



Since the COVID-19 public health emergency was declared in mid-March 2020, ACDS has intensified supports to the Community Disability Service (CDS) sector.

COVID-19 Advocacy Timeline

Through the Service Provider Partnership Committee (SPPC) and with regular communication with service providers and Alberta Community and Social Services (CSS), ACDS has kept abreast of emerging issues and been a central player influencing the collaborative development of policy responses.

March 2021

While the number of active cases of COVID-19 plateaus and then begins to rise, Alberta begins Step 2 of reopening. Vaccines are made more widely available; individuals with severe or profound learning disabilities or severe developmental delay become eligible for vaccination in late March.

PDD transformation draft recommendations are presented to CSS. ACDS hosts a webinar on legal and HR considerations on COVID-19 vaccinations, distributes the findings of the 2020 Workforce Survey, circulates a list of resources on vaccinations, and produces a brief analysis of the Alberta 2021 budget.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

March 31, 2021

Alberta Community and Social Services and Alberta Health host a virtual town hall for the disability community on vaccines

March 31, 2021

ACDS shares a list of vaccination resources with service providers

March 30, 2021

Phase 2B of vaccinations begins, targeting people with eligible high-risk underlying health conditions; this includes adults with severe or profound learning disabilities or severe developmental delay

March 23, 2021

Bill 58, the Freedom to Care Act, is introduced, proposing a process for non-profits to request one-time exemptions from regulations, if an exemption does not already exist

March 15, 2021

Phase 2A of vaccinations begins: Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are made available to 65 to 74 year olds

Albertans with severe developmental disabilities are made eligible for vaccination in phase 2B

March 12, 2021

'Legal and HR Considerations on Vaccinations' webinar is hosted by ACDS

March 10, 2021

Staggered distribution of the AstraZeneca vaccine is made available to 50 to 65 year olds

March 8, 2021

Several restrictions are relaxed for retail, hotels, performance groups, and youth sports

Early March, 2021

PDD Transformation Steering Committee finalizes report of 30 recommendations and presents findings to CSS

March 1, 2021

Alberta begins Step 2 of reopening: libraries are open to 15 percent capacity and low-intensity fitness activities are permitted

March 1, 2021

ACDS produces a brief analysis of Alberta 2021 budget

2020 Workforce Survey is released

February 2021

Step 1 of Alberta's new reopening strategy based on hospitalization benchmarks begins. Critical Worker Benefit (CWB) is announced, providing one-time \$1,200 to workers in public and private sectors; CDS eligibility is limited to staff in overnight staffed residences.

ACDS writes to Minister Sawhney expressing concerns on narrow CWB eligibility for CDS workers. A letter writing campaign is launched for CDS organizations to advocate for expanded eligibility for CWB.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

February 24, 2021

CMOH order 03-2021 is issued, with stricter protocol to licensed and designated supportive living facilities with an outbreak of a C-19 variant of concern

Vaccination eligibility is expanded to Albertans born in 1946 or earlier

February 17, 2021

CWB details limit eligibility to CDS workers in overnight staffed residences, and merges CWB (covering October 12, 2020 to January 31, 2021) with initial staff recognition grant (covering March 2020 to July 2020), for a maximum of \$1,200 per employee under both time periods

February 10, 2021

CWB is announced, providing a one-time payment of \$1,200 to public and private sector workers

February 9, 2021

Rapid testing program is expanded to include testing of asymptomatic staff in long term care and designated supportive living facilities

February 8, 2021

Alberta commences Step 1 of a new reopening strategy based on hospitalization benchmarks

February 3, 2021

Alberta Government announces an additional \$68.5 million dollars of funding for continuing care and supportive living

February 19, 2021

ACDS provides members a template and key messages for writing letters to MLA and CSS for CWB advocacy for the sector

February 18, 2021

ACDS writes to Minister Sawhney, advocating for expanding CWB eligibility to all frontline disability workers and providing employers the flexibility to recognize other workers if benefit allocations are not fully expended. ACDS also requests that CDS workers and individuals with disabilities be confirmed as priority groups for vaccination



January 2021

C-19 cases begin to drop across Alberta as strict restrictions continue. Select services reopen in mid-January and outdoor gatherings of a maximum of ten people are once again permitted. Vaccination distribution continues, though supply issues slow delivery.

