

OHCA Position Statement

Integrating Care For Children

The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA) advocates for the creation of a strong, reliable and accessible home care system that fully supports all Ontarians, regardless of age, to remain independent and active in their communities. The aging population is dominating the health care agenda, but notwithstanding, OHCA urges policymakers to continue their efforts to enhance and better integrate services for children.

Currently, four government ministries – the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and the Ministry of Education, provide services to support children with complex needs to remain at home.¹ Recognizing the challenges to families, and providers, of multiple ministries governing the resources for children, the four ministries are working together to achieve improved integration and collaboration in the provision of their respective mandates. OHCA applauds this effort and encourages their continued work to reduce bureaucracy and duplication.

The four ministries collectively address children's needs, ranging from those with short term acute health needs to those with developmental, physical and/or mental health disabilities. Through these ministries children and their families are provided with many services and resources, including health care, respite, and assistive devices, to name a few, in order that they may live, play and attend school in their communities. However policy variations between ministries and, in some cases, across the province can compromise the good intentions for children and their families.

Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) have been charged to ensure that health care in their communities is seamless and integrated. By their leadership, LHINs can influence the movement of individuals, particularly those with life-long health conditions, in order to keep children at home and ensure that they do not fall between the cracks between providers of care. Key to successful integration is a belief by the provider community that there is a 'shared responsibility' for on-going care needs of all people within the LHIN.

¹ Canadian Home Care Association, 2006. *Home Care for Children with Special Needs: An Environmental Scan across Canadian Provinces and Territories*

OHCA suggests that the traditional notion of home care services as a component of the health care continuum only be expanded. Leveraging the expertise of staff already providing care to children at home and/or in schools through the MOHLTC makes sense and would help to ensure the continuity critical to achieving best outcomes for children.

Approximately 30,000 children per year are served by the MOHLTC through the CCAC administered home care program.² An estimated 30% of these children are served in the home and 70% at school.³ Services to children include the full range of therapies, nursing and home support. Through the frontline service provider, children are prepared and supported at key transition points (such as preschool, school age, adolescence, adulthood) that often trigger changes in ministry and/or policy. By recognizing the potential of the home care team, children and families will be afforded greater continuity, reduced duplication and potentially improved access to staff.

Limited staffing resources, particularly in rural areas, limits access to care, and generates waitlists. Leveraging providers in the community to cross ministerial boundaries will serve to get the right service to the right child and family at the right time.

Home care is vital to the transformation of health care in Ontario, and our children are vital to the future of the province. OHCA urges policymakers to work together to achieve the best collaboration and integration of care for children through an expanded scope for frontline providers.

The OHCA, *the voice of home care in Ontario*, represents Canadian home care service organizations that deliver quality home care to an estimated 300,000 Ontarians annually. The OHCA advocates for a strong, dependable and accessible home care system for Ontarians. OHCA members are accredited through the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) or the International Standards Association (ISO).

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For the latest in news and information about the home and community care sector in Ontario, subscribe to the Ontario Home Care Association's 'House Call' at www.homecareontario.ca

² Ibid

³ Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres, 2003. *Children's Services and Community Care Access Centres: Discussion Paper (draft)*

Prepared by the Ontario Home Care Association.

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