



News release

Ontario Government Asked to Remove Secrecy and Release COVID-19 Critical Care Triage Protocol

Did you know your child, parent or neighbour could be denied critical care based on pre-existing conditions or assumptions healthcare professionals make regarding their quality of life versus ability to recover from COVID-19?

There remains much uncertainty about what level of healthcare Ontarians who have disabilities will receive if they contract COVID-19. Despite the Ontario Government having cancelled a controversial critical care triage protocol that disproportionately impacted individuals with disabilities, they have yet to publicly release the new triage protocol submitted by the Bioethics Table in September.

“It’s unacceptable that Ontarians still have not seen the triage protocol to be used by hospitals in the event resources are overwhelmed due to an influx of patients with COVID-19,” explains Brian Dunne, President and CEO of Participating Housing Supports and Services (PHSS). “This protocol could be used to determine who is refused the critical care they need.”

“While we know the previous triage document disproportionately impacted the 1.85 million Ontarians who have a disability, we are still waiting to see its replacement,” says Ron Coristine, Executive Director of Community Living Chatham-Kent. “This despite the fact the Ontario Human Rights Commission has called for its public release and stated it has concerns about human rights issues in the report.”

“As organizations that value and recognize the contributions of individuals who have disabilities, we are calling on the Ontario government to immediately make public the Bioethics Table’s report and recommendations,” says Roxanna Spruyt-Rocks, CEO of DeafBlind Ontario Services. “This is a human rights issue that impacts one in seven Ontarians. We cannot remain silent as life and death decisions are made that potentially discriminate against individuals who have disabilities.”

With COVID-19 cases rising rapidly, the lack of information regarding a potential new triage document continues to put individuals who have disabilities at risk as medical staff may determine who receives life-saving critical care based on stereotypes or assumptions about disabilities.

As organizations that value and recognize the contributions of individuals who have disabilities, we are calling on the Ontario government to take the following actions:

- Immediately release the new Bioethics Table report and recommendations
- Hold open, accessible and inclusive consultation on how critical care triage decisions should be made
- Develop and make public any new directives or protocols related to critical care triage
- Ensure the constitutional and human rights of all patients, including individuals who have disabilities, are respected

“We are asking residents to email or call their MPP, demanding the Ontario Government release the Bioethics Table’s critical care triage report,” says Dunne. “We all have a right to see how life and death decisions will be made that could impact our parents, friends and family members.”

About DeafBlind Ontario Services, Community Living Chatham-Kent and PHSS

Sharing a common mission of supporting individuals who have disabilities, we have formed an integrative partnership to strengthen the collective abilities of our three organizations. Our goal is to share knowledge and explore efficiencies, ensuring the people we serve who have unique, specialized, and complex needs are the number one priority. Together, we support over 930 individuals and their families, employ over 1,185 people and operate in over 110 locations throughout Ontario.