

Brief to All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions July 2015

Autism Society
Newfoundland & Labrador



The Plan

- Five Key Changes that will Make a Difference!
- Who are we at ASNL?
- What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?
- What is the relationship between autism and mental health issues?
- What needs to change to address priority needs?

Five Key Changes to Make a Difference

1. Screen all children for autism between 30 and 36 months of age through the Public Health system.
2. Add “medically diagnosed anxiety” to the criteria for allocation of student assistant support to students with ASD in inclusive classrooms
3. Develop and implement a 3-year comprehensive action plan for effective training of all educators and SA’s “in the field” about ASD and “best practice’ teaching strategies
4. End the use of just IQ 70 as the sole criteria for service provision to children, youth and adults – add an “adaptive function measure” to remove the discrimination
5. Create a central intake clinic for adults with developmental disorders, including autism



We believe in
nurturing potential

www.autism.nf.net

Autism Society
Newfoundland & Labrador




Who Are We at ASNL?

Vision

A province where people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families are valued and respected, and where they receive services and supports based on their individualized differences, needs and preferences.

Mission

The Autism Society, Newfoundland Labrador, is a charitable organization dedicated to promoting the development of individual, lifelong, and community-based supports and services for persons with ASD, their families and caregivers.

A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is in the background, smiling. In the foreground, a man with dark hair is smiling, with a young child with blonde hair sitting on his shoulders. Another young child with blonde hair is in the foreground, smiling. The background is a bright blue sky with some light clouds.

“We must create a ‘provincial strategy’, an action plan, with urgency, and dedicate resources to implementing real solutions that help improve people’s lives, give an opportunity for happiness, enjoyment, strong, lasting relationships, employment and careers; and suitable housing.”

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (5th Edition)

published by the American Psychiatric Society

*The **DSM-V** refers to a set of conditions called Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD), connected by a symptom set including impairments in reciprocal social interaction and in verbal and nonverbal communication skills and by the presence of restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour.*

A family of four is shown smiling and embracing each other outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, a man with dark hair is in the center, and two young children with blonde hair are on the right. The background is a bright blue sky with some light clouds.

These signs all begin before a child is three years old, and affect information processing in the brain.

The three disorders known as the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, and PDD-NOS.

The National Institute of Mental Health in the United States also includes autism spectrum disorders in their database of mental and psychiatric disorders.

Co-morbidities

A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, a man with long brown hair is in the center, and two young children are in the foreground. The background is a bright blue sky with some clouds.

These are medical conditions that may often accompany a diagnosis of autism

They are common and include anxiety, depression, eating disorders, schizo-affective disorders, gastro-intestinal disorders and epilepsy.

80% of those diagnosed with ASD have anxiety and/or depression

A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, a man with brown hair is in the center, and two young children are on the right. The background is a bright blue sky with some clouds.

Autism is a mental disorder, by definition, but it is especially so because of the high prevalence of depression and anxiety co-morbidities.

It's the fastest growing developmental disorder in Canada.

In 2000, the incidence rate was 1 in 150

Today, the incidence rate is 1 in 68


A family of four is shown smiling and embracing each other outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, a man with dark hair is in the center, and two young children are on the right. The background is a bright, clear blue sky with some light clouds.

ASNL Brief to Mental Health Commission, 2011

ASNL Research Project into needs of healthcare practitioners, 2012

*The Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (CASDA) completed Canada's first ever **'National Autism Needs Assessment Survey' 2014***

