

# Focus Newsletter Summer 1997

- [OASIS First Annual Meeting](#)
- [Rapid Membership Growth Continues](#)
- [Polling Protocol for Member Agencies](#)
- [Legislation - Minister Reviews Labour Ruling on Autistic Homes](#)
- [Technology Corner - OASIS "Listserv" A Communications Godsend](#)
- [Parents Relieved After Vow To Aid Son](#)
- [Member Agency Highlights](#)
- [Issues - "Levels of Support"](#)
- [Featured Web Site - The JP Das Developmental Disabilities Centre](#)
- [Featured Best Practice - Employee Opinion Survey](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)

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## OASIS First Annual Meeting

A welcome to cottage country and to Collingwood in particular will be extended to OASIS agencies on May 8-9, 1998 at the First Annual Meeting of OASIS.

This meeting promises to be an exciting beginning for the upstart provincial agency which has grown from six to eighteen agencies in a few short months. A transitional Board of Directors was elected from the founding members in November of 1996.

The first annual meeting will give all member agencies an opportunity to become more involved at the Board or committee levels if they so desire. It will also provide an opportunity to balance representation across the province to reflect the growing membership base.

OASIS was launched in an effort to facilitate a more focused cross agency sharing of ideas, systems and operations.

As such this umbrella agency becomes a vehicle for agencies to assist each other in the provision of services and supports to people with developmental disabilities.

The annual meeting will be held at the newly renovated and expanded Vacation Inn in Collingwood. Attendance is expected to exceed 150 people.

Full details of anticipated work sessions, resolution processes and guest speakers will follow in the late fall 1997.

The first Annual General Meeting of OASIS will be open to elected members and other individuals who are interested in furthering the collaborative efforts of member agencies.

For further information please contact: Susan Fry at (705) 445-6351 Ext. 227.

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## Rapid Membership Growth Continues

Since its inauguration in November of 1996 [membership in OASIS](#) has grown to eighteen agencies. There has been tremendous interest expressed in such a short period of time. Officials are both delighted and anxious to ensure that members get value for their money.

The latest agencies to join are West Parry Sound ACL and Metro Toronto ACL. This brings the combined budgets of OASIS members to a total well in excess of 200 million dollars. OASIS now represents agencies who support some 8,000 individuals and their families in virtually every region of the province. It represents a combined agency staff base of about 6,000 people.

OASIS is now moving rapidly to work with MCSS in developing more qualitative and cost effective service to people with developmental challenges. In a recent interview with editors of "Focus" newsletter, OASIS president Annie Oliver attributed the sizable growth to the fact that the organization is very focused on inter-agency support for operational activities. Examples of work already done in this area are: research on WCB rate increases, research on the possible savings if agencies engage in combining the purchasing power of benefit packages; [position statements](#) on "Levels of Support", "Depopulation" and "Making Services Work for People".

[Membership](#) in OASIS is limited to non-profit agencies (ACLs and others) which provide supports to

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people with developmental disabilities. Annie Oliver further indicated that the makeup of the [Board of Directors](#) will be 75% volunteer following the first annual meeting and that this will substantially reflect a predominant view of families and consumers who are being supported by the agency members. The makeup of the Board further reflects a collaboration of professionals and volunteers who work jointly toward common ends. This approach is different than other provincial bodies and may also account for the strong interest.

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### **Polling Protocol for Member Agencies**

In an effort to ensure greater participation and an inclusive opinion gathering process OASIS has established a "polling protocol" for the development of media releases and the development of position statements.

This protocol will be attached to each and every draft document where consensus is necessary for the public release of information. Member agencies are encouraged to follow the protocol closely. Input is essential to ensure an active, vibrant and member responsive association.

The protocol is outlined below in a five point summary. Please note that this protocol itself is subject to change at the discretion of the OASIS Board of Directors. Member agency input is welcome. We want full participation and OASIS will bend over backwards to make that happen. At the same time, the development of positions cannot be held hostage by agencies, which for whatever reason, do not respond in a timely way to released drafts.

It is clear that advocated positions must be timely or they may not have the desired impact with the intended recipients.

