

Policy Forum: Autism Across the Lifespan

“Voices from the Field”



Ministry of
Children and Family
Development

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Overview of Autism Programs

1. Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI)



- Began in 2001. Contracted services provide intensive one-to-one therapy for approximately 75 children under age six with ASD
- EIBI Standards were completed in January 2008
- Services are available in seven communities
- Interdisciplinary approach

2. Autism Funding: Under Age 6




- Began in 2002. Families can receive funding of up to \$20,000 per year to assist with the cost of purchasing autism intervention services (based on best practices) to promote their child's communication, social-emotional, pre-academic and functional like skills development
- Behaviour Consultant/ S-LP/ OT/ or PT must be chosen from the Registry of Autism Service Providers (RASP) list
- Invoice Payment or Direct Funding options

Overview of Autism Funding Programs

3. Autism Funding: Ages 6-18

- Began in 2003. Families of school-aged children can receive funding of up to \$6,000 per year to assist with the cost of purchasing out-of-school autism intervention that will promote their child's communication, social-emotional, academic and functional like skills development
- Boards of Education also receive \$16,000 in supplemental funding (in addition to the basic per pupil funding) for each student with ASD to provide in-school interventions and services





Overview of Autism Funding Additional Supports

- Children and youth diagnosed with ASD and their families are also eligible for a variety of other services and supports through MCFD and Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) including Respite, Family Supports, Infant Development and Supported Child Development
- Services for children and families delivered by CLBC will be transferred back to MCFD in 2009/10



Overview of Autism Funding Statistics

- BC currently serves over 5,000 children and youth diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families: roughly 700 children under age six and 4,300 children and youth aged six through 18
- The MCFD budget for autism intervention and funding programs has grown dramatically from \$3.4 M in 2000 to more than \$40 M annually
- Funding for diagnostic and assessment services (Ministry of Health Services) has increased from \$.1 M in 2001/02 to \$3.4 M annually



Overview of Autism Funding Research

- In 2007, B.C. teamed up with Health Canada to fund the establishment of a national Autism Research Chair at SFU
- BC has also invested \$1.275M in a long-term national study (the Autism Pathways Project) at UBC into effective interventions for children with ASD
- Partnerships with other post-secondary institutions such as Douglas College are increasing the number and quality of trained autism interventionists
- More research is being done to ensure services are current and effective for children and families – and more families are able to make informed choices for their children



Opportunities and Challenges EIBI- Transition to School

- Opportunities:

- Programs have long-standing relationships with school districts
- Programs have staffing, protocols, and standards for transition planning to school system

- Challenges:

- Serves only 75 children within specific communities

Opportunities

Autism Funding: Under Age 6 & Ages 6-18

- Families are assisted with the cost of purchasing autism intervention services (based on best practice)
- Behaviour Plan of Intervention must take into account child's individual strengths and needs
- Families are able to purchase services that are designed to address their child's individual needs

Challenges

Autism Funding: Under Age 6

- Direct Funding or Individualized Funding does NOT necessarily mean a customized service to the child's individual need
- The allocation of funds is based on age, not on a functional assessment of abilities
- No mechanism to provide a sliding scale of funds to match child need
- No mechanism to re-assess or evaluate if treatment plan is working

Challenges

Autism Funding: Under Age 6

- Registry of Autism Service Providers (RASP) is the only ‘gate-keeping’ protection that government can provide to families to ensure quality service provision – service provider capacity is increasing, but it is still a problem
- No regulatory body or standards of practice for Behaviour Consultants
- Quality of service is variable even with RASP – transitions to school often depend on relationship of service provider and individual schools
- Range of fees have fluctuated according to demand

Challenges

Autism Funding: Under 6 & Ages 6-18

- Families don't have a consistent point of contact or support person
- Not all eligible families access funding:
 - 18.6% of eligible families on Invoice Payment (IP) are not accessing funds;
 - 12% of eligible families on Direct Funding (DF) do not submit required documentation within 3 months of contract expiry which means they do not have access to ongoing funds

Questions:

- Are families aware of how to locate eligible services?
- Are families able to locate eligible and effective services?
- Is there a shortage of services in some communities?
- Are the administrative requirements or funding policies a barrier to accessing effective intervention?
- What are the appropriate intervention services for children over 6 years, 9 years, 14 years, etc.?

Challenges

Autism Funding: Ages 6-18

- MCFD autism funds are reduced from \$20,000 to \$6000 annually at age six.
- The \$6,000 is intended to supplement the child or youth's educational program, and is focused on "out of school autism intervention"
- Consistency across settings and systems is a challenge and a barrier for many families
 - For example, the Ministry of Ed takes the lead on training for employment, but families are not able to use their MCFD autism funds towards augmenting the programs in the education system
- Hiring policies may interfere with continuity across settings



Transitions During School-Age Challenges

- The MoE funding (\$16,000) is not allocated to the individual child, but to the district who decides how the funds will be best utilized
- A philosophical change occurs when transitioning to the education system: Parents move from being the “Drivers” of their children’s programs to being “Partners” within a school-centred system
- Many families wish to continue ABA intervention in school – but there are capacity and union issues



