

RSA

Regional
Support
Associates

**Deepening Connections,
Strengthening Foundations**

Strategic Plan 2021–2025

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Introduction

From the Director

I am pleased to introduce you to Regional Support Associates (RSA's) 2021–2025 Strategic Plan.

Working with people, families and community partners, Regional Support Associates (RSA) provides people who live with an intellectual/developmental disability with the specialized supports and resources they need.

In 2019–2020 over 1700 people received support from RSA.

RSA provides specialized services for people who live with an intellectual/developmental disability living within RSA's catchment area - the Sarnia and Essex areas to the west, south to Haldimand County, and north to Owen Sound and the Bruce Peninsula.

Over the past decade, RSA has continuously grown in size from a team of approximately thirty (30) to now, a team of sixty (60). New staff members come from different disciplines, providing interdisciplinary support. RSA has introduced initiatives to build community capacity through education and training, and is integral to the region's Enhanced Community Response (ECR). RSA also operates the Southern Network of Specialized Care (SNSC) – a service that provides support coordination, health care facilitation and assistance with the justice system to people with the most complex needs.

With these and other changes underway, and the significant growth now steadying out, it is an optimal time to develop a new strategic plan to guide the next phase of RSA's development. RSA can now build upon the strong foundation that has been established over the past few years, while managing increasing and new demands for their services in an environment of limited resources. RSA is also positioned to deepen its relationships with other organizations, collaborating wherever possible to improve people's lives.

— Jason Young, Director, RSA

Stakeholder Consultation

“The help that my son has received has been invaluable. They have literally saved his life and have given him the chance to have a good life. We are very optimistic for his future.”

– Parent of a person who has received service from RSA

In setting new strategic priorities and goals, RSA wanted to ensure their direction was grounded in the voices, experiences and expertise of its stakeholders. RSA reached out to people who have used its services and their family members, asking them to take part in interviews and focus groups. Staff, community partners, family groups, specialists, funders and representatives from other sectors were also contacted to be involved in co-designing the future direction of the organization.

Approximately 118 stakeholders took part.

A number of methods were used to gather their information and insights – e-surveys, telephone interviews, face-to-face group interviews, and facilitated group meetings. A full-day staff engagement session was also held, attended by over 60 staff members.



Situational Analysis – RSA’s Landscape

In addition to the consultation, a scan of best and emerging practices in clinical service provision was completed. Emerging trends affecting RSA were also identified, to fully understand the impact and importance of these considerations moving forward.

The next step toward establishing the strategic direction for RSA’s future involved completing a Situational Analysis. Questions and conversations focused on:

Trends – Current and emerging trends that may impact the organization

Opportunities – Associated opportunities that were identified

Assets and Strengths – Of the staff team and organization as a whole

Take Note of – considerations that RSA should acknowledge when making decisions and plans.

Through this analysis, a picture of the internal and external environment within which RSA operates became clear, as did central messages and themes about what matters most to key stakeholders – in the present and looking ahead to the future.

All input was considered during a planning retreat. Attendees reviewed current trends, opportunities identified, the strengths and assets of the organization, and issues to take note of. The group reflected on the role RSA will play across the region, in the evolving system serving people with specialized support needs.

Trends

Organizations exist in a dynamic environment. Some of the key trends affecting RSA are:

Youth in, or coming into, services

A growing number of youth are entering adult services with different expectations and more complex needs than in the past. Families also require support in order to be able to continue to be the primary support provider in a person’s life. People and families want a more seamless experience during times of transition, and technology is an expectation in service provision.

Aging Families/ Supporters and People Who Use Services

On the other end of the continuum are people and families who need complex clinical services to address the challenges they face as they age, such as dementia, and end of life support.

Changing Workforce

An ongoing shortage of qualified staff working in developmental services is impacting services across Ontario. This is further exacerbated by retirements and workers leaving the sector for other opportunities. In an agency such as RSA, where specialized experience and skills are needed, this

shortage becomes more acute and challenging. As communities become more diverse, the workforce needs to better reflect this diversity.

Partnerships and Resource Sharing

It is becoming an expectation that organizations view collaborations and partnerships with other organizations as an assumption. There are more collaborations occurring across sectors, such as with education, immigration, justice, and health, and these collaborations are taking a multitude of forms. A move to bridge gaps in service by utilizing resources across organizations is becoming commonplace. Partnerships with the private sector are also expanding.

Technology

Advances in technology are leading to a reinvention of organizational processes, learning, and collaboration. Organizations are using technology to improve access to service, to drive organizational efficiencies and to optimize resources. Emerging technology, like digital health and lifestyle apps, is also being used to assist people in their daily lives.

Shifting Funding Toward Direct Funding

As the provincial government shifts further toward directly funding people and families to purchase services, organizations are making changes to administrative systems, focusing on marketing and branding, and being responsive to a wide variety of ‘customer’ needs and requests.

Person-Directed Supports and Services

More than ever before, person-directed supports and services are the norm. Co-designing supports with “people” to ensure their needs and expectations are met is becoming the norm. This is in keeping with the shifting culture within clinical and specialized services away from the view that clinicians are the ‘experts’, to a view that people are the experts of their own experience, and need to be viewed as such.

