



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **FAMILY ALLIANCE ONTARIO and ONTARIO DISABILITY COALITION DEMANDS THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT ACT TO PROTECT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FROM DISCRIMINATION IN ALL COVID-19 POLICIES AND DIRECTIVES**

The Government of Ontario's most recent written directions to Ontario hospitals - [\*\*ADULT CRITICAL CARE CLINICAL EMERGENCY STANDARD OF CARE FOR MAJOR SURGE\*\*](#) released January 13, 2021, puts people with disabilities at risk of discriminatory practices that could result in personal harm or death.

The [letter](#) released January 18, 2021 from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Alliance to Minister of Health Christine Elliott provided an in-depth identification of numerous concerns with this government triage initiative. Family Alliance Ontario (FAO) and Ontario Disability Coalition (ODC) wholeheartedly support the position they have put forward.

Having reviewed the current triage protocol, FAO and ODC have deep concerns about the extent to which this government triage plan appears to be in contravention of the Canadian Charter of Rights, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Criminal Code of Canada, and that it does so in a manner that has particularly disproportionate risks for people with disabilities.

Despite the Guiding Principle of Respect for Autonomy, referenced in Section 1.1 of the government's triage plan, FAO and ODC are also gravely concerned about the impact that the government restrictions on access to family or other Essential Support Person(s) during Covid-19 have had for people with disabilities.

These restrictions severely impact their ability to equitably access care and has left many people abandoned with no opportunity to experience effective communication, nor essential disability-specific supplemental assistance.

Such restrictions deny essential supports to assist people with disabilities in making informed decisions with regard to their care, and as such are a flagrant abuse of their legal and human rights. People with disabilities must have access to their Essential Support Person. Essential Support Persons are not visitors! All necessary supports, including access to appropriate PPE and orientation training in infection control and prevention must be provided to Essential Support Persons to ensure safe and meaningful access to this non-negotiable right to needed supports.

Additionally, we wish to draw specific attention to concerns related to Section 1.2 Prohibitions in Critical Care Triage. This section describes what **MUST NOT** be considered in establishing triage decisions, but this identified set of considerations are easily negated by tools such as the Clinical Frailty Scale (CFS) used to assess Short-Term Mortality Risk (STMR). Of particular note is the risk that this tool allows a distinct bias against disability to seep into the assessment and subsequent decision of the person completing it.

Family Alliance Ontario and Ontario Disability Coalition are calling on the Ontario Government to immediately rescind the ***ADULT CRITICAL CARE CLINICAL EMERGENCY STANDARD OF CARE FOR MAJOR SURGE*** and to ensure that disability will not be used to deny people access to care during instances of over-capacity in hospitals across Ontario during Covid-19 or at any other time.

We are also calling on the Ontario government to issue a province-wide directive to ensure that people with disabilities have access to their Essential Support Person(s) despite COVID “visitor” restrictions.