*ASNL completed a provincial **Autism Needs Assessment, 2015***

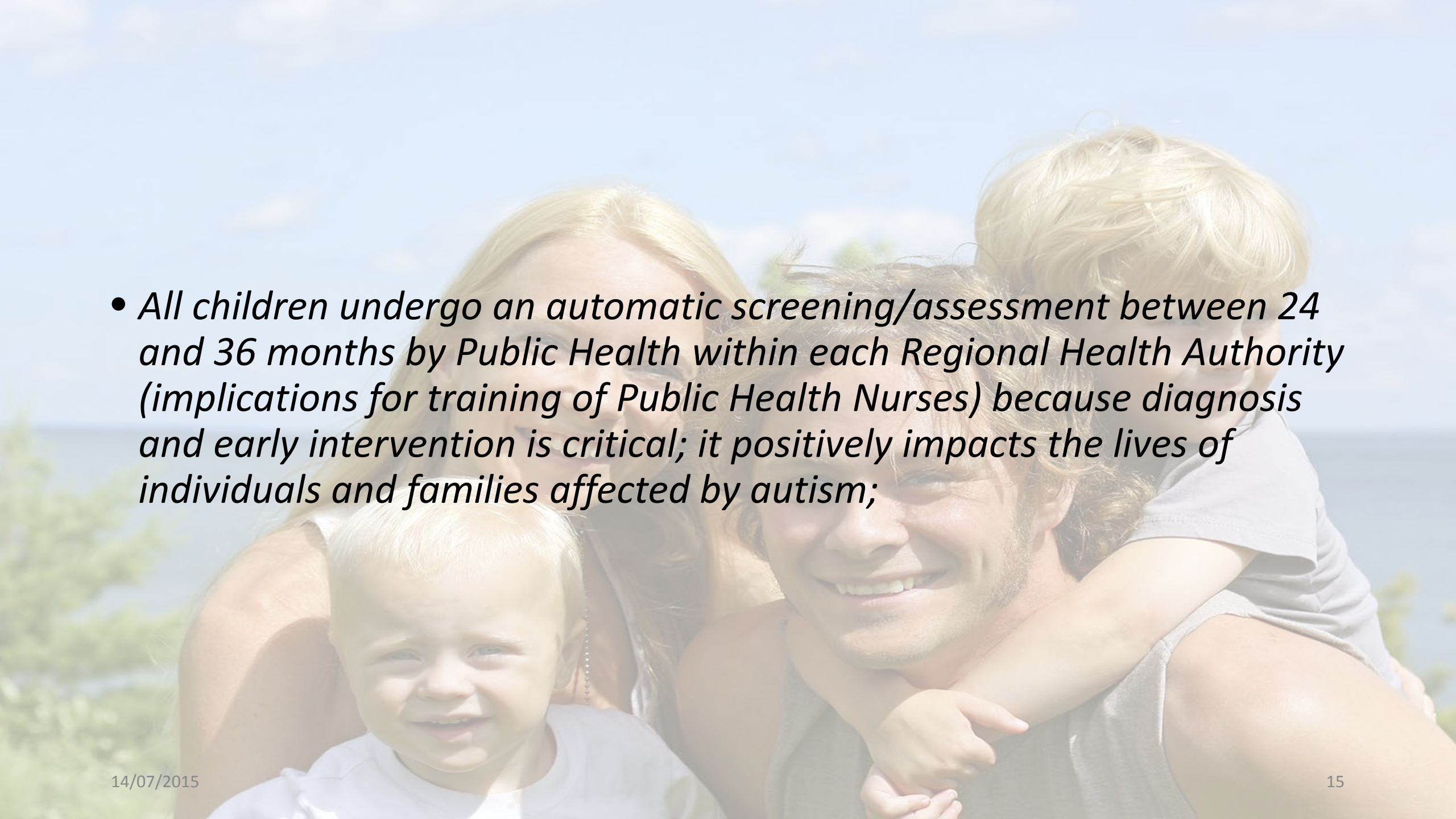
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The level of mental health problems reported by adults with ASD was significant; their identification of issues related to anxiety, depression, OCD and ADHD provides dramatic insight into the need for more mental health support services and transition planning for this group of individuals with ASD.

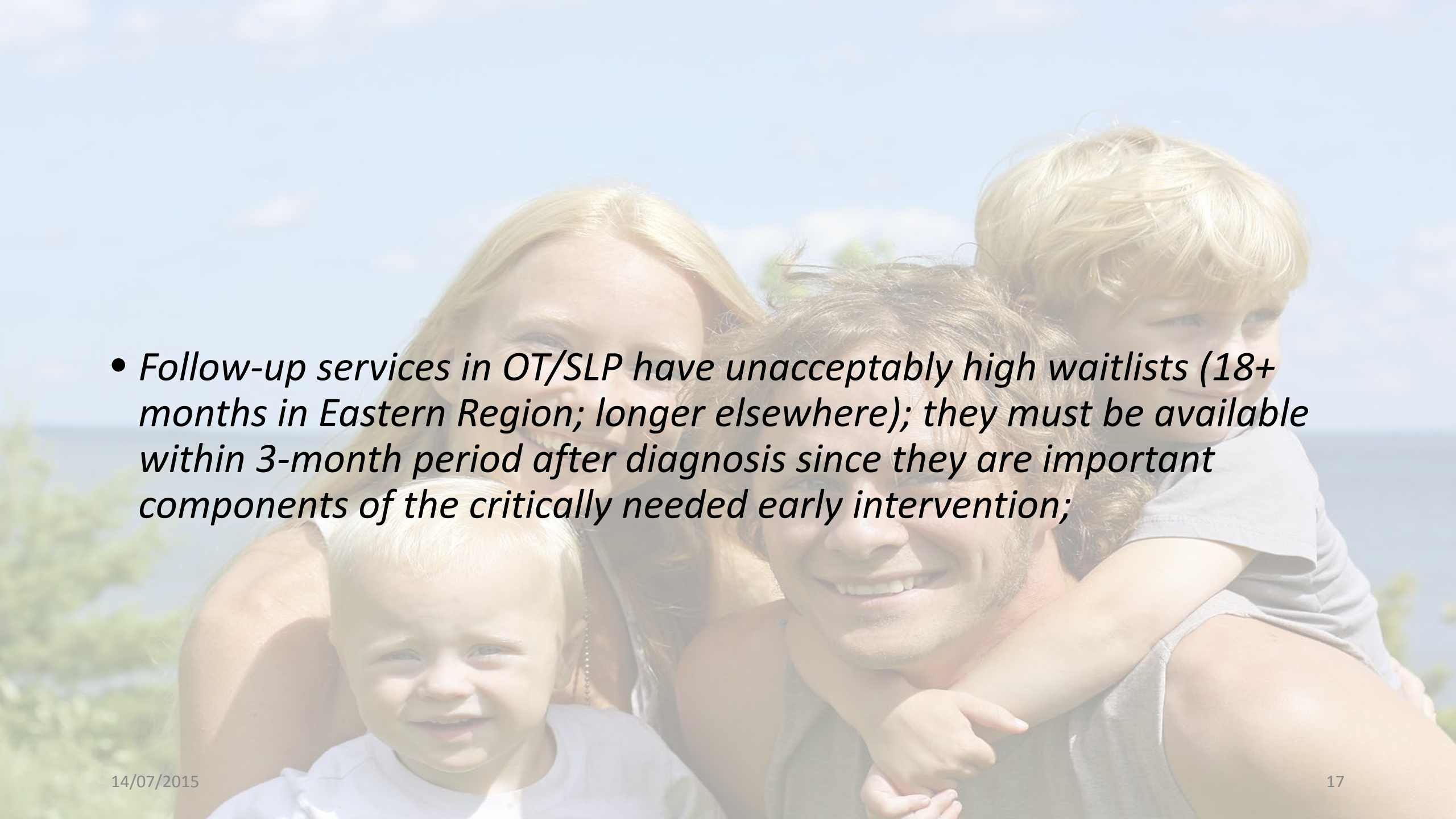
A photograph of a family of four outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is smiling, with a young child with blonde hair sitting on her back. A man with brown hair is smiling, with another young child with blonde hair sitting on his back. They are all wearing light-colored clothing. The background is a bright blue sky with some clouds and green foliage.