ACDS continues to advocate for vaccination eligibility for workers in the disability sector and launches a staff safety initiative in partnership with ALIGN, CSS, and AASP to reduce harassment and violence in the workplace.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

Throughout January

ACDS advocacy focuses on prioritizing all disability workers for vaccination access

PDD transformation working groups continue to provide input to develop recommendations

January 29, 2021

CSS announces it will continue to fund select government-operated care facilities in Calgary and Edmonton

January 22, 2021

Active C-19 cases in Alberta drop below 10,000 for the first time since November 2020

January 20, 2021

ACDS, in partnership with ALIGN, CSS, and AASP, launches the Community Services Staff Safety Initiative (CSSSI), a set of resources to increase safety and reduce workplace harassment and violence

January 18, 2021

Personal and wellness services reopen (appointment only) and outdoor social gatherings are allowed for up to 10 people

January 4, 2021

CSS regional structure is revised; six PDD regions are restructured into two zones (North and South)



December 2020

As C-19 case counts continue to rise, new restrictions are enacted, prohibiting all indoor and outdoor social gatherings. C-19 vaccinations begin in Alberta and recognition pay begins to rollout to select disability service providers.

ACDS assists AHS to host two sector-specific Town Halls, and presents a webinar with an expert panel discussing approaches to complex challenges. Preliminary results of ACDS' 2020 Workforce Survey are released, and ACDS is invited by CSS Minister Sawhney to a sector-specific round table discussion on challenges and opportunities.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

December 22, 2020

CSS recommences bi-weekly Q&A for disability service providers which had last been released on July 9, 2020, answering questions asked at the Town Halls in early December

December 21, 2020

Q&A is released by the Alberta government answering questions on the enhanced public health measures and their effect on congregate care centres

December 18, 2020

Rapid point-of-care testing begins at long-term care and designated supportive living facilities using dedicated mobile testing centres

December 15, 2020

First C-19 vaccine is administered in Alberta

December 8, 2020

Alberta announces province-wide mandatory masking in all indoor public spaces and workplaces, restrictions to social gatherings, and mandatory work from home where possible

December 6, 2020

Alberta exceeds 20,000 active C-19 cases for the first time

December 4, 2020

CSS distributes information to claim recognition pay for certain PDD and FSCD positions

December 2 & 4, 2020

In response to ACDS advocacy, and with ACDS assistance, AHS hosts two sector-specific Town Halls to clarify public health orders and address questions

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

December 21, 2020

ACDS CEO and a Director participate at an invited round table with CSS Minister on sector challenges, opportunities, and learnings from navigating through C-19

December 18, 2020

ACDS releases the preliminary findings from the 2020 Workforce Survey: COVID-19 Wave 1

December 11, 2020

ACDS hosts *Uncertainty, Risks, and Transformation: Preparing Organizations for the Shifts Ahead*, a webinar for leaders of member organizations

Early December, 2020

ACDS advocates for: vaccination in the CDS sector, recommencing biweekly C-19 meetings, and reinstatement of the weekly Q&A document



November 2020

C-19 cases continue to rise throughout Alberta and a second state of public health emergency is announced. New restrictions include no indoor gatherings, a maximum of 10 people at outdoor social gatherings, and grade 7 to 12 classes move online for the remainder of the year.

ACDS continues to circulate information on Alberta's CDS sector as a part of the #QualityCDS campaign, and advocates for a forum by AHS to address CDS-specific questions related to the public health orders.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

Late November, 2020

ACDS advocates for a CDS sector-specific Town Hall with AHS to interpret health orders

November 30, 2020

Grade 7 to 12 classes move online for the remainder of the year

November 26, 2020

Executive Summary of *Impact and Insights: COVID-19 and Alberta's CDS Sector* is published, with recommendations for sector recovery and growth

November 25 & 27, 2020

AHS hosts two telephone Town Halls by Dr. Hinshaw to discuss ongoing issues in supportive living and long-term care

