

AS AUTISM SERVICES

We Could Use a Little Help: Parents of Children with ASD looking for Respite Support

-Discussion Points-

- ✓ 1 out of every 166 school aged child in Saskatchewan has an autism spectrum disorder. (ASD)
- ✓ What was once viewed as a rare disorder is now recognized as the most common neurological disorder affecting children.
- ✓ More children in Saskatchewan schools are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder than are diagnosed with a visual impairment, a hearing impairment, and mental health impairment combined.
- ✓ **IQ instead of diagnosis remains as program entry criteria**
At the present time only families with children that have an IQ lower than 70 can apply for respite funding through the Community Living Division Branch of the Department of Social Services. It is only after this entry criterion is met that the Department will assess the family for services based on need.
- ✓ **Families with children with higher IQ face challenges in parenting.** Children with higher functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome, a disorder on the autism spectrum, typically have IQ above 70 but have severe impairments in the areas of social, sensory, executive functioning and motor planning. These impairments display themselves as severe anxiety, rigidity, depression or oppositional tendencies, resulting in behavioural challenges.
- ✓ **Agency support needed to address lack of trained respite providers**
Families often have a great deal of difficulty finding adequately trained individuals willing to work with their child (ren). ***At the present time, there is no agency contracted to train, coach, support and either employ or keep lists of caregivers trained to work with children with ASD.*** It is of little value to have funding to hire respite workers if you can't find a worker to hire.
- ✓ **Respite Funding is currently Subject to Income Test**
The income test should be removed and the program made universally available.
It is our belief that, in the vast majority of the cases, only families who need the support will contact the department and go through the cumbersome funding process.