



CADDAC Welcomes Revised Guidelines for the Application of Special Education Categories from Ontario Ministry of Education

Students with ADHD and/or other neurological disorders in Ontario should now have greater accessibility to equitable education opportunities

TORONTO, ON, Jan. 10, 2012 — Ontario children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) should now have easier access to special education services following a memorandum recently sent to school boards by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Many families in the province have struggled for decades to access these services that their children with ADHD need in order to succeed in school.

The Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (CADDAC) congratulates the Ministry for this first step in correcting a long-standing inequity of access to special education services.

A new Ministry memorandum to school boards states that students with ADHD who have learning-based needs should be identified as exceptional students, and can be recognized under a variety of categories including behavior, communication, intellectual, physical and multiple.

Children can be categorized in the communication (learning disability) category regardless of whether criteria for a learning disability are met. When a child is identified in this way, an individual education plan (IEP) must be developed and implemented by the school.

It is CADDAC's hope that school boards will follow through with the intent of this memorandum. It is also our hope that increased training for educators will be the next step.

“Our school systems need to become more educated about this legitimate disorder and recognize that students with ADHD are indeed special learners who typically require school accommodations as part of their treatment,” says Rosemary Tannock, Canada Research Chair & Professor in Special Education & Adaptive Technology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the University of Toronto.

The Ontario Ministry of Education memorandum, “Categories of Exceptionality”, can be viewed in the special education section of the Ministry website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/2011CategoryException.pdf>

“There is an appalling inconsistency in how students with these complex neurological disorders are recognized and supported across the province,” says Heidi Bernhardt, National Director of CADDAC.

“We receive calls almost daily from frustrated parents who are told that ADHD does not fit under a specific special education Category of Exceptionalities, which some boards insist is necessary for a student to be identified. Many children are denied access to interventions recommended by their doctor or psychologist because they did not have the ‘right’ diagnosed disorder.”

Although many may not recognize the significance of this memorandum, we should all be concerned as a society that students with disorders such as ADHD, Tourette Syndrome and other neurological and medical disorders are being denied special education resources and interventions. These medical disorders do not impact a child’s intelligence. The students are often bright, talented children and adolescents who, with the right assistance at school, grow into successful, contributing members of society. Untreated, these disorders can lead to early school dropout, unemployment and lower paying jobs, increased medical, judicial and economic costs to our society.

Ontario was one of three provinces to receive a failing grade in CADDAC’s first “report card” in 2010 on how provincial special education systems identified and supported students with ADHD. All three provinces have systems that allowed inconsistencies and inequities in how students with ADHD receive special education services - if they receive them at all.

CADDAC calls on all provincial governments to ensure that ADHD is recognized by their education systems as a legitimate learning disorder and that all students with ADHD who have special learning needs receive appropriate supports to overcome their challenges in becoming academically successful.

About CADDAC

The Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada is a national, not-for-profit organization providing leadership in awareness, education and advocacy for ADHD organizations and individuals with the disorder across Canada. CADDAC is committed to increasing the understanding of ADHD, therefore decreasing the stigma of ADHD by providing up-to-date scientific information. CADDAC endeavors to network with government, professional organizations, health care providers, educators and all other stakeholders to improve the lives of people with ADHD. For more information about ADHD or “Categories of Exceptionality,” please visit www.caddac.ca.

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