

INCLUSION *insights*

JUNE 2026



INCLUSION
WEST NIAGARA



OUR IMPACT

Navigating Possibility Together

When families first connect with our Case Management Services, they are often navigating uncertainty. What supports are available? Where do we begin? How do we build a meaningful life for our loved one?

At the heart of our Agency's response are our dedicated Case Coordinators. These skilled professionals help people and families make sense of complex developmental services systems and, more importantly, help them see what is possible.

Our coordinators do far more than connect people to services. They help families build a network of supports tailored to their unique needs, including:

- Navigating access to funding through Ontario's developmental services pathways
- Connecting to respite services to provide essential caregiver relief
- Supporting transition planning during all life transitions
- Supporting participation in inclusive summer camps for children
- Creating inclusive community access opportunities for adults

- Linking families to school, autism programs, and specialized services
- Identifying training and education opportunities for families
- Offering guidance on how to creatively and effectively use available funding

Often, the work involves thinking “outside the box”—finding innovative solutions that reflect each person's strengths, interests, and goals. For one family, this might mean helping their child attend a fully inclusive summer camp. For another, it may mean helping an adult build community connections through accessible recreation and skill-building programs. Our role is to ensure families feel supported, informed, and empowered every step of the way.

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities

Case Management Services, funded by the Ministry, play a critical role across the sector. Research and sector experience consistently show that early access to coordinated supports helps families remain stable, reduces crisis situations, and improves long-term outcomes for people.

Access to respite alone has been linked to improved caregiver well-being, reduced stress, and a greater ability for families to sustain care at home.

By helping families access the right supports at the right time, our coordinators:

- Reduce system pressures by preventing escalation to crisis services
- Increase participation in inclusive community programs
- Support people to build independence and life skills
- Strengthen family resilience through planned breaks and shared responsibility
- Ensure public funding is used effectively and creatively

A Foundation for the Future

Every connection made, every program accessed, and every plan developed contributes to something bigger: a future where people with developmental disabilities—and their families—feel supported, included, and hopeful.

Maintenance, Transportation and IT Management—The Work You Don't Always See

When we talk about “maintenance,” it is easy to picture a toolbox and a quick repair. But here, it is much more than that.

Across our properties, our team manages:

- Plumbing, electrical, cabinetry, and carpentry
- Lawn care, pest control, fences, and decks
- Lighting systems and outdoor safety
- Appliances like washers and dryers
- Cleaning schedules and snow removal
- Renovations and daily repairs



Some homes require specialized oversight—potable water systems must be monitored, and septic systems at select properties need ongoing care. At the same time, fire safety plans, inspections, and compliance requirements must be maintained across all locations.

It's a complex, always-moving system—one that most people never see, but depend on every day.

40 Vehicles, Countless Journeys



In larger urban centres, public transit fills the gap. But in our communities, transportation looks different. That is why we operate a fleet of 40 vehicles—each one essential to helping people get to appointments, programs, work, and community activities. Our transportation team ensures that people remain connected—because access to community is not optional; it is a right, and a pathway to dignity and inclusion.

The Digital Backbone



While much of the work is hands-on, an equally critical part happens behind screens. Every day, systems are monitored to keep staff connected across locations

These include:

- Network reliability and device support
- Software systems used daily
- Data protection and cybersecurity.

It is invisible work—until something stops working. And thanks to proactive oversight, it rarely does.

The People Behind the Work



All of this falls under one coordinated portfolio, led by Remo, Director of Administration, whose oversight ensures that every moving piece works together seamlessly. Supporting this effort is a dedicated team:

- **Mary-Lou and Gary**, who handle the wide-ranging maintenance needs across our buildings
- **James and Michelle**, who keep transportation running smoothly
- **Harmit**, who manages the IT systems that connect and protect our work.

Each day, their work intersects in ways that are not always obvious—but are always essential.

ADVOCACY AWARENESS

Building Confidence, Community, and Healthy Lifestyles Through Baseball



For the third year, we are thrilled to partner with the **Jays Care Foundation** to bring a meaningful baseball experience to our Agency.

The Jays Care Foundation is the charitable arm of the Toronto Blue Jays, dedicated to using baseball as a tool for social development. Through inclusive, accessible programming, Jays Care creates opportunities for people facing barriers to build life skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging. Their programs are designed not just to teach sport, but to foster resilience, teamwork, and leadership in a fun and supportive environment.

The value of programs like this goes far beyond the baseball diamond. Over the course of the program, participants benefit from being outdoors, engaging in physical activity, and experiencing the joy of team sports. Just as importantly, our staff and people supported step into coaching roles—creating opportunities to strengthen relationships, model positive leadership, and build new skills.

We deeply appreciate our continued partnership with Jays Care Foundation and look forward to another fantastic season of learning, growth, and fun.

<https://www.mlb.com/bluejays/community/jays-care>

IN THE NEWS

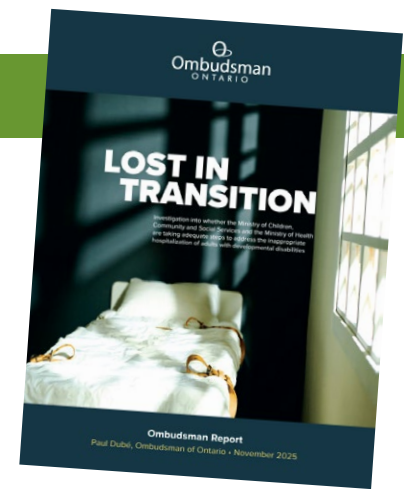
The Ontario Ombudsman's "Lost in Transition"

This report resonates deeply across the developmental services sector. Released after extensive investigation, the report highlights a critical gap: the challenging transition from children's to adult services. For many individuals and families, turning 18 does not bring new opportunities—it brings uncertainty, long waitlists, and a system that can feel difficult to navigate when support is most needed.