Transitions to Adulthood Challenges

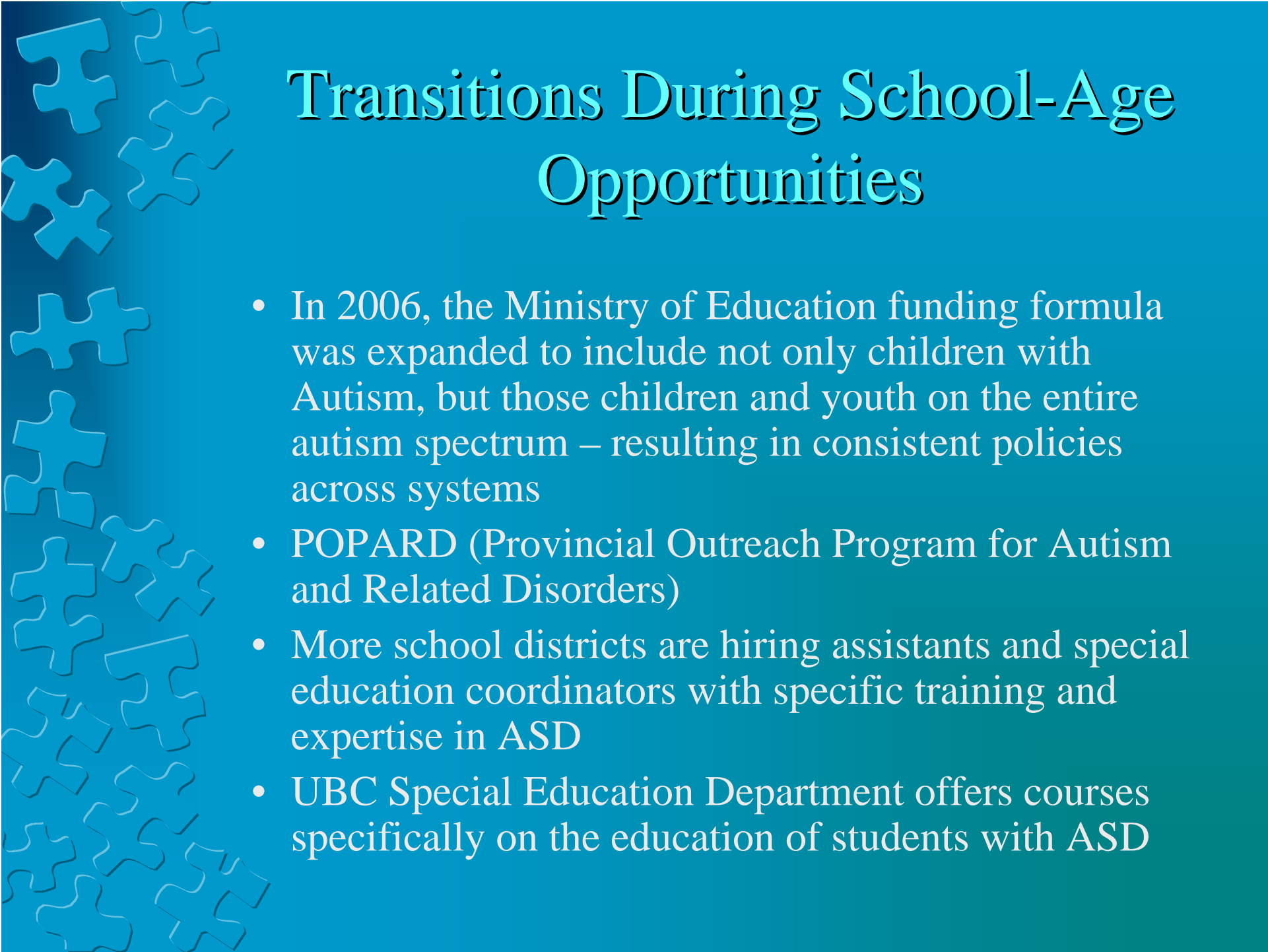
- Most significant transition challenge for youth and families is the difference in eligibility criteria between adult disability programs and services for children and youth with special needs
There is also increasing criticism of eligibility criteria based solely on diagnosis
No dedicated services for persons with ASD



