

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Education and Advocacy: Navigating the School System

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1. DIAGNOSIS AND ASSESSMENT

You do not need a formal diagnosis to ask for school supports (see Section 3 below).

But if you are seeking a diagnosis:

- **Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital:** supports Autism and developmental assessments but also offer a wide range of pediatric disability services
www.hollandbloorview.ca
- **SickKids ASD Program:** Autism spectrum disorder assessments and specialty clinics
www.sickkids.ca
- **Surrey Place:** offers support for developmental disabilities, autism, FASD, dual diagnoses
www.surreyplace.ca
- **Grandview Kids:** This is in Durham Region offering support for developmental, physical, and communication disabilities
www.grandviewkids.ca
 - Public assessment wait times are typically 18–24 months (in our experience)
 - Private assessments can happen in 3–8 weeks. However these cost between \$2,500–\$4,000 – again in our experience

2. ONTARIO AUTISM PROGRAM (OAP)

For families of children with an autism diagnosis. Wait times are around 5 years.

- **OAP Registration** funds ABA, speech therapy, OT, and other eligible services
www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-autism-program

Caregivers can also reach out to:

- **Autism Ontario:** OAP information sessions, school advocacy, community support, parent resources
Phone: 416-246-9592
www.autismontario.com
- **Geneva Centre for Autism:** They are a Toronto-based therapy, training, and family support
Phone: 416-322-7877
www.genevacentre.ca
- **Kerry's Place:** They provide support and services for autistic people of all ages across Ontario, not just children.
www.kerrysplace.org

3. YOUR RIGHTS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

- **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**
 - Your child does not need a formal diagnosis to receive an IEP.
 - An IEP must be written within 30 school days of placement.
 - You can request everything in writing.
- **IPRC: Identification, Placement and Review Committee**
 - You can request an IPRC meeting in writing at any time.
 - The school cannot deny your request.
 - You may bring a support person, friend, advocate, or interpreter.
 - You can request a review after three months in a placement.
- **Autism Ontario School Advocacy Toolkit:** provides guides for IEP, IPRC, and navigating school boards. Aparna has used this and found it very helpful.
<https://www.autismontario.com/programs-services/learning-resources>
- **People for Education:** This is a plain-language guide to Ontario school rights, but in general not only for children with disabilities. www.peopleforeducation.ca

4. SERVICES AND THERAPIES OUTSIDE SCHOOL

For all diagnoses, whether developmental, physical, sensory, learning disabilities, or mental health, you can access a central healthline.

- **Toronto Central Healthline:** helps you find local disability services by diagnosis, age, and neighbourhood: www.torontocentralhealthline.ca

5. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

- **Hong Fook Care:** Culturally appropriate primary care and mental health counselling: <https://hfcare.ca>
- **South Asian Community Health Services:** Culturally appropriate primary care and mental health counselling: <https://sachss.ca/>
- **Asian Initiative in Mental Health at Toronto Western Hospital:**
https://www.uhn.ca/MentalHealth/Clinics/Outpatient-Mental-Health?utm_source=https://www.uhn.ca/mentalhealth/clinics/asian_mental_health&utm_medium=404&utm_campaign=redirects
- **CAMH:** Mental health support across all backgrounds; sliding scale options available www.camh.ca
- **Ontario Caregiver Organization:** Free support, counselling referrals, and peer connection for caregivers: www.ontariocaregiver.ca

6. FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

- **Disability Tax Credit (DTC):** This federal tax credit can be applied for through the Canada Revenue Agency.
www.canada.ca/disability-tax-credit
- **Child Disability Benefit:** This is a monthly tax-free payment for families who qualify for the DTC
www.canada.ca/child-disability-benefit
- **Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP):** This is a long-term savings with government grants and bonds. Requires DTC.
www.canada.ca/rdsp

- **Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP):** ODSP offers income and employment support for adults with disabilities
www.ontario.ca/odsp
- **Special Services at Home (SSAH):** SSAH gives funding for families to purchase supports for children with developmental or physical disabilities
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/special-services-home>

7. PLANNING FOR ADULTHOOD

- **Developmental Services Ontario (DSO): Toronto Region**
www.dsontario.ca
- **Passport Program:** Government funding for adults with developmental disabilities to participate in community life
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/passport-program-adults-developmental-disability>
- **Autism Ontario's Transition to Adulthood Resources:** Guides, webinars, and peer support for the 18+ transition
www.autismontario.com/transition
- **Rotary Cheshire Homes:** Supported living, respite, and community programs for adults who identify as D/deaf or visually impaired
<https://www.cfpdp.com/RCH/default.html>