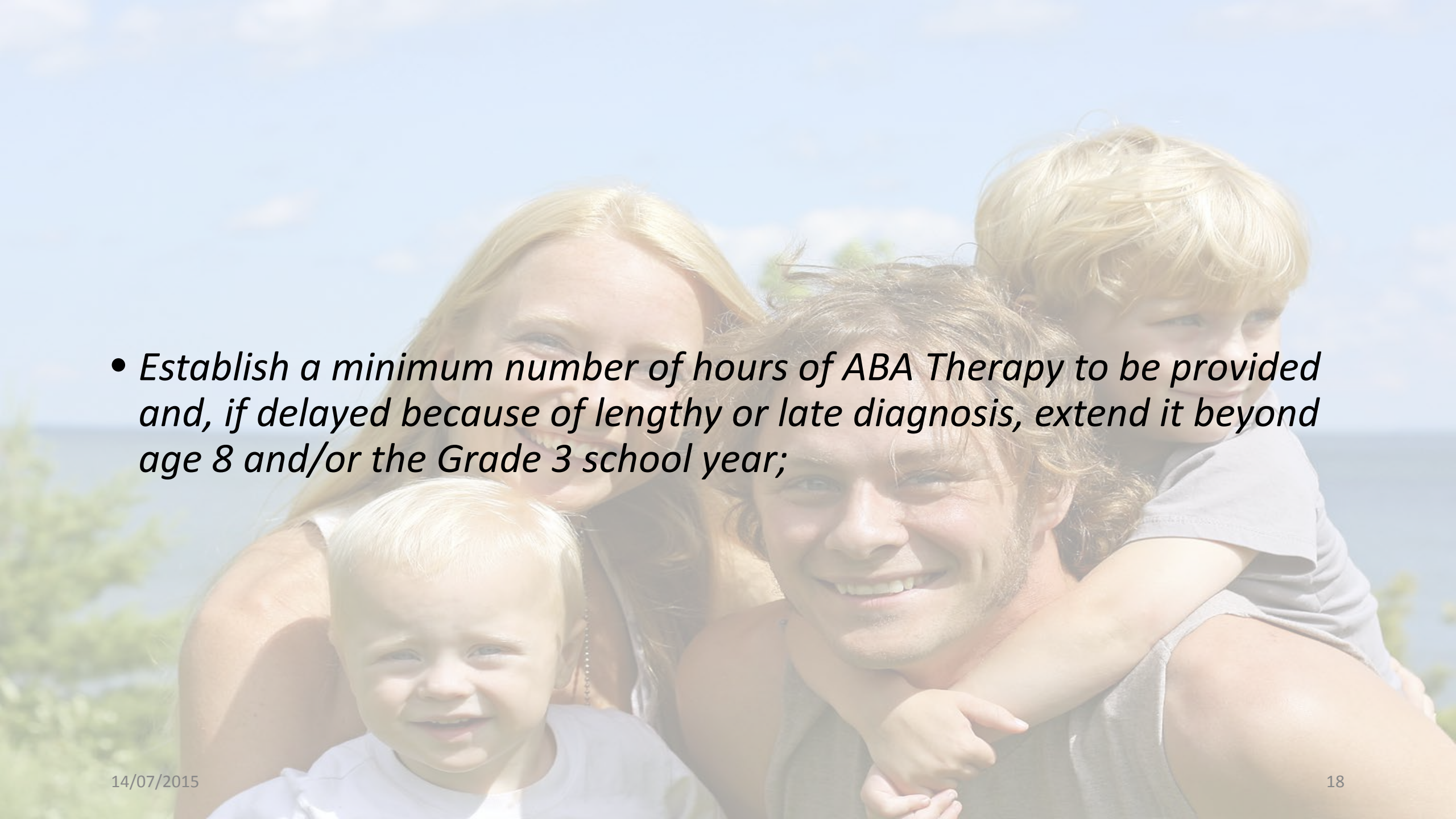
What needs to change to address priority needs?