Protocol Re: Media & Position Releases

1. All media release will be coordinated through the President, who may wish to delegate the actual drafting of a release. The drafted copy will always be sent to the President for her approval.
2. Once the President is satisfied with the content, a poll procedure will be used to solicit feedback. The release will be sent to each Member Agency with a specific response date identified. A response within 5 working days will be the average.
3. Responses to the release will be sent back to the author for consideration. Unless major intent of the release is suggested, editorial adjustments will be made to the release upon the discretion of the author. Seventy-five percent approval rate will be used for consensus.
4. Once the release is in its final form, it will be E-Mailed to Gord Anton and will be sent out over the Internet to approximately 250 Media Contacts.
5. Responses that need immediate attention or direct interviews on behalf of OASIS will be handled by the President or the President's designate.

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### **Legislation**

#### **Minister Reviews Labour Ruling on Autistic Homes**

by Jake Rupert  
The Ottawa-Citizen - May 15, 1997

The labour dispute between Ottawa Valley Autistic Homes and its locked-out employees will continue until Ontario's Labour Minister Elizabeth Whitmer decides to receive or reject an Ontario Labour Relations Board decision that declared the homes to be hospitals.

"The minister is reviewing the matter carefully and a decision will be made soon", said ministry spokesman Marc Pichette.

He couldn't say when the decision would be made and called the board's ruling "advice."

In a written decision last Friday, the labour board said the homes are an institution that operate for observation, care and treatment of people suffering from physical or mental illness, disease or injury, "and is thus a hospital within the meaning of the Hospital Labour Disputes Act."

The act designates hospitals "essential services" and prevents a union from going on strike or an employer from locking out its unionized workers.

Both sides are working on their next moves in the dispute that started October 28, 1996, when 70 staff members from six homes for autistic adults and teenagers in Ottawa-Carleton were locked out after talks over the key issue of a reduction in staff-client ratios couldn't be resolved.

Ontario's Labour Ministry usually accepts labour board decisions immediately, but this one could have provincewide effects on homes like the ones operated by Ottawa Valley Autistic Homes.

This is also believed to be the first time in Ontario that a company has been reclassified during a

labour dispute.

Editor's Note: A potentially precedent setting decision by the Ontario Labour Relations Board could have a profound impact in the bargaining position of unionized ACL's.

It is ironic that while MCSS does not necessarily see supports to the developmentally handicapped sector as essential in their recent document: "Making Services Work for People", the ruling in this case deems these supports to be essential services like a hospital.

A further anecdotal bit of information related to being compared to a hospital was evident in the "pay equity" process layed down by the previous government. The Pay Equity Commission's proxy comparison process forced many ACL's to compare their salaries to the local hospitals. The data revealed unconscionable disparities in compensation favouring the hospitals. Maybe ACL's should argue that ACL's would gladly be treated like hospitals for the purpose of labour legislation if they are also paid on par with hospitals! If only the world were so black and white.

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## Technology Corner

OASIS "Listserv" A Communications Godsend

Member agencies are currently the backbone of OASIS operations. OASIS has no paid staff. The coordination of communications under these circumstances is a major challenge.

A computer "Listserv" has been established to facilitate this process. Fax of course is the alternative for those people and agencies which are not connected to the Internet.

A "Listserv" is essentially a database of addresses which resides on a "server" (computer which is connected to the Internet and which is accessible 24 hrs a day) and is programmed to distribute incoming messages to all addresses in the database.

The list of addresses can be in the hundreds of thousands or millions for that matter. With this tool, messages and documents etc. can be sent to all participants in a minute at minimal cost compared to conventional methods at great cost and time.

The OASIS "Listserv address" is "oasis@bconnex.net". The quotation marks are not part of the address. Individuals wishing to add or subtract names should e-mail or fax these changes to "[ccl@oasisonline.ca](mailto:ccl@oasisonline.ca)" or (705) 445-6313 respectively.

E-mail addresses for agencies, board members, staff and families of member agencies who are interested are welcome. Please submit changes through the local ACL.

Information on the "Listserv" will include but not be limited to such things as the distribution of "opinion gathering polls" for the formation of [policies](#), media releases and position statements; the sharing of ideas; the distribution of queries on relevant service sector issues and the coordination of administrative tasks. "

Listservs" on thousands of other topics and industries have proven that this medium can become a dynamic and critical information base.

Connected members are encouraged to gradually increase the use of the "Listserv" . The more it is used the more effective it becomes as an information sharing tool. The cost and time savings will amaze even the most skeptical.

Anyone submitting a message to the "Listserv" should be aware that the same message must also be faxed to those members who are not connected. An updated fax list can be obtained by calling Susan Fry at (705) 445-6351 Ex 227 or e-mailing:

["oasis@oasisonline.ca"](mailto:oasis@oasisonline.ca)

Messages must get through to all participants! OASIS is working hard to streamline the timeliness and inclusiveness of its communications. Your help is needed to make this objective a reality.

