of children could have better lives at less cost to government if their families received SSAH.

ACTION NEEDED: Ontario's 2021-22 Budget must enhance SSAH funding so that the waiting list is eliminated and all children and youth are supported as soon as they become eligible.

¹ https://d718293e-c3b2-4015-95b3-51454cb27bc5.filesusr.com/ugd/3ec4f6_bcfb0c2b34c448ed9e9932ccb41202a5.pdf

² https://d718293e-c3b2-4015-95b3-51454cb27bc5.filesusr.com/ugd/3ec4f6_e92d20d37d6845bc80559b58d7353934.pdf