**AUTISM SERVICES INTEGRATION AND PROGRAM EVALUATION OF VIRTUAL GROUPS THROUGH THE ONTARIO AUTISM PROGRAM WORKFORCE CAPACITY GRANT**

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**Objectives:** Children with autism and their families disproportionately face barriers to accessing evidence-based intervention services, particularly for complex needs such as mental health, daily living skills, and social relationship skills/safety. While it has been widely reported that children and youth with autism often experience anxiety, coping and self-regulation difficulties, and social relationship difficulties, service navigation barriers often prevent access to necessary support.  Responding to the challenges families face in accessing integrated, coordinated, and comprehensive services requires a concerted effort from various stakeholders. Thames Valley Children’s Centre has partnered with Western University and the Mary J. Wright Child and Youth Development Clinic for a Workforce Capacity Grant to evaluate the delivery of autism services. This collaboration resulted in: (1) developing an autism services integration committee to identify and strategize solutions for the most pressing gaps in service, (2) conducting program evaluation research on virtual groups for children and youth in the Ontario Autism Program.

**Methods:**  The first part of this project resulted in qualitative data about autism service navigation and service gaps. Qualitative data from discussion groups were gathered from 31 autism services providers who were invited to two service integration events held in person and virtually across Ontario. The other part of the project involved quantitative and qualitative data to understand the feasibility of online group programs for youth with autism. Key indicators of service demand, acceptability, and implementation data from service providers, researchers, caregivers, and children and youth with autism between the ages of 10-18 will be shared.

**Results:** The results of this study are pending and will be ready to share during the conference date.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** The poster will display quantitative and qualitative data that will guide future planning to disseminate evidence-based practice and to improve access to autism services across Ontario.

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