

Children's Rehabilitation Services Research/Evaluation CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2003/04

Purpose

As part of the \$20 million in new provincial funding for Children's Treatment Centres that was announced in 2001, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has set aside \$300,000 on an annual basis to support research, evaluation, and best practice in the field of community-based children's rehabilitation services, including services for individuals from birth to the transition to adulthood.

A steering committee with broad representation from the children's rehabilitation services sector has been established to advise the ministry on the selection of projects for funding, as well as the development of a multi-year strategy to guide the administration of the funding.

Objectives

The objectives of the funding are three-fold:

- To enhance the effectiveness of community-based children's rehabilitation services, leading to improved functionality (in a holistic or "life needs" sense) for children and youth with multiple special needs;
- To enhance the effectiveness of children's rehabilitation service provision, leading to improved service delivery for children and youth with multiple special needs and their families; and
- To support effective integration of children's rehabilitation services with the broader health, education, and social services systems.

Scope

1. Definitions

The definitions below are intended to clarify, not unduly limit, the scope of projects that can be considered for funding. It is important to consider them in light of the following guiding principle:

- Any projects that advance knowledge in the children's rehabilitation services sector, whether they focus exclusively on the sector, or focus on breaking down the silos between children's rehabilitation services and other sectors, are potentially within the scope of this initiative.

Children/Youth with Multiple Special Needs

Children and youth with multiple special needs:

- Are between the ages of 0 and 19 (to 21 by exception)¹;

¹ The *Education Act* allows for the provision of services to a person's 22nd birthday.

- Require specialized services/supports to participate in the activities of daily living, school and community on a long-term, continuous and/or intermittent basis;
- Have two or more different special needs, requiring two or more services that cross sectors (health, education, social services), and that may be provided at a number of different locations; and
- Have needs associated with a variety of conditions, which may include physical, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and chronic, severe and/or terminal illness.

For the purposes of this call for proposals, it is assumed that projects focusing on one or more types of special need will be of potential relevance to the children's rehabilitation services sector. Research outcomes/impacts directly targeted to children/youth with a single special need do not necessarily preclude relevance for children/youth with multiple special needs.

Children's Rehabilitation Services

Rehabilitation, in the broad sense, is defined by the World Health Organization as a "progressive, dynamic, goal-oriented" process that makes it possible for an individual with an impairment to identify and work toward an "optimal level of mental, physical, cognitive and/or social functioning." While rehabilitation, particularly for adults, can be a time-limited process, in the context of children's rehabilitation, the time horizon is generally long-term to life-long. According to the World Health Organization, rehabilitation provides opportunities for an individual, his/her family and community to "accommodate a limitation or loss of function, and aims to facilitate social integration and independence." An additional aim of children's rehabilitation is the facilitation of healthy child development.

Children's rehabilitation services are inclusive of the following (not an exhaustive list):

- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Pathology Services
- Physiotherapy
- Psychology/Psychometry
- Social Work
- Rehabilitation Engineering
- Therapeutic Recreation
- Audiology
- Nursing
- Medical Resources
- Cleft Lip/Palate Dental Services

For the purposes of this call for proposals, it is assumed that projects focusing on one or more of the above service areas will be of potential relevance to the children's rehabilitation services sector.

It is recognized that children with rehabilitation needs may also have needs in other areas, such as social/emotional, mental health, behavioural/developmental, education, child care, child protection, etc. Therefore, projects that focus clearly on children's rehabilitation services, but that link to other sectors meeting other needs, will also be considered potentially relevant for the purposes of this call for proposals.

Best Practice

The term "best practice," in the context of this call for proposals, is inclusive of both micro and macro level applications, from the realm of the child and family, to the realms of the service provider/agency, the community, and the system as a whole. It is also inclusive of evidence-based, scientifically or clinically proven best practice, as well as more experience-based, emerging, or promising best practice. Projects focusing on best practice in any one of these contexts will be considered potentially relevant to the children's rehabilitation services sector.

2. Types of Projects That Will Be Considered

Types of projects that will be considered for funding include:

- Research projects ("pure" and applied);
- Evaluation activities;
- Dissemination of best practice; and
- Systems analysis (e.g., work that examines systemic issues such as service gaps/barriers and ways to address them, etc.)

Multi-year projects will be considered, as will projects with shorter timeframes.

The expectation is that the 03/04 funding will be awarded to more than one project, so respondents should bear this in mind from a budget perspective. [This does not exclude projects with budgets that exceed \$300,000 cumulatively over more than one year.]

3. Eligibility

To be eligible to submit a proposal for the funding, respondents must be:

- Based in Ontario;
- Affiliated with a legal entity (either non-profit or for-profit); and
- Willing to disseminate their work to the broader children's rehabilitation services sector.

4. Priorities

An informal field survey was undertaken in the Spring of 2003 to gather feedback on possible priorities for the research/evaluation funding over the next few years. Community Care Access Centres, Children's Treatment Centres, the Special Education Project at the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and

Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services Regional Offices were consulted through the survey.

