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## Ministry of Children and Family Development Autism Service Changes – Q and A

### Q1: What are the changes to autism funding and when do they take effect?

A.: While the overall budget for autism programs has actually **increased by \$1.6 million** this year, the ministry is moving forward with a number of changes aimed at **increasing access** to services and **improving equity** among children and youth diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder – and their families. These are:

- ***Increase in Funding for children under six:***

- **Effective April 1, 2010**, the ministry will be **increasing funding** from \$20,000 to **\$22,000** annually for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder who are under six years of age. Research indicates that intensive intervention before age six results in better long-term outcomes for children with ASD.

- ***Moving to Invoice Payment for all families:***

- **Effective October, 2009**, Autism Funding will only be available via **Invoice Payment for all new enrolments** to the Autism Funding Programs. Families currently receiving Direct Funding will be transitioned to Invoice Payment on the date of their funding agreement renewal.
- Families of children under age six who have not renewed their funding agreement prior to April 1, 2010, will be required to do so at that time to receive the enhanced funding.
- On Invoice Payment, families choose the professionals who will provide autism intervention, and the professionals then bill government directly for services rendered. We've heard from many families that the Invoice Payment system is more convenient, less time-consuming and, ultimately, more efficient for both parents and government.

- ***Changes to Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention Programs:***

- In order to ensure fairness and equal access to services for all families raising a child or youth with autism spectrum disorder, the province's **Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI)** programs will be discontinued, effective **January 31, 2010**.
- The centres currently provide EIBI services to 70 of the province's more than 900 children under age six diagnosed with autism at a cost of about \$70,000 annually per child.
- A minimum of \$1-million will be redirected toward the creation of a new provincial outreach program to improve access to professional services, particularly in rural communities.

**Q. What about children over six years of age?**

- Autism funding for children and youth aged 6 to 18 years of age **remains the same at \$6,000 per child, per year**. Families may also be eligible for a range of other services and supports – including respite -- through MCFD and Community Living British Columbia.

**Q. My child currently receives autism services and intervention through an EIBI program. What happens to us when the program closes?**

- One of the key reasons for ensuring EIBI programs are funded through until January 31, 2010 is to give children and families affected a lengthy period of time to successfully transition to the Autism Funding: Under Age 6 program. Resources – including [Autism Community Training \(ACT\)](#) training courses and [Registry of Autism Service Providers \(RASP\)](#) -- are available to all families of children diagnosed with ASD throughout British Columbia.
- Once the EIBI program has ended, access to autism funding will continue to be available for your child through Invoice Payment. The Autism Funding Unit will send you an Autism Funding agreement in late November/early December 2009 for you to sign and return directly to the Autism Funding Unit for processing. We will be working with you and your EIBI service provider in the coming months to ensure a coordinated transition is in place to support you and your child during transition to the Autism Funding program.

**Q. I am currently utilizing Direct Funding in order to pay my child's service providers. How does Invoice Payment differ -- and when will my funding switch over to this method?**

- Invoice Payment was created in 2004 in response to parents' concerns that Direct Funding was too time-consuming and difficult to manage. Since that time, it has proven to be an effective and efficient system for both parents and government.
- With the **Invoice Payment system**, funding is set aside in an 'account' held within government in the child's name and payment is provided directly to service providers for eligible intervention.
- Parents choose the services they need and the service providers they want and notify the Autism Funding Unit by filling out a '[Request to Pay Service Providers/Suppliers](#)' form (CF0925).
- Service providers submit invoices to the Autism Funding Unit for services they have provided, and the Unit then pays service providers directly within 30 days. This reduces paperwork for families while still ensuring they retain control over their child's services and service providers. Professionals who provide services to families on Invoice Payment are not required to complete any more paperwork than professionals providing services to families on Direct Funding.
- Parents can contact the Autism Funding Unit at any time to confirm the amount of funds remaining in their account.
- Autism funding agreements are automatically renewed at the end of the month of your child's birthday.

**Q. Can I pay for services myself, and then be reimbursed?**

**A:** No. To pay for services, complete a Request to Pay Service Providers/Suppliers form and submit the form to the Autism Funding Unit. Authorized Service Providers will then invoice the Autism Funding Unit to receive payment. The Autism Funding Unit is committed to paying service providers within 30 days of receipt of an approved invoice.

**Q: When will families who currently receive Direct Funding be transitioned to Invoice Payment?**

**A:** Families who currently receive Direct Funding will be transitioned to Invoice Payment on the date of their funding agreement renewal – typically this falls on the month following the child's birthday. Families of children under age six who have not renewed their funding agreement prior to April 1, 2010, will be required to do so at this time to receive the enhanced funding.

**Q: Will the ministry be doing anything to improve community services for children and youth with autism?**

**A:** Government will be redirecting a minimum of \$1-million in funding to create a provincial outreach program to help build capacity and provide services in under-served communities throughout B.C.. Ultimately, that will mean better service for more children and youth diagnosed with autism, and their families.

For more information on autism spectrum disorder programs and services, please visit the ministry web site at <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/autism/index>.