Transitions to Adulthood Challenges

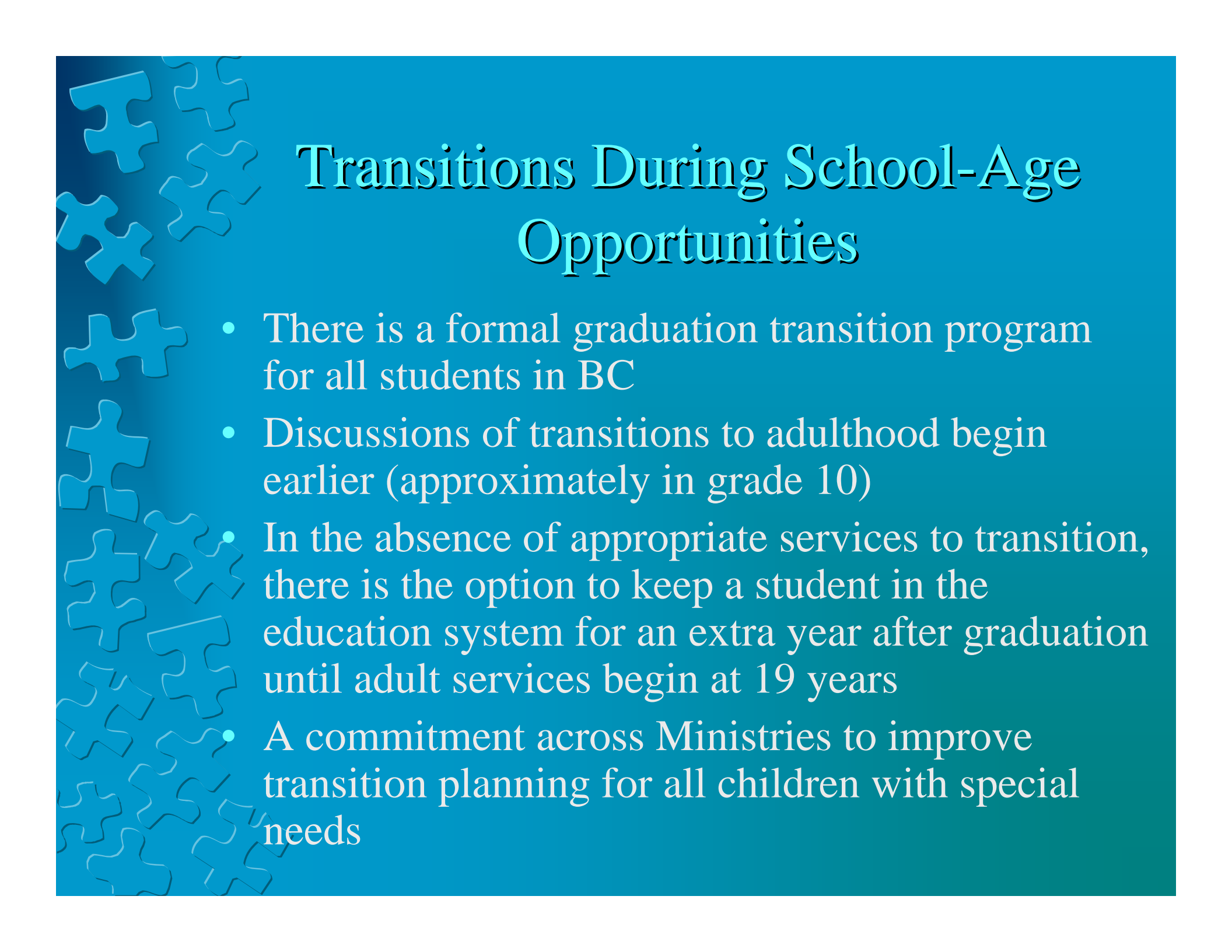
- No assessment services for adults with ASD
- Adults may end up living with aging parents or in sheltered home environments where their abilities are not challenged
- There may be a pool of special education graduates that are unable to realize their potential because of lack of resources





Transitions During School-Age Opportunities

- In 2006, the Ministry of Education funding formula was expanded to include not only children with Autism, but those children and youth on the entire autism spectrum – resulting in consistent policies across systems
- POPARD (Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders)
- More school districts are hiring assistants and special education coordinators with specific training and expertise in ASD
- UBC Special Education Department offers courses specifically on the education of students with ASD



Transitions During School-Age Opportunities

- There is a formal graduation transition program for all students in BC
- Discussions of transitions to adulthood begin earlier (approximately in grade 10)
- In the absence of appropriate services to transition, there is the option to keep a student in the education system for an extra year after graduation until adult services begin at 19 years
- A commitment across Ministries to improve transition planning for all children with special needs



Transitions During Childhood

Future Directions

- Promote the Invoice Payment (IP) option
- Develop a Keyworker model so that families would have a consistent contact to assist with planning for services, annual monitoring, proactive planning for future transitions, etc. (e.g., FASD model)
- Increase access to “packaged” intervention programs that follow children throughout childhood



Transitions to Adulthood Opportunities

- Customized Employment Initiative
 - Pilot project with Ministry of Housing and Social Development (MHSD)
 - A proactive approach to transitioning where 60% of the services are targeted to youth ages 16 to 19 years within the school system
 - involves 8 demonstration projects with a budget of just over \$4 M over 3 years (2008/09-2010/11)



Transitions to Adulthood

Future Directions

- Strategy is to align eligibility requirements across Ministries
- Develop eligibility requirements on an adaptive behaviour or functional assessment of need
- Proactive planning: Assess needs earlier (i.e., at 14 years of age)
 - @ 14: Provide families with a package that outlines a protocol for transitioning
 - @ 16: Assess child to provide an updated picture to assist in transitioning to adulthood



Cross Ministry Commitments

- CYSN Framework for Action
 - MCFD, Education, Health
- Youth Transition Protocol
 - MCFD, Health, Education, CLBC, Housing and Social Development
- New Approach to Eligibility