



## Managing Continuity of Care for Children With Special Needs in Rural and Remote Parts of Northern Ontario

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## Research Team

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## Background and Purpose

### ➤ Challenges of managing continuity in rural areas:

- widely distributed case loads
- recruitment and retention of professionals in rural areas

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## ISNC Strategies for delivering care

- interdisciplinary teams
- case managers
- mediation and integration models

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## Methodology

- Review of random sample of 327 client charts, divided into six categories - speech/language, occupational therapy and behavioural care by mediation or intervention
- Semi-structured in-person interviews with 100 clients and care providers

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## 1. Clients remain in contact with ISNC services

- Intervention workers establish more “consistent and constant” contact
  - Allowing monitoring and more rapid modification to plans of care
  - Follow-up contact more frequent with intervention workers
- Technology facilitates contact

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## 2. Breaks in the delivery of services

- Occurred in 45.6 % of cases
- Some breaks in contact were warranted by clinical status of the client
- Client precipitated a high number of breaks

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## ➤ Occurred when there was :

- Staff turn over
- Unavailable services professional, paraprofessional and Francophone providers
- Wait lists for certain specialists

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## 3. Continuous contact with the same care providers

- Majority of children continue to work with same providers over extended periods
- Client initiated changes, especially in behavioural cases
- Small town familiarity presented challenges

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## 4. Plans of care implemented

- Frequency of review
  - annually vs. continuously
- Parental participation
  - more active parental engagement with intervention model
  - mediation plans may create a parental burden

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## Plans of care implemented (con't)

- More difficult to monitor progress in mediation model
- Mediation dependent on school staff for implementation
  - staff turnover
  - assistance from ISNC

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## 5. Co-ordination with primary care services

- ISNC's liaison function
- Intervention "early warning" reduces wait times

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## Coordination of primary care services (con't)

- **Delayed feedback from specialists**
- **Availability of services locally affects co-ordination**

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## 6. Co-ordination with formal and informal care givers

- **Case conferences**
- **Parental involvement**
- **Workers role as intermediaries between parents and schools**

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## Coordination with formal & informal care givers (con't)

- **Co-ordination with other agencies**
- **Referrals – client moves or reaches adulthood**

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## Main Messages

- 1) **Rural residents place premium on care at home**
- 2) **ISNC has created viable system of care**
- 3) **Interdisciplinary teams crossing agency and sector boundaries foster continuity of care**

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## Main Messages (con't)

- 4) **Paraprofessional approach preferred – constant and consistent care monitored by professionals**
- 5) **Requires sustained investment by government**

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## Main Messages (con't)

- 6) **Continuity of care influenced by model of care, staff turnover, referral routes, waitlists and client motivation**

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