Trauma-Informed Care

As the number of clients who have experienced trauma increases, the need for trauma-informed care is being recognized as a requirement in specialized services. Trauma informed care requires deep understanding of the impact of trauma in general, as well as the unique impact of trauma on a person with a developmental disability.

Interdisciplinary Support

Moving beyond multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary support has become a focus as a way to overcome service ‘silos’ and provide people with deep, diverse expertise and support. This is widely regarded as the approach needed as people’s support needs become more complex.

Assets and Strengths

Stakeholder's identified the following assets and strengths as being key to the ongoing development and success of RSA:

Highly skilled and motivated employees

RSA's team was consistently given accolades for their multiple skillsets, their expertise, and their abilities to connect effectively with the people. They were also commended for their perseverance, passion, accessibility and flexibility.

Professional Development Opportunities

RSA was noted for offering many opportunities for staff professional development, as well as offering professional development and capacity building opportunities in the community.

Collaborative Approach

RSA was said to work well with other agencies and community partners, and to engage in collaborative problem solving. A positive exchange and sharing of information was identified. The organizations employees were given credit for working well with a range of community members.

Uniqueness of the Supports

RSA's supports were identified as being responsive to the needs of the people and the communities in which they live. Examples given were the ECR, regional outreach, courses offered, and the blend of capacity building and 1-1 supports.

Vision

People living their best lives in the communities they call home.

Purpose Statement

When people with an intellectual disability experience their most complex challenges, RSA provides specialized and clinical services, in collaboration with others

Values

Integrity

We strive to build trust and accountability. We follow through on what we say we will do, and commit to professional, respectful interactions at all times.

Collaboration

We work alongside you, learning about what matters most to you, and what support you need. We will use our professional knowledge, experience and insights to help you set and achieve goals.

Empathy

We are active listeners, asking questions and working toward a deep understanding of your experiences.

Open-Mindedness

We strive to make you feel heard, without making assumptions or judgements.

Transparency

We share information with you openly, and use language that enables us to understand each other.

Flexibility

We look for creative options and ways to adapt our approaches and practice to meet your needs.
We build on promising practices.

Strategic Priorities

Strategic priorities identify where RSA will focus over the next four to five years, to bring the vision to life. These priorities build on our strengths, capitalize on our assets and reflect the role we wish to play, in providing specialized services to people living with an intellectual/ developmental disability who have complex needs. RSA has established three strategic priorities. They are:

- 1) **Excel at providing evidence-based, individualized, holistic, and flexible specialized services**
 - a. Involve people who use services, their support networks, and community agencies in the development, delivery and evaluation of services
 - b. Develop a systematic framework for innovating, planning, testing and evaluating potential solutions to services challenges like:
 - Providing fee-for-service services and options
 - Incorporating technology into clinical and specialized services
 - Building the internal capacity of agencies
 - c. Explore emerging, leading and alternative approaches to services, without losing focus on evidence-based practice and high quality service
- 2) **Foster Collaborations and Partnerships**
 - a. Optimize community resources by collaborating with other agencies throughout the region, within and beyond developmental services, to deliver holistic, high quality specialized supports to:
 - Young people with complex and multiple support needs who are transitioning to adult services
 - People requiring coordinated support across different service sectors, such as health and justice
 - People whose support needs are changing as they age
 - Diverse populations within our communities
 - People with urgent specialized support needs
 - Families needing assistance to be able to continue to provide support to a family member
 - b. Develop proactive strategies to assist people who are waiting for service, or who may need to access specialized supports in the future
 - c. Encourage and support other organizations and providers, to be able to meet the specialized needs of the people they support

- d. Explore creative partnerships to address current and emerging workforce issues facing the developmental services sector

3) Strengthen the Organization's Foundation

- a. Cultivate a cohesive and healthy workplace culture across staff teams and locations through strategies that strengthen camaraderie, address employee wellness, and build trust and effective communication
- b. Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of operations, such as ways to optimize regional travel requirements, evaluating internal workflow, and integrating technology into daily operations
- c. Proactively support employees to develop competencies needed to thrive in the future by:
 - Offering mentorship opportunities
 - Enhancing the orientation process
 - Further developing interdisciplinary teams
 - Recruiting people from diverse backgrounds
 - Building and deepening knowledge and skillsets
- d. Support a better understanding of RSA's mandate and services by providing different stakeholders with the information they need, at the right time.

180-Day Strategy

In the first 180 Days, we are prioritizing action on the following goals:

1. Involve people who use services, their support networks, and community agencies in the development, delivery and evaluation of services
2. Explore and evaluate emerging, leading and alternative approaches to services, without losing focus on evidence-based practice and high quality service
3. Cultivate a cohesive and healthy workplace through strategies that strengthen camaraderie, address employee wellness, and build trust and effective communication
4. Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of operations, such as ways to optimize regional travel requirements, evaluating internal workflow, and integrating technology into everyday operations