

Family says wait time for services hurting son

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was forced to wait on a 12 to 18-month list for Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy.

"After a very extensive wait time of two years to see a developmental pediatrician, we were then told that due to his poor comprehension and functional ability of approximately one year to 18 months, he would not qualify for IBI therapy. At that time, he was then put on a wait-list for ABA therapy," said Maxine.

For a time, the family was able to secure the services of a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) and an Occupational Therapist (OT) through ErinoakKids in Oakville - the closest place where the services are offered. However, Dylan only received eight sessions before entering senior kindergarten, after which he no longer qualified for the SLP program.

"Needless to say, we are at our wits' end and very frustrated as he has been discharged from SLP services despite being non-verbal, because he is in (senior kindergarten) this year at school," she said. "We understand that the SLP through the school is just a consultation role and will not be providing (one-to-one) support."

According to Maxine, things got worse in September when the family was told the wait time had been extended from 12-18 months to 18-24 months, which would place Dylan past the age where the treatment has been shown to be most effective.

With nowhere left to turn, the Payne family recently reached out to their local MPP, Ted Arnott, who promptly forwarded their concerns to the Ontario Minister of Children's and Youth Services, Michael Coteau.

The Paynes received a

"We are at our wits' end and very frustrated as he has been discharged from SLP services despite being non-verbal, because he is in (senior kindergarten) this year at school. (The Ministry of Children and Youth Services) did not answer one single question that I asked. It's a whole lot of lip service and a very generic letter that I feel is probably sent to everyone who inquires about the new OAP,"

- Maxine Verge-Payne

reply from the ministry on Oct. 11, but say they are no further ahead when it comes to answers than they were before.

"(The Ministry of Children and Youth Services) did not answer one single question that I asked. It's a whole lot of lip service and

"During this transition phase to the new program, agencies are working to move families into the new program, while maintaining pre-planned service for those still in the old program. We want to do this right, while still providing a high-level of care, and this takes time," wrote community programs manager, Eden Cantkier.

In an earlier response to inquiries by The IFP, the ministry gave an idea of just how long that transition might take.

"We know this system change won't happen overnight. We are doing this incrementally because we want families to experience a smooth transition to the new OAP. Our goal is to reduce wait times for children and youth autism services to less than six months within five years," said a ministry representative.

However, that timeline is cold comfort for Verge-

Payne and her family, who are still searching for answers and a concrete idea of when they can expect to secure treatment for their son.

"I'm not only frustrated and angry, but now I'm disgusted that these government officials can't get things in order for these kids that need this therapy. Anyone else would be held accountable but it seems all we hear as Autism parents are excuses. Where is the inclusion and the responsibility to our kids?" she said.

"I understand it takes time to revamp systems and programs, but I truly don't believe it takes as long as the Ministry of Children and Youth Services are stating. In the meantime, we are forced to put up with it because there is no accountability."

"I won't stop fighting, my son deserves better and so do all the other children and parents," she added.

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