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- A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, smiling. A man with long brown hair is in the center, smiling. A young boy with blonde hair is on the right, smiling. A young girl with blonde hair is in the foreground, smiling. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with a blue sky and green foliage.
- *Recognition of ASD as a mental health condition; and programs, services and supports provided free of charge to families and adult individuals, as per the Canada Health Act;*

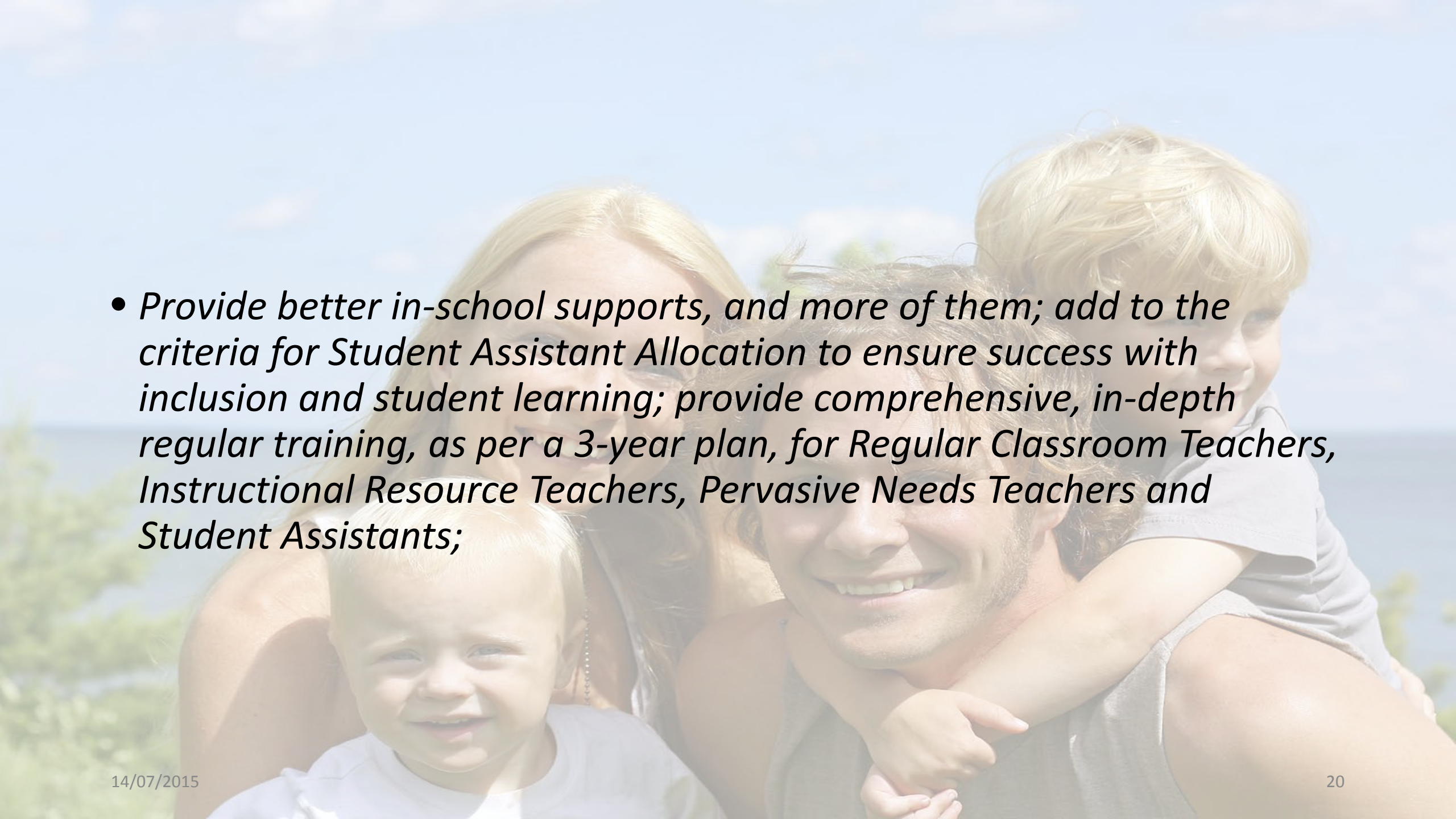
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- A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is in the background, smiling. In the foreground, a young child with blonde hair is smiling. To the right, a man with dark hair is smiling, and another child with blonde hair is sitting on his shoulders, also smiling. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with a blue sky and some greenery.
- *All children undergo an automatic screening/assessment between 24 and 36 months by Public Health within each Regional Health Authority (implications for training of Public Health Nurses) because diagnosis and early intervention is critical; it positively impacts the lives of individuals and families affected by autism;*