At its core, the report emphasizes that transition should be a process—not a single point in time. Youth with developmental disabilities and their families require consistent, coordinated planning well before they age out of children's services.

The Ombudsman found that too often, planning is siloed, communication between systems is limited, and families are left to piece together information on their own. This results in service gaps that can affect housing stability, mental health, employment opportunities, and overall quality of life.

The findings call for stronger collaboration across ministries, clearer pathways to adult services, and a more person-centered approach that recognizes the aspirations of each person. It also highlights the need for better data, accountability, and system navigation supports—ensuring that



no one is "lost" simply because systems fail to connect.

This report reinforces the importance of the work we are doing every day. By listening closely to the individuals and families we serve and aligning our practices with emerging sector reforms, we contribute to a more responsive, inclusive, and seamless system of support.

Find the Ombudsman report here: <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/en/our-work/investigations/lost-transition>

GRATITUDE HIGHLIGHT: OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



When people think about our organization, they often picture our programs, our staff, and most importantly, the people and families we support. But behind the scenes, there is a dedicated group quietly helping to guide, strengthen, and sustain everything we do—our Board of Directors.

Our Board is made up entirely of volunteers who generously give their time, energy, and expertise to ensure our organization remains strong, accountable, and forward-looking. Each member brings a wealth of real-world experience and together they form an engaged leadership body that helps shape our direction.

Throughout the year, our Board meets monthly, dedicating several hours to reviewing agency performance, discussing emerging sector trends, and ensuring we remain aligned with our strategic priorities.

These meetings are focused, informed, and grounded in a shared commitment to quality, safety, and innovation.

Beyond regular meetings, Board members participate in strategic planning retreats, where they work collaboratively with leadership to chart our path forward and help us stay responsive to changing needs, while continuing to evolve in meaningful ways. And our Board's involvement extends well beyond the boardroom. Members attend agency events, engage with our community, and build relationships.

One of the greatest strengths of our Board is its diversity. Our members include family members, individuals with lived experience, and professionals with expertise across a wide range of fields—including education, finance, law, autism, aging, leadership, human resources, public relations,

healthcare, and governance. This breadth of knowledge allows for balanced decision-making, and strong stewardship.

As part of their role, our Board focuses on critical areas that ensure the organization's stability and success. They oversee governance practices, monitor risk and compliance, and ensure we meet all legal and ethical obligations. They review financial health, funding frameworks, and succession plans, helping to safeguard the organization both now and into the future.

We are incredibly grateful for the leadership and support our Board provides. Their steady guidance has been instrumental in building a strong, responsive organization for the future. Quite simply, we could not do this work without them.

PROVINCIAL UPDATE

Provincial Budget Shows Promise for the Developmental Services Sector

The Ontario government's 2026 provincial budget included a commitment of \$407 million over three years to help community organizations—including developmental services agencies—manage rising operating costs and maintain essential supports. This investment is appreciated and recognizes the growing complexity of needs in our sector, as well as the ongoing pressures related to inflation, workforce challenges, and service demand. While modest relative to the scope of need, it is encouraging to

see continued provincial recognition of the critical role developmental services play in supporting individuals and families across Ontario.

At this stage, details about how this funding will be allocated—including timing, distribution, and any conditions attached—have not yet been released. As a result, agencies are still awaiting clarity on what this investment will mean in practice. Even so, we are pleased to see this commitment from the Ontario government as an



important signal of support for our sector, and we remain hopeful that further details will enable organizations like ours to strengthen services and continue meeting the evolving needs of the people we support.

Source: [Pooranlaw.com](https://pooranlaw.com)

RESOURCES

Registered Disability Savings Plan

The Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) is a long-term savings program designed to help Canadians with disabilities build financial security for the future. People who qualify for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) can open an RDSP, and contributions can grow tax-deferred. The federal government may also add significant support through matching grants and bonds, helping savings grow faster over time.

Learn more: Canada.ca or ciro.ca

Disability Tax Credit

The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) is a non-refundable tax credit that helps reduce the amount of income tax owed by people with a severe and prolonged physical or mental impairment, or by their supporting family members. In addition to lowering taxes, approval for the DTC can open the door to other important supports, including access to the RDSP and additional benefit programs.

Learn more: Canada.ca

WATCH FOR IT ...

Upcoming events at the Agency

GOLF TOURNAMENT September 9, 2026 at Twenty Valley Golf Course.

In collaboration with Westland Insurance (formerly Meester Insurance). For details on sponsorship or to register as a golfer, please contact shyde@inclusionwestniagara.ca



Watch for our newly raised flags at Inclusion West Niagara office buildings in Grimsby and Beamsville. We raised these flags in support of the grief and loss work that we do at the Agency. When our community sees our flag at half mast, it may mean that we recently lost someone.



Please consider supporting IWN:
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/5854>

GREAT NEWS!

THANK YOU TO:

- **Our Community** for the overwhelming attendance to our Community Open House on May 13th. We had record breaking attendance, everyone enjoyed the walking tacos, the games, and the EDI conversations held around the room. Prizes were won, fun was had. We will see you next time!
- **Niagara Community Foundation** for the grant for \$25,000 to open a new social enterprise at the Agency—watch for more details.
- **The 100 Women Who Care Grimsby Chapter** for the generous donations equalling \$5,360—we will put those funds to innovations in our programs.
- **The 25 families** who attended our Wills and Estate Planning session with Pooran Law. More great news to come!