**TOP 5 PRIORITIES FOR FAMILIES AND SELF-ADVOCATES IN ONTARIO**

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**Objectives:** Autism Ontario conducts an annual province wide survey to gain a better understanding of what caregivers and autistic adults are experiencing, and what their current needs are. The survey provides a wealth of information about the current status of services and supports in the province. In the past, Autism Ontario has relied on professional expertise to determine the most important, actionable items from the data. This year, in order to more accurately pinpoint what the autism community *itself* believes to be the most pressing and important areas for action and study, we conducted a secondary survey so the community could rank the results in order of perceived importance. This poster will detail and explore the top 5 priorities as ranked by the community.

**Method:** A team at Autism Ontario in consultation with external stakeholders developed the annual survey. It was available in French and English, included both multiple choice and open-ended questions and was open for the month of May, 2018. 1,514 caregivers and 87 autistic adults from across Ontario completed our initial survey. After analyzing and reviewing the results, a committee at Autism Ontario pulled the top ten pieces of information and sent out a secondary ask to the same distribution lists to rank the data in terms of what they felt was most important to them. 1,147 adults (4.1%), caregiver of a child with autism (60.2%), caregiver of an autistic adult (21.9%), professionals (7.9%) and other – siblings, other family, etc., (5.9%) participated in the ranking process from October 8th - 15th, 2018. We pulled the top 5 issues as identified by the autism community to highlight as priorities.

**Results:** The top 5 identified priorities were as follows, 1) Education support – according to caregivers, the top are of need for a child with autism in their community was support within the education system, regardless of the fact that 77.8% of caregivers reported feeling listened to by their child’s school. 2) Waitlists – according to both caregivers (73.6%) and adults (60.3%), long waitlists are a significant barrier to accessing service. 3) Financial Hardship – according to both caregivers (56.3%) and adults (50.7%), finances had been a significant source of stress in the last year. 4) Transitions out of the school system – the majority of caregivers (87.4%) say it is very stressful to plan for their child’s transition out of school and 83% reported not feeling well supported or ready to do so. 5) Adult services – autistic adults reported a lack of needed services (63.4%) and a lack of professionals who understand autism (63.1%) as significant barrier to accessing services.

**Discussion/Conclusions:** We will discuss the selected top 5 priorities in greater detail, with a focus on what can be done on a local and provincial level to address the concerns identified by families and autistic adults.

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