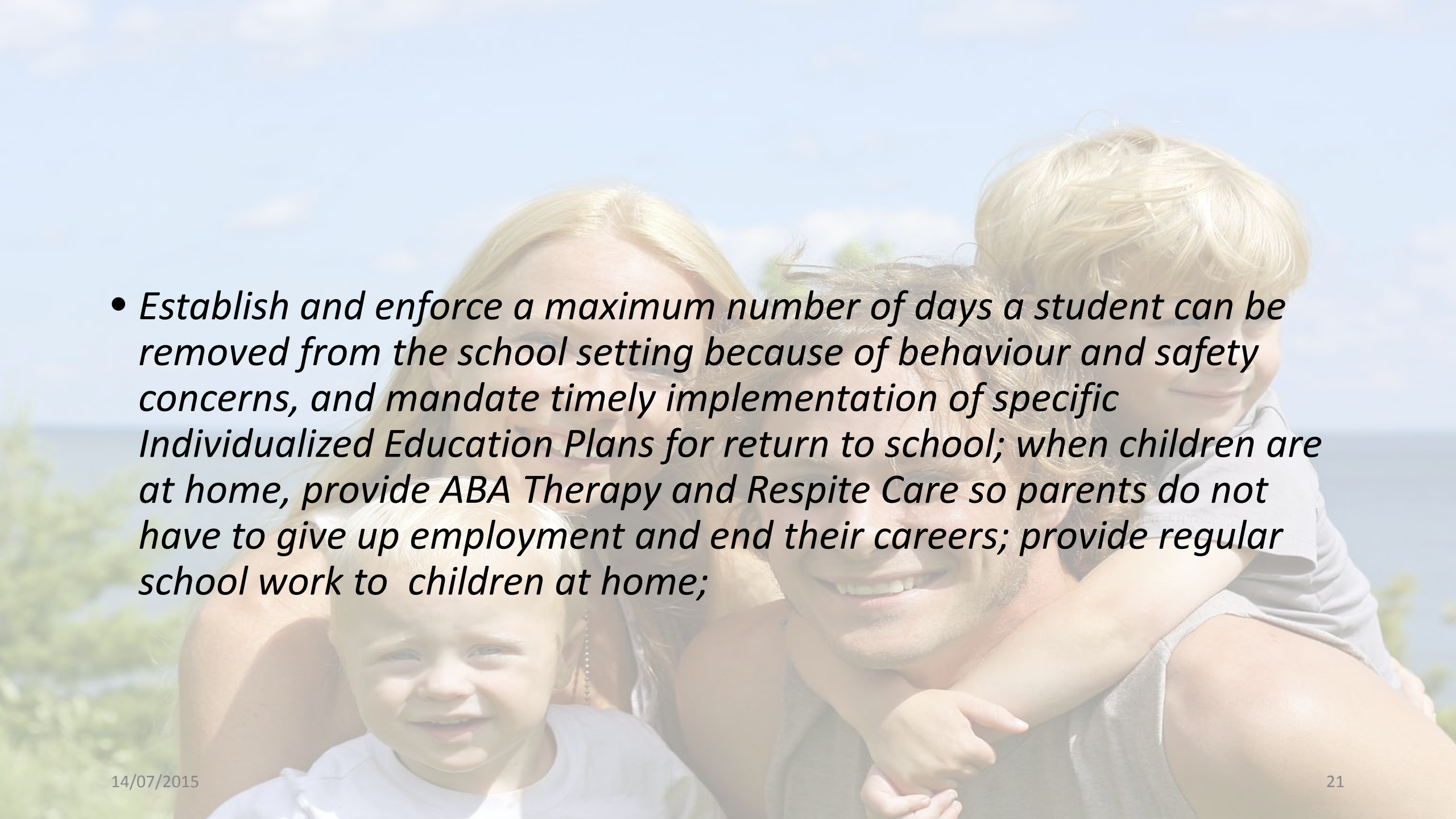
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- *Better assessment and diagnostic capabilities that will flow from more personnel and more efficient ways of assessment and diagnosis;*

