**INDIVIDUALLY FUNDED SERVICES AND SUPPORTS IN ONTARIO: WHAT’S AVAILABLE AND HOW IS IT WORKING**

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**Objectives:** Individualized funding is a way of flowing money directly to individuals so that they can purchase services of supports. It is designed to enhance choice and self determination. In Ontario adults with developmental disabilities (DD) have access such funding through the ‘*Passport Program’.* This funding is designed to increase community participation. Some agencies also develop individualized budgets for their clients and flow money directly to them for services and supports. including residential supports. Although many agencies in Ontario provide Individually Funded Services and Supports (IFSS) to adults with developmental disabilities, there is no provincial framework to support and guide agencies in developing, delivering and evaluating this type service and support. Absent is a clear understanding of how clients, families and agencies define IFSS, how the IFSS provided look, what is working and not working or the results. The purpose of this research was to understand what is happening in the delivery of IFSS in Ontario and what peoples’ experiences are. The results were used to develop recommendation for the expansion IFSS in Ontario to maximize the benefits for adults with DD.

**Method:**  Conducted 73 semi-structured interviews with people across Ontario that use or provide support to those using Individually Funded Services and Supports. The participants included 24 adults with developmental disabilities, 31 family members and 18 representatives from agencies that provide IFSS. Interviews were transcribed and coded using Nvivo Software. We also held four regional focus groups with interview participants to discuss the results and develop recommendations on improving the delivery of IFSS in Ontario.

**Results:** The interview participants identified many benefits to IFSS for adults with developmental disabilities, families, agencies and the community. They included but were not limited to:

* Better understanding of needs and wants when person directed planning is included in the process of developing services and supports
* Increased flexibility, creativity and opportunity in creating services and supports
* Improved quality of life for adults with developmental disabilities
* Several benefits for families were identified such as respite and peace of mind that their family member was getting support that met their needs.

Even though IFSS benefits individuals and families, many challenges were identified. Challenges fell into 3 categories.

* Context Variables (e.g. challenges specific to small communities)
* Limitations in System Capacity (e.g. long wait times)
* Administrative Policy and Procedure (lack of clarity in finding rules)

These issues limit the effectiveness of the funds in meeting the needs of adults with DD.

**Discussion/Conclusions:** Adults with developmental disabilities are experiencing many benefits from IFSS.  There are, however, challenges with using the funds.  Recommendation for improving the effectiveness of individualized funds focus on ways to making IFSS more affordable, providing more information about the funding and how to use it effectively, and making it less complex to access and use funds.

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