

Provincial Autism Strategy

June 15, 2010

Early in 2009, a report was commissioned to develop an action plan that would support a Provincial Autism Strategy. The report contributors were members of the Autism Action Group (AAG) which was comprised of representatives from the Departments of Education and Early Childhood, Health and Wellness, Community Services, Seniors and Labour and the Autism Society of PEI

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development officially accepts the guiding principles in the *Prince Edward Island Autism Action Plan* and has committed that the Provincial Autism Strategy will reflect the recommendations of the Action Plan. In particular, this is a commitment to a strategy where all related departments have ownership and accountability and community input is essential.

The department has already implemented a number of initiatives from this report, including:

- The development of an Intensive Kindergarten Support model to ensure that children can continue to receive intensive support in their first school year.
- In the last year a Preschool Autism Coordinator and three full time Preschool Autism Specialists have been hired, which has helped to decrease wait times.
- As of last July all children receiving IBI services are assessed at entry and exit from the program to help evaluate the effectiveness of the program.
- Two new Autism Consultants will begin training this Fall to build capacity for supporting students at the Eastern and Western School Boards.

Immediate action is also being taken on a number of other recommendations in the report, they include:

- Issuing a Minister's Directive on autism that outlines school based autism specific supports and establishes a commitment to evidence based practices.
- Creating a part time Navigator position to help guide families through the system and provide ongoing support.
- Creating an internal communication path to ensure all internal stakeholders are aware of roles, responsibilities, activities and accountabilities.
- Working with other departments to create a plan to provide more support for all families coping with ASD, especially for those on wait lists.
- Conducting a new survey that will go to all Island families with children who have

ASD, not just those in the Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) program. This allows families to provide input about their experience and identify service gaps.

- Enhancing the wage subsidy by one dollar per hour for tutors of home-based IBI programming to help families subsidize tutor wages, while the department develops a new service delivery model for tutors which will include guidelines around wages.
- Create a resource centre in partnership with the Autism Society and Stars for Life.
- Increasing communication between the Autism Society and the department on a monthly basis.