The priority areas highlighted by the survey (and noted below) are considered to be of particular relevance to the children's rehabilitation services sector, and therefore, the selection process may favour those projects that focus on one or more of the priorities listed. However, all submissions that meet the overall objectives of this initiative are welcomed and will be considered.

The priority areas identified in the field survey include the following:

A. Transition

- Examination of service gaps, best practices, impact on quality of life, and other issues during key transition periods in the lives of children/youth with multiple special needs and their families (i.e., pre-school to school, adolescence to adulthood, children's services to adult's services, etc.).

B. Service Models/Service Delivery Issues and Tools to Support/Address Them

- Service model/delivery issues include (among others):
 - The use of paraprofessionals (Communication Disorder Assistants, Occupation/Physiotherapy Assistants);
 - How best to serve rural/remote/First Nations communities, school-aged children, and children with complex technological needs;
 - An assessment of treatment modalities (e.g., consultation vs. direct therapy, intensive service frequency vs. less intensive, community/school-based vs. clinic/centre-based, 1:1 vs. group therapy, early intervention vs. later supports); and
 - Examining best practice with respect to wait lists and case loads.
- Tools include assessment tools, outcomes/indicators, benchmarks, etc., either for specific disciplines, or for the system as a whole.

C. System and Integration Issues

- Examination of issues such as:
 - Gaps/barriers/duplication in the system in terms of services/roles/policies and how to address them;
 - Best practices in terms of working with other agencies/sectors;
 - Case management/service coordination; and
 - Piloting new positions (e.g., systems-level service coordinator, or educational assistant/medical attendant, etc.).

D. Specific Conditions/Challenges

- Examination of best practices and/or service models for working with children/youth with a variety of conditions or challenges, including autism, fine motor difficulties, Acquired Brain Injury, fluency, and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Selection Criteria/Proposal Requirements

Any proposal submitted for consideration should, at a minimum, meet the following requirements:

- Follow the prescribed format and attached outline;
- Be clear and complete;
- Be consistent with the purpose and objectives of the funding, and (optionally) any of the specific priorities outlined in this call for proposals;
- Demonstrate the clear potential of the project to benefit and be of relevance to the children's rehabilitation services sector through one or both of the following methods:
 - Providing evidence of consultation with the sector (letters of support from service providers, children/youth, families, or other key informants are optional, and will not be considered sufficient evidence on their own); or
 - Providing other evidence (e.g., making the case that there is a critical knowledge gap in a particular area that the project intends to address, etc.);
- Explicitly state the potential impact (direct or indirect) on children/youth with multiple special needs and their families, regardless of the focus of the project;
- Demonstrate how the work proposed builds on and/or adds to (but does not duplicate) other work being done within Ontario, Canada, and internationally on the same topic or related topics. The proposal must include an environmental scan of related work in the field in question, and an assessment of the impact the proposed project will have at the local, national, and international levels within this context;
- Contain a plan for dissemination of project information to the children's rehabilitation services sector, including agreement to produce a user-friendly abstract/summary of the project and its key findings/results that the ministry and its partners in the children's rehabilitation community can disseminate via the internet or hard copy. Respondents are encouraged to provide web-links to internet sites where information about their project or related work is posted (optional), in addition to providing the abstract/summary;
- Contain a detailed and feasible workplan that indicates clear timeframe for completion;
- Contain a detailed, cost-effective budget;
- Contain an indication of anticipated project outcomes (i.e., for children/youth, families, service providers, the sector, the system, etc., as appropriate) and a proposed evaluation strategy for measuring those outcomes. Should the ministry (upon the advice of the steering committee) request an evaluation upon project completion, a separate funding agreement will be negotiated, and so evaluation plans should also include an indication of cost; and
- Include names and contact information for three references who are experts in the field, and who can attest to the project being ethical, of sound methodology, and clear scientific merit (applies to research projects). The ministry will contact these references upon recommendation from the steering committee, should the nature of the project warrant it.

Format for Submissions

(also see attached proposal outline)

Proposals should:

- Be prepared in Microsoft Word or a compatible electronic format;
- Have a main body that is no more than 15 pages in length. The main body is inclusive of the budget and workplan, but not references, bibliographies, letters of support, CVs, or other appendices; and
- Follow the outline attached, and use the attached budget form (available from the ministry electronically). Workplans may follow formats other than the one provided, but should include the same components.

Submission Deadline and Contact Information

Proposals must be received by the Children with Special Needs Branch by 5 P.M. September 2, 2003.

Please send two hard copies and an electronic copy of your proposal to:

Sandy Palinski
Children With Special Needs Branch
56 Wellesley St., 15th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2B7
sandy.palinski@moh.gov.on.ca

If you have any questions about this initiative, you may contact Mary Beaudoin by phone at 416-326-8339 or by e-mail at mary.beaudoin@moh.gov.on.ca or Sandy Palinski by phone at 416-326-8375 or by e-mail at the address given above.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Children With Special Needs Branch in conjunction with the steering committee mentioned at the beginning of the document. If your proposal has been selected for funding, you will be notified by October 15, 2003. Contract negotiation will begin shortly thereafter.

July 18, 2003