Helping our children reach their potential: Today’s reality for Canadian parents

As a parent, you do everything you can to encourage and provide the foundation your child needs to reach their potential. But what happens if your child is struggling with a developmental or genetic disorder, or mental health concern? What are the common issues to accessing services? How can an interprofessional approach to care improve a child’s outcomes and lessen the stress on parents?

A guide to understanding common access issues when seeking help for your child and the value of an interprofessional approach

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Common access issues when seeking help for your child

- Wait lists
- Scheduling challenges
- Costs
- Geographic location
- Staffing and service availability
- Breadth of treatment available in community
- Poor fit or rapport with therapist
- No or incorrect diagnosis
- Acceptance of diagnosis

Challenges parents face once their child is receiving help.

- A lack of communication between the child’s various providers
- Appointments located at multiple clinics across the city/town

38.4% of parents started working fewer hours.

46% of parents either turned down a promotion or passed up a job for reasons related to their child’s condition.¹

- Finding a mix of therapy that happens simultaneously versus linearly.

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Source: 1 2006 Statistics Canada Participation Activity Limitation Survey (PALS).

Children’s Support Solutions
An interprofessional approach – what it is and how it can help

An interprofessional (sometimes also called *interdisciplinary* or *multidisciplinary*) model brings the skills of professionals from different disciplines together under one roof as they work together to create a customized support system for the “whole child.” A combination of “… social-emotional learning, mentorship, mental health support, and strong parent-(child) relations…. The approach goes beyond focusing on (the youth’s) ability and takes into consideration, literally, the whole child”.

Morneau Shepell’s Children’s Support Solutions (CSS) uses an interprofessional approach. Under one roof, at our clinics we provide: psychology, neuropsychology, psychoeducation, speech language pathology, special education, physiotherapy, behaviour therapy and occupational therapy. Services vary by location.

“For families, Morneau Shepell acts like a one-stop shop for their child’s developmental needs, conserving their time and resources. As a collective team, we may be in a position to not only identify and intervene with the main issues, but also provide a unique perspective on other concerns that may not be as obvious.”

Samuel Siah
Doctor of Psychology, Clinical Psychologist

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Source: 2 Education World 2015.
The interprofessional approach formula looks like this:

$$1+1=3$$

Using this approach provides an outcome for the family and child that is greater than the sum of each of its parts. This means that for a child who needs behaviour, speech and occupational therapy, their therapists will work together to create an integrated treatment plan that incorporates all three disciplines.

For instance, when a child is in their behaviour therapy session, their therapist may incorporate a speech goal. Vice versa during their appointment with a speech therapist they may work on strategies for attention and focus provided by the occupational therapist. This approach leads to faster gains for the child and less stress for the parents as there is one client file for all three therapies and appointments are at one location and can be booked back to back.

One-on-one sessions with a therapist may be well complimented with a social group or camp program where the child can apply their new skills among other children.

In an interprofessional model, therapists will meet with camp or group instructors to review the child’s goals so the child will continue to be encouraged to practice new skills while in the group. This approach is especially effective in the Preschool/JK/SK program available at our Toronto clinic where therapists work closely with the school director.
The fundamentals of a successful interprofessional approach include:

- The opportunity for open communication between therapists and families
- A working environment and reporting systems designed for collaboration
- Family-centred therapy by experts in every field
- Like-minded therapists who believe in the approach
- A choice of session formats (one-on-one or small groups)
- Convenient, afterhours and online access to therapy
- Information on funding options to help finance treatment

"By working in an interdisciplinary setting, clinicians learn so much from one another – and our clients reap the benefits. For instance, I have learned from our behaviour and occupational therapists at Children’s Support Solutions how to help children regulate their emotions, improve their behaviour and focus so that I can have more effective speech therapy sessions with my clients. With this approach we learn which red flags to look for and when it is best to refer to another profession. This approach allows us to help our clients and their families move forward as a cohesive unit, with all of their needs considered and ultimately improves their outcome."

Lauren Robinson
Speech Language Pathologist
Our interprofessional approach helps families, children and youth see progress and positive outcomes for

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Learning disabilities
- Behaviour challenges
- Speech, language and communication challenges
- Anxiety, depression and mood disorders
- And much more!

“My son goes (to CSS) for occupational, speech, and behavioural therapy as well as preschool and summer camp. He has truly excelled above and beyond anyone’s expectations. He’s learning so much there. We were told he wouldn’t talk and thanks to the hard work and dedication of his therapists and teachers at Morneau Shepell, he never stops! He truly loves to go there, especially for summer camp and preschool where he gets the one-to-one support that he needs. Morneau Shepell’s services have truly made a huge difference in his life and ours as a family. I highly recommend their services to families who are looking for therapists or a preschool for their children.”

Millisa
mother of a five-year-old boy
Morneau Shepell is the provider of choice to help children and youth reach their potential

- Celebrating nearly 50 years in service, helps over half a million people each year through therapy, education and coaching services.

- We use an interprofessional and family-centred care model which knits the skills of professionals from different disciplines together under one roof. These experts create a support system personalized to the child resulting in improved outcomes.

- We provide a wide range of services at our clinics and online to help children and youth with speech and language, emotions and behaviour, learning, life skills and physical ability.

- We are mindful of a family’s financial situation and will tailor a treatment plan accordingly and provide information on funding sources.

- Fast access to services with 14 clinic locations across Canada and online therapy and learning options.

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We look forward to the opportunity to work with your family.

Contact our Child and Family Advisors today to learn more about our interprofessional model can help your child reach their potential.

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