On many topics it is entirely appropriate to use the "listserv" even if your communication is to one individual. There are always others in the system who may benefit from or contribute to the ideas put forward. Ideally, unless messages are very sensitive or confidential, it is very useful to include all through the "listserv".

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## Parents Relieved After Vow to Aid Son

Excerpts from The Toronto Star  
By William Walker

Their son Gordy may never fully understand it, but Robert and Debi Kirwan have proven you can fight city hall - or Queen's Park.

The Kirwans came from their Ottawa home yesterday to ask Premier Mike Harris if he'd keep his

promise to let their developmentally disabled son, and others like him, stay in school.

Following a private late-afternoon meeting with Education Minister John Snobelen, the Kirwans appeared to win their case after years of lobbying. Snobelen told reporters he hopes to be able to make the necessary changes this spring.

"We're going to have a look at the act and see what we can do to modify it and improve people's circumstances," Snobelen told reporters. "

The Premier remains committed to his promise and we want to improve the situation for disadvantaged adults."

The Kirwans were distraught because Gordy, 21, who learns at the level of a 3 year old, may soon be kicked out of his school because of his age.

The Education Act requires students leave such special schools at age 21, regardless of their circumstances.

Gordy does not speak. Through years of painstaking training, the school has taught him to point to visual symbols to explain when he must go to the bathroom, sleep or eat.

Without such training, these basic skills would erode in weeks. If he's forced to stay at home full-time, Gordy would be back in diapers and would rapidly deteriorate, Debi Kirwan said.

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### Member Agency Highlights

Barrie & District Association for People with Special Needs - In an ongoing effort to identify how as a service provider we can best meet our families' needs while keeping a constant watch on our spending, we have found ways to bring together some common services resulting in the opening of a new office in the Bayfield Mall called "Barrie Support Services". This initiative will provide common office space for the first time to Job Support, Supported Independent Living and Habitat '90 services. The location was chosen to provide the programs with a visible community profile and individuals with an easily accessible single site.

Community Living Central Huron - They have just recently held their Annual General Meeting, and again, for the 1996/97 year were within MCSS fiscal allocations. The Agency continues to operate within various constraints implemented approximately two years ago, however are presently reviewing opting out of W.C.B. and our insurance coverage. We were successful in funding for a summer student through Human Resource Development Canada, and have hired a "Technology Resource Assistant", therefore we should be more accessible through electronic communications!

Community Living Association for South Simcoe - This summer marks the opening of CLASS' Snoezelen room. Snoezelen provides a full range of sensory stimulation and enjoyable experiences in an atmosphere of trust and relaxation. In a safe, comfortable environment, the primary senses are stimulated by wonderful combinations of music, lighting effects, gentle vibrations, tactile sensations and aromatherapy.

Community Living Huronia - C.L.H. offers a Teen Program for anyone over the age of 13 with special needs. The Program runs from the first week of July to the last week of August and provides both work, recreation/leisure and volunteer opportunities within the community.

Elmira and District Association for Community Living - The Elmira Community Living have been busy expanding their residential homes. Just as they recently completed building a new home, for four individuals from Midwestern Regional Centre in Palmerston, they have started building a second home to be completed in August for four additional people.

Lambton County Association for the Mentally Handicapped - The Agency has completed renovations to their Petrolia Enterprises location. Additional accessible washrooms were built, installation of an improved dust collecting system, and the purchase of new equipment to facilitate production of high quantities of construction and survey stakes are just a few of the improvements made in order to increase productivity and efficiency while maintaining a safe environment for all individuals and staff.

Collingwood Community Living\* - C.C.L. has moved to a new headquarters which was renovated for their needs and at the same time they have diversified and restructured their service delivery options. The Board and staff at CCL worked hard for almost ten years to make the new headquarters a reality. Over time this decision will save CCL hundreds of thousands of operational dollars in leases and leasehold improvements. \* Now known as E3 Community Services.

Norfolk Association for Community Living - Renovations are underway to amalgamate the Human Resources Development Canada building and the Multi Service Employment Centre. This federally sponsored community project presents numerous opportunities for people supported by the Association in need of employment.

