Ontario Autism Program 2026 Parent Guide: What Services and Funding Are Available Through the OAP?

NorthStar Funding & Benefits Guide

When Ontario families of children with autism talk about the Ontario Autism Program (OAP), the first question is often: “When will we receive funding?”

Today, the OAP is not a single cash-funding program. It is a system made up of different services and supports.

1. Who Does the OAP Serve

The OAP serves eligible children and youth with autism who live in Ontario and are under 18 years of age. Families must register through the current process and access relevant services through systems such as AccessOAP.

2. What Are Core Clinical Services

The OAP Core Clinical Services listed in the 2026–27 official materials include:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)
- Speech-Language Pathology (SLP)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Mental health services, including counselling and/or psychotherapy
- Technology, program materials, and therapy equipment that meet the requirements and are recommended by a regulated professional responsible for or supervising the service

After entering Core Clinical Services, the family works with a care coordinator to complete a determination of needs. A corresponding funding allocation is then established for the purchase of eligible core clinical services and supports.

3. The OAP Is About More Than “Treatment”

The official objectives place particular emphasis on:

- Supporting ongoing learning and development
- Helping children build the abilities needed for meaningful participation at home, at school, and in the community
- Reducing interfering thoughts or behaviours that affect well-being, learning, and adaptive functioning
- Strengthening the capacity of parents, caregivers, and relevant professionals to provide support
- Improving children’s and families’ quality of life, mental health, dignity, and opportunities for development

This is closely aligned with a point NorthStar has consistently emphasized: meaningful support cannot remain only in the clinic. It also needs to reach schools, sports, social settings, and real community life.

4. Can OAP Funding Be Used for Any Activity

It is not accurate to assume that “if a family has OAP funding, anything can be reimbursed.”

Different OAP funding and service streams have specific eligible-expense rules. Whether a particular sports activity, social program, piece of equipment, or professional service can be paid for with OAP funding must be assessed based on the family’s specific funding arrangement, the current official rules, and relevant professional recommendations.

NorthStar does not recommend that families determine eligibility based only on the name of an activity.

5. What Can Parents Do Now

Families are encouraged to create their own OAP file containing:

- OAP registration and AccessOAP information
- Records of invitations and communications with the care coordinator
- Determination of needs documents
- Funding allocations
- Provider invoices and receipts
- Service plans and professional recommendations
- All submission and reconciliation records

6. Begin Adult Transition Planning Before Age 18

The OAP is part of the child and youth services system. Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) specifically reminds families that child services such as the OAP end as a person enters adulthood.

For this reason, families should begin learning about adult supports such as DSO, Passport, the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), the Canada Disability Benefit, and the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) at around age 16—not wait until OAP services have ended.

Important Notice: OAP policies and eligible expenses may change. Families should rely on the latest information from AccessOAP and Ontario.ca, together with the terms of their own funding agreement.