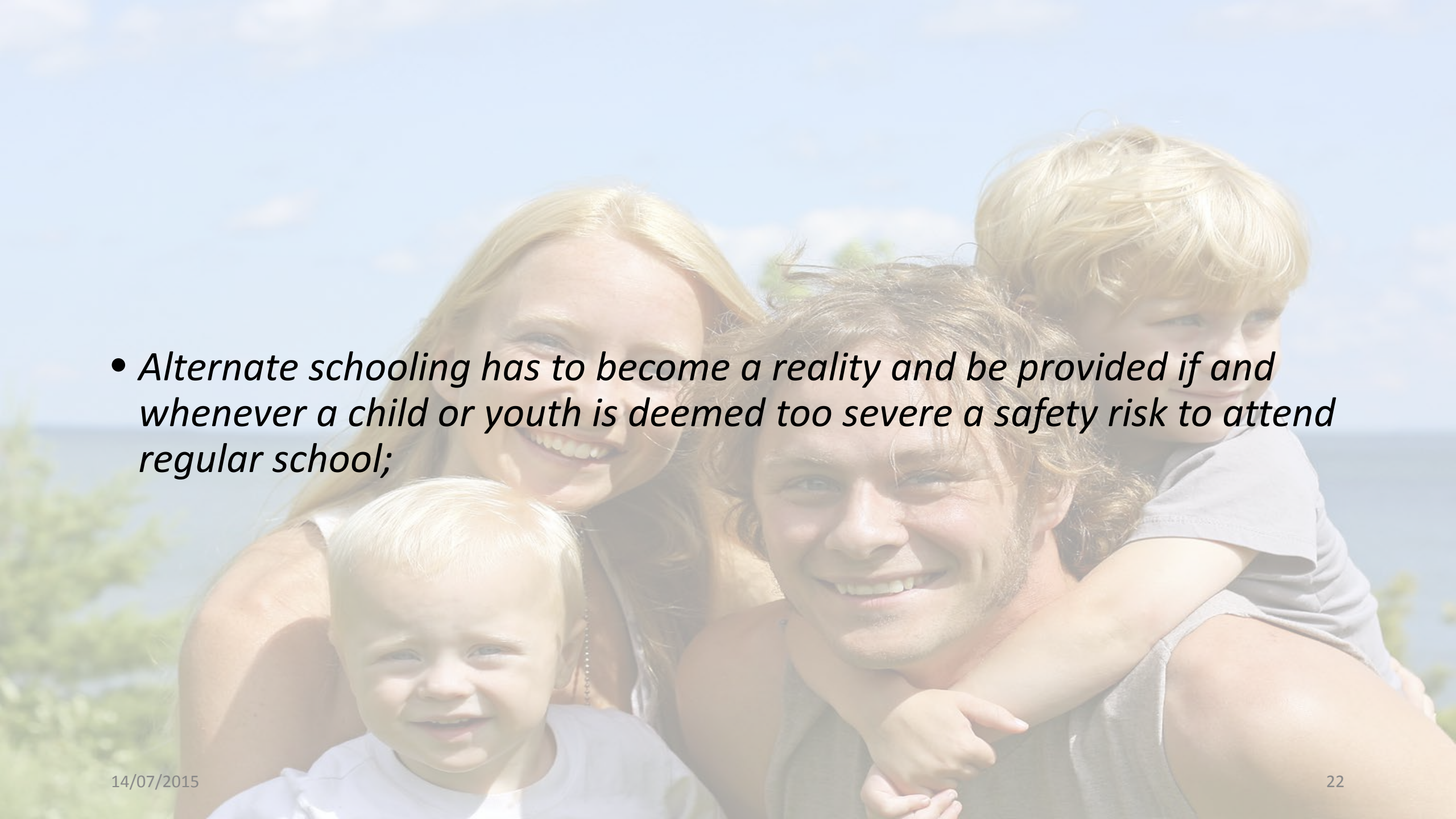
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- *Follow-up services in OT/SLP have unacceptably high waitlists (18+ months in Eastern Region; longer elsewhere); they must be available within 3-month period after diagnosis since they are important components of the critically needed early intervention;*