North Bay Association for Community Living - Dick Cuthbertson, formerly Recreation Supervisor, is now Community Living's Community Education liaison. This new position fills the need to develop various partnerships with other organizations in the North Bay area and to have close contact with

media for fundraising and awareness initiatives. With his move, Recreation Programs are now being approached in smaller groups with emphasis on inclusion and integration.

North Wentworth Association for the Mentally Retarded Inc. - Westfield contract work aims to provide a high level of customer service and satisfaction to their business partners. At the same time, they are promoting a work environment that supports individuals in gaining necessary work habits and skills towards future employment opportunities. Shortly, they will be setting up an order desk to sell certain products packaged by the Westfield Team.

Ottawa-Carlton Assn. for Persons with Developmental Disabilities - The Ottawa-Carlton Association has been focusing on a paper shredding and recycling program known as Public Archives at Tunney's Pasture. With the decline in the market price of paper, the program was in serious jeopardy of closing. However, a private sector company, ProShred, has approached the Association with a partnership proposal which will not only enable the program to continue but is anticipating expansion.

Woodstock & District Developmental Services - The theme for this year's 15th Annual Sports Celebrity Dinner was "Best of the Past". Some of the best celebrities of past Sport's Celebrity Dinners will be attending such as Dennis Hall (ex-hockey player) and Brian McFarlane (sportscaster). This fundraiser has generated over \$90,000 for Developmental Services in Woodstock.

Windsor Community Living Support Services - The local planning committee organized a March for Acceptance in downtown Windsor on May 15th. This was one of the initiatives WCLSS has made to advocate for the "Ontarians With Disabilities Act". ODA is a law aimed at achieving a barrier-free Ontario in which persons with disabilities can fully participate based on their individual merit.

## Issues

### "Levels of Support"

MCSS has been working on a project called "Levels of Support" for two or more years. In recent months they have piloted the implementation of this accountability tool. Essentially it attempts to measure the level of need of people with developmental disabilities by looking at the number of paid hours for which individuals are supported by various transfer agencies. MCSS has arbitrarily assigned six different levels to the range of needs. The overall objective is to tie in this measurement tool to funding levels at some point.

Levels of Support has run into tremendous resistance and/or concern across the province from families, agencies, professionals and advocates including MARC, OASIS and OACL. There is widespread recognition that some form of accountability tool is necessary for all concerned to get a handle on appropriate funding levels under different circumstances. However, "Levels of Support" in its current state has many shortcomings.

OASIS has written to Brian Low, MCSS Minister asking for changes to the Levels of Support model and offering to help develop a modified tool or a better alternative. OASIS President, Annie Oliver's letter to the Minister follows:

Dear Mr. Low:

Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS) is a provincial organization established to support community agencies which in turn support people with Developmental Disabilities. There are now 16 member agencies in Ontario. OASIS, in a letter to Janet Ecker, has recently requested a seat at the Ministers Advisory Council Table.

In the meantime, we are committed to ensuring our position on relevant issues are heard.

At our April 11 Board of Directors meeting, we discussed the Ministry's pending Accountability initiatives and LOS specifically. Our Board is fully supportive of the need for province wide accountability measures; and we are very aware of the many years of work which the Ministry has spent developing the Levels of Support tool to achieve accountability. We do however, have several concerns regarding the proposed Levels of Support Assessment. We would like an opportunity to discuss budget impact with the objectives of working constructively with MCSS toward solutions in the following areas.

**FAMILY SUPPORT** - Families must be aware and assured that the tool will be used with integrity and that it will not further erode supports where they are needed.

**BUDGET IMPACT** - There does not appear to be a clear set of guidelines on how LOS will affect agency budgets. Most agencies have flattened over the past four years and have meager resources to handle increasingly challenged individuals. We need some further information on how LOS will work for individuals we support; and in particular, we want to know how funding through LOS will tie into the focus on individual needs. We know that there are dramatic differences from region to region and community to community on costs which are attributable to many factors. If the LOS formula does not effectively allow for differences which are in some cases uncontrollable, it will have a devastating impact on families and agencies.

**PERSON CENTRED PLANNING** - We realize that the six level approach is intended to simplify a complicated process for getting a handle on cost projections. While this does not fully reflect a

person centred approach, it could be workable if there is sufficient flexibility in the new funding system to account for people whose needs will often change. We must also be sensitive to the very negative focus on deficits (disabilities) which this tool seems to dictate. OASIS could be of assistance to you in improving the way this is perceived.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION - It appears to many of our members and consumers that more needs to be done in the way of communicating and sharing information on how this assessment works. We are willing to listen with open minds and we ask your cooperation in delaying implementation until some further consultation can be organized. We would be glad to help with this.

