



September 14, 2021

Dear MPPs,

I am writing to ask for your support to prioritize COVID-19 third-dose vaccines for individuals living with developmental disabilities.

My name is Bryan Keshen. I am the Chief Executive Officer at Reena – a non-profit social service agency dedicated to helping children, adults and senior citizens with developmental disabilities, serving the needs of more than 1,000 individuals and their families. I also chair a sector vaccine working group and sit on the York Region Vaccine Table as chair of the Western York Region Ontario Health Team.

The prioritization of persons with developmental disabilities for third-dose vaccines, along with other high-risk clinical groups, is a recognition of their heightened susceptibility to severe complications. I am sharing an Ontario retrospective cohort [study](#) that illustrates that relative to adults with developmental disabilities, COVID-19 positivity rates were **nearly 30% higher for adults with developmental disabilities and more than 40% higher for adults with Down syndrome**.

Compared to adults without developmental disabilities, adults with developmental disabilities were **more than twice as likely to be hospitalized following COVID-19 and to die**. These were greater for adults under 65. For adults with Down syndrome, mortality rates were **6.59 times higher than those without**.

When Ontario became the first Canadian province to approve a third COVID-19 dose for vulnerable people amid heightened concerns over the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant, it excluded those with developmental disabilities. If we don't count them, they don't count.

I am seeking your support to prioritize third-dose vaccines for those with developmental disabilities in parallel with other immunocompromised individuals and vulnerable, elderly populations living in high-risk congregate settings. Doing so will alleviate delays and clarify omissions, and we can begin protecting those at risk. I recognize that our sector may not be the first on the list for consideration, but its omission will result in avoidable health disparities that are unjust.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss prioritizing those living in developmental service congregate settings. This includes those:

- who have complex clinical conditions or are Medically Fragile Technologically Dependent;
- who are of age 50+ who have syndromes or neurological conditions (causing early aging);
- individuals living with Down syndrome and other syndromes; and,
- individuals living in Developmental Service congregate settings.

Please contact me to discuss how developmental service agencies can assist with inoculation efforts across the province.

Sincerely,

Bryan Keshen
Chief Executive Officer

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Charitable No. 10809-3642-RR0001
2020-2021

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