



## **Building Inclusive Communities Virtual Stakeholder Consultations – October 2020**

### **Outreach**

Clients, parents, and caregivers in the Building Inclusive Communities Programs were invited to participate in a conversation about their experiences with Options and Passport services. The invitation was sent by email to FST staff in August 2020, posted on the FST website, and sent to Development Services Ontario (DSO) for dissemination to their staff. Staff were asked to distribute the flyer to people receiving their services. A total of 37 clients and caregivers expressed an interest in participating in the consultations. A total of 13 individuals participated in the consultations.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through two virtual group consultations and individual phone calls. Clients were assured that confidentiality would be maintained, and that feedback was anonymous. Participants provided verbal informed consent.

### **Topics Discussed**

The 4 main questions were:

- What services do you feel are working well?
- What areas do you feel can be improved?
- What services are most important and essential for you and your family?
- What new services would you like to have access to, if possible?



### **Participation**

A total of 11 parents and caregivers attended one of the two group virtual consultation sessions that took place on October 1 and 6, 2020. Two clients were reached independently on October 6th and 7th. Unfortunately, 25 parents, caregivers, clients, and service providers were unable to attend or be reached during this period.

### **Acknowledgements**

We want to thank the clients and parents who were able to participate on such short notice, and for sharing their personal stories and feedback with us.

## Theme 1 – Coordinated Service Delivery

**The development services sector system is complex, inefficient, and creates inequalities.**

Recommendations:

- Make system more streamlined and easier to navigate
- Improve information package
- Changes should be communicated on time

## Theme 2 – Passport Funding

**Eligibility criteria for allowable expenses is unclear, inconsistent, and serves as a barrier. Furthermore, there is ambiguity between Passport and ODSP funding.**

Recommendations:

- Improve the information package and training supports
- Continue to provide Passport clients with 25% of their annual allotment upfront
- Provide clarity on the different functions, roles and overlap of Passport & ODSP payment systems

## Theme 3 – Employment & Housing Supports

**Housing and employment supports are inadequate and do not meet the needs of clients. Urgent housing needs are going unmet and waitlists are too long.**

Recommendations:

- More transparency with clients regarding housing requests
- Advocate to landlords, developers, and city officials
- More one-on-one and hands-on employment support programs to increase vocational skills

## Theme 4 – Role of Siblings in Providing Care

**Parents worried about how their children's care needs will be met when they can no longer care for them.**

Recommendations:

- Siblings should be recognized as caregivers of the individuals requiring support

## Theme 5 – Living with Dignity

**There is a lack of meaningful engagements during the pandemic.**

Recommendations:

- Support funded programs such as day programs to transition to virtual services during the pandemic
- Review how much clients can earn while receiving ODSP, so clients do not feel that the system is keeping them down

## Discussion

Individuals and families accessing developmental services in Ontario are not spared the challenges that many in society experiencing poverty, marginalization, and discrimination face. The complexity of the DSO sector and system can further marginalize and make life more challenging for clients and families. The sector needs to support efficient and equitable service delivery to everyone.

## Limitations

This work is limited in scope and was completed in the early and preliminary stages of the engagement work we hope to continue in the BIC programs here at FST. Due to time constraints, the report only outlines feedback from a small group of individuals.