We know that the search for some kind of accountability has been a difficult and elusive goal. We realize there have been test sites in the province but we also know that these information gathering experiments have not clearly shown yet how the information will affect individuals, budgets or the capacity of agencies to support individuals. The measurement of level of ability or disability is a very tenuous business. We would not want to find ourselves and our families in a bureaucratic strait jacket. It may well be that this tool needs to be field tested in three or four agencies with regard to eventual impact on families and finances. OASIS members would be willing to participate in any further field testing that may be required.

Mr. Low you have our attention and our cooperation. We ask to be constructively involved in determining the credibility of this tool and/or helping to build a better tool if that becomes a need.

Sincerely,  
Annie Oliver President OASIS

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### Featured Web Site

The JP Das Developmental Disabilities Centre

The JP Das Developmental Disabilities Centre was established in the Fall of 1967 with a grant given to the University of Alberta by The Canadian Association for Mental Retardation.

Its current activities include: research, student training, publication, and selected clinical services for children and adults with mental retardation and other disorders that affect learning and originate in childhood.

The Centre maintains a library of selected journals and books as well as laboratory and testing facilities. The Centre publishes a journal, Developmental Disabilities Bulletin.

The Centre also invites visiting professors and international scholars whose areas of research and clinical interest are similar to the Centre's. The Centre organizes lectures, workshops, symposia and conferences.

Research material is linked to the following areas:

Inclusive Education Resources. This section provides information on Inclusive Education (e.g., annotated bibliographies, teaching strategies, and instructions for joining an Inclusion List).

Violence & Disability. This section provides information about violence against people with disabilities. It includes information on ICAD, the International Coalition on Abuse and Disability and the University of Alberta Abuse & Disability Project.

Developmental Disabilities Bulletin. This section includes information about the Developmental Disabilities Bulletin, a journal published twice each year.

Human Ethics. This section contains information related to ethical issues and people with disabilities.

Links. This section provides access to some of the links that we think you might find useful in each of our sites.

Training Materials. This section contains access to training materials on Assessment, Inclusion, and Violence & Abuse.

Contact person:  
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### Featured Best Practice

#### Employee Opinion Survey

Norfolk Association for Community uses an Employee Opinion Survey to measure and evaluate the attitudes, beliefs, opinions and perceptions that NACL employees have about their job, management and organization practices, work conditions and other important aspects of the work environment.

To facilitate upward communication and feedback from NACL employees and to serve as a data base for constructive organization development activities.

The Employee Opinion Survey is a 44 item structured anonymous questionnaire which measures employees' perceptions in 11 key organization development dimensions. The survey also includes an open-ended section for write-in comments by respondents. These comments are forwarded to the Coordinating Committee for review and follow up.

The results of each questionnaire are grouped by employee classification level and an average score per organization development dimension established per classification level. This score is then totaled against all classification levels and divided by four to achieve a mean of means score for the agency wide total score.

The agency received information across each of the eleven Organization Development Dimensions. The perceptions shared and survey results were of great assistance in further organizational training and development.

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### Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Depopulation and deinstitutionalization has been an accepted practice for many years now. I believe that there is no quarrel between any of the stakeholders in this regard. The fact that depopulation has already been accomplished at several institutions in Ontario is on record. Expertise has been developed by those agencies who have participated and have been successful in both assimilating people into the community and closing institutions.

It had been hoped that this expertise would be used in other areas as further depopulation occurred. Unfortunately, the methodology has changed and so has the funding. Agencies are not involved as partners. Rather, they are being directed to cooperate. Funds are not individualized based on need. Instead one flat subsidy is arbitrarily designated. These tactics are a flagrant violation of principles which MCSS gives lip service to, namely: respecting partnerships and individualizing support to peoples. The process cannot begin by setting unrealistic costs per person and then trying to develop an individualized plan to fit those costs.

Most studies show that there is money to be saved in deinstitutionalization. It won't, however, be saved if each area office of MCSS tries to re-invent the wheel. It won't be saved if the expertise of those who have been through the process is not used. It won't be saved if layers of bureaucracy stand in the way of fair practices.

These approaches will eventually backfire in ways which will end up costing everyone including the government.

Submitted by Helen Havlik

Lambton County Association for the Mentally Handicapped

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