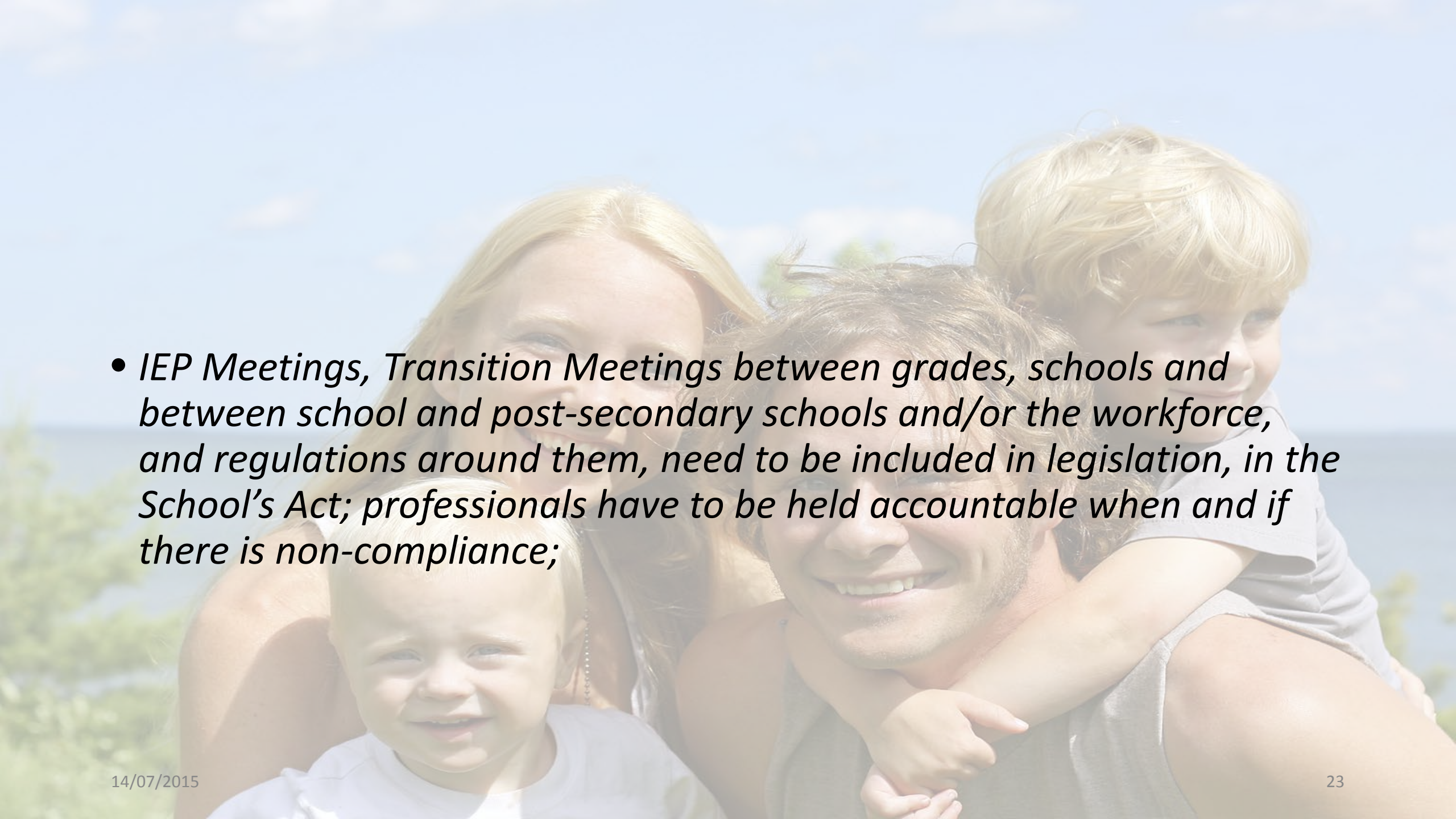
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- *Establish a minimum number of hours of ABA Therapy to be provided and, if delayed because of lengthy or late diagnosis, extend it beyond age 8 and/or the Grade 3 school year;*

