

Below is the fourth email from Karen Glass, Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Services Division about Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion and the work her division at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is doing to help improve services for people who have a developmental disability.

Our vision in Journey to Belonging is of an Ontario where people with developmental disabilities feel at home in their communities. We will continue to work together with our partners to build a developmental services system that is more responsive to people's needs, and provides flexible, person-centered supports to help meet their changing needs over the course of their lives.

I encourage you to share this email with anyone you think may be interested. If you would like to be added or removed from our distribution list, please contact dscsengagements@ontario.ca.

In this edition, I want to share some of the work that is having an impact now and setting foundations for our vision in Journey to Belonging.

Supporting families and caregivers

- Families, caregivers and friends are key partners in a person-centred system and deserve to be supported and connected with one another.
- That is why MCCSS continues to provide funding to the Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) for a grant program that funds peer-to-peer support initiatives by Family Support Networks.
- OCO received 70 applications for the 2024-25 year through a public facing call for applications and successful applicants will be notified soon.
- This grant program makes it easier for families and caregivers of adults with a developmental disability to find peer support in their community, share information, and build connections for their own wellbeing and the people they provide support.
- Since this program started, over 139 grants have been awarded to family networks across the province.

Supporting DS service providers

- With MCCSS funding and support, the Knowledge Translation and Transfer Hub and Network continues to provide resources and learning opportunities to DS service providers who are seeking leading practices and ways to offer person-centred supports.
- A current focus is building awareness of human-trafficking and its impact on people with developmental disabilities. A learning module on Anti-Human Trafficking and its relevance to the DS sector will soon be posted on the REAL Xchange site.
- Recent learning webinars are available online if you would like to view and learn more:
 - The Impact of Anti-Human Trafficking in the Developmental Services Webcast (January 11, 2024)
 - Understanding a Trauma-Informed Approach to Support (October 3, 2023)
- I'm also pleased to share that we are supporting the Provincial Network on Developmental Services in their development of a readiness assessment of the current capacity of ministry-funded service agencies to deliver on the vision and principles of Journey to Belonging.
- The ministry greatly values the importance of upholding and cultivating relationships with sector partners. We know that possibilities are inspired and achieved when families, communities, service providers and government come together with mutual understanding, common goals, and willingness to move forward.

Initiatives that are helping the DS workforce

- As you may recall from my last email, we are continuing to partner with the DS sector on initiatives that support the DS workforce and goals for our workforce strategy.
- Currently, four task groups with diverse representation from the DS sector are working to implement initiatives related to skills development and training, recruitment and retention, and research.
- One of the initiatives in development is the 2024 Labour Market Survey, which will survey DS human resource managers, DS workers, and individuals and families to update the workforce profile and assess its current state and emerging issues.

- Recognizing the importance of capturing the voices of people with lived experience, one of the surveys being developed is targeted specifically to individuals and families.
- The last time a survey like this was conducted was in 2018, before the COVID-19 pandemic. A lot has changed since then. It's important that knowledge and understanding of today's workforce is updated to help the sector plan for the future.
- Surveys will launch in the coming weeks

Upcoming Engagement:

- On May 28, 2024, at 7:00 pm join us for a special webinar with Partners for Planning, where MCCSS representatives will have a conversation about Journey to Belonging and answer your questions. This webinar is free and intended for people with developmental disabilities, family members, and caregivers. You can register at this link: **[Overview of Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion - May 28, 2024.](#)**
- Representatives from MCCSS are also presenting and talking about Journey to Belonging at various conferences and local meetings this Spring to share information and progress.

Thank you for reading. As a reminder, please share this email with others who may be interested and contact dscsengagements@ontario.ca if you would like to be added or removed from our distribution list.

Karen Glass
Assistant Deputy Minister
Community Services Division