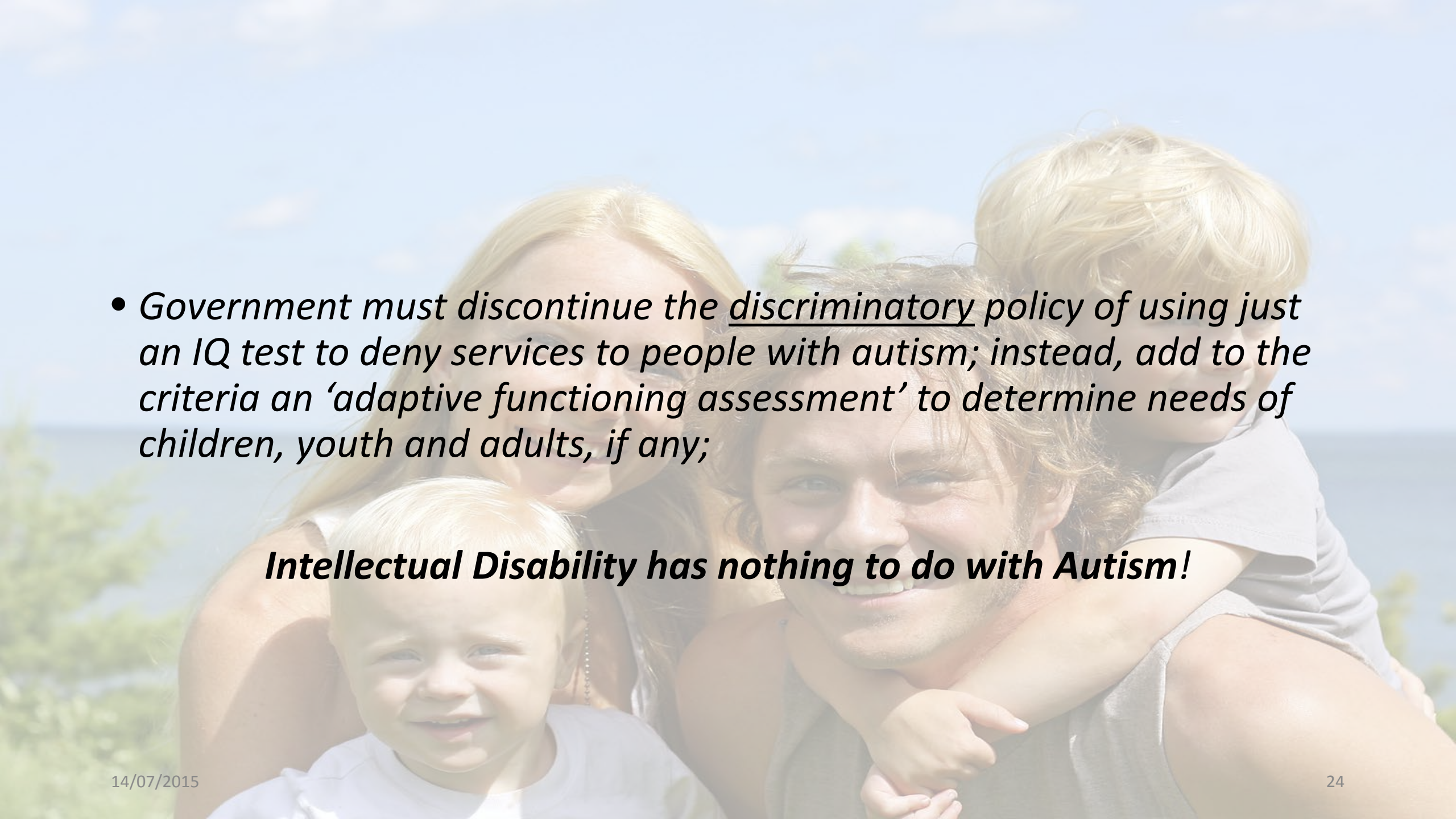
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- A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, a man with dark hair is in the center, and two young children are in the foreground. The background is a bright blue sky with some clouds. The text is overlaid on the image.
- *Establish an adult clinic for ASD and other developmental delays in the province – none exists - and require medical doctors to accept adult referrals for the purpose of diagnosis and/or treatment;*

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- A family of four is shown in a close-up, smiling outdoors. The mother is on the left, the father is in the center, and two young children are on the right. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with a blue sky and green foliage.
- *Provide better in-school supports, and more of them; add to the criteria for Student Assistant Allocation to ensure success with inclusion and student learning; provide comprehensive, in-depth regular training, as per a 3-year plan, for Regular Classroom Teachers, Instructional Resource Teachers, Pervasive Needs Teachers and Student Assistants;*


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- *Establish and enforce a maximum number of days a student can be removed from the school setting because of behaviour and safety concerns, and mandate timely implementation of specific Individualized Education Plans for return to school; when children are at home, provide ABA Therapy and Respite Care so parents do not have to give up employment and end their careers; provide regular school work to children at home;*


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- A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, a man with brown hair is in the center, a young child with blonde hair is on the right, and a toddler with blonde hair is in the foreground. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a bright blue sky with some light clouds and green foliage.
- *Alternate schooling has to become a reality and be provided if and whenever a child or youth is deemed too severe a safety risk to attend regular school;*

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- A photograph of a family of four smiling outdoors. A woman with long blonde hair is on the left, a man with dark hair is in the center, and two young children are in the foreground. The background is a bright blue sky with some clouds. The text is overlaid on the image.
- *IEP Meetings, Transition Meetings between grades, schools and between school and post-secondary schools and/or the workforce, and regulations around them, need to be included in legislation, in the School's Act; professionals have to be held accountable when and if there is non-compliance;*

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- *Government must discontinue the discriminatory policy of using just an IQ test to deny services to people with autism; instead, add to the criteria an 'adaptive functioning assessment' to determine needs of children, youth and adults, if any;*

Intellectual Disability has nothing to do with Autism!

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- *Prepare a plan for independent living in the community for people with autism to the extent their abilities permit, and provide alternate community-based housing for individuals requiring it;*

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- A photograph of a family of four (mother, father, and two children) smiling and embracing each other outdoors. The image is overlaid with text. The background shows a bright, sunny day with a blue sky and some greenery.
- *Implement and fund the research-based, 3-year Continuing Professional Development Plan (CPD) presented to the Minister of Health & Community Services by ASNL in spring of 2013; the cost is \$250,000*

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4. End the use of just IQ 70 as the sole criteria for service provision to children, youth and adults – add an “adaptive function measure” to remove the discrimination
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Thank you

Questions/Clarifications?

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