November 24, 2020

Alberta enacts a second state of public health emergency, along with restrictions allowing no indoor gatherings and limiting outdoor social gatherings to a maximum of 10 people

November 20, 2020

Dr. Hinshaw writes a letter to supportive living and long-term care operators, reminding agencies that staff must stay home when they are sick and practice proper hygiene/distancing

November 15, 2020

Alberta exceeds 10,000 active cases for the first time

November 5, 2020

ACDS hosts a leadership webinar for organizations to share firsthand experiences and learnings from COVID-19 outbreaks

Throughout November, 2020

ACDS continues the #QualityCDS campaign, sharing CDS sector data and celebrating the hard work of disability workers during the pandemic



October 2020

As federal CERB comes to an end, workers are transitioned to an expanded version of Employment Insurance and a new sickness and caregiving benefit (CRSB and CRCB). C-19 cases begin to rise in mid-October, resulting in a 15-person limit on social gatherings in Calgary and Edmonton.

ACDS resumes committees that had been paused due to C-19, and launches the #QualityCDS campaign to celebrate and share facts about the CDS sector. A report detailing impacts and learnings from the first 6 months of C-19 is produced to help inform improvements to PDD program sustainability and supports.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

October 29, 2020

Dr. Hinshaw writes a letter to supportive living and long-term care operators in Edmonton and Calgary, recommending visitor restrictions

October 26, 2020

Following record numbers of C-19, a 15-person limit is placed on indoor and outdoor social gatherings in Calgary and Edmonton

October 5, 2020

An updated screening tool is provided to long-term care sites aligning screening with other sectors to focus on limiting entrance of individuals with a high risk of transmitting C-19

October 3, 2020

CERB benefit ends and is replaced by an expanded version of Employment Insurance

October 2, 2020

Bill C-4 is passed, providing federal benefits to workers quarantining due to C-19 (CRSB) or staying home to care for dependants (CRCB)

October 30, 2020

ACDS publishes *Impact and Insights: COVID-19 and Alberta's CDS Sector*, highlighting impacts in the first 6 months of C-19, with recommendations for sector recovery and growth

October 28, 2020

ACDS releases a statement to provide facts on community-based service delivery in Alberta

October 19 - 23, 2020

ACDS Fall Webinar Series provides 5 days of professional development for frontline on mental health and trauma, intercultural competence, dementia care, gender and sexual diversity in the disability community, and care in the time of C-19

October 8, 2020

ACDS launches the #QualityCDS campaign to celebrate the hard work in the sector during the pandemic, and to share key facts about the sector and its workforce

October 2, 2020

ACDS summarizes the list of new federal benefits and grants relevant to the CDS sector

Early October, 2020

ACDS Government Relations Committee and ACDS Human Resources Coordinating Committee resume work

The SPPC continues to meet and discuss COVID-related issues and broader PDD program needs, while the Contract Working Group resumes to address outstanding invoicing issues



September 2020

Schools reopen in Alberta, a broader range of PDD data becomes publicly available, some public health restrictions are relaxed for care facilities, and new federal programs are announced.

ACDS supports the sector with information on federal programs, and provides input to CSS on distribution of federal wage top-ups if these were to become available to workers in the CDS sector.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

September 17, 2020

CMOH order 32-2020 is put into effect, lessening quarantine requirements upon admission to long-term care facilities, re-allowing volunteer access, and allowing exemptions to single-site regulations for specific professions and roles

Asymptomatic individuals are no longer able to access C-19 testing in Alberta

September 2, 2020

Schools begin reopening across Alberta, with masking requirements in place

September 1, 2020

PDD and FSCD program data is updated to the end of June 2020 and made available on the Alberta Government's Open Data Portal

Early to Mid September 2020

CSS requests ACDS' input on the distribution of potential federal wage top-ups for essential workers; ACDS advocates for a flexible process that is not prescriptive or burdensome, which allows employers to use their own criteria for distribution in their agencies

August 2020

Masking bylaws are implemented in various communities across the province. Increasing numbers of staff and individuals begin testing positive for C-19. Staff coverage costs start exceeding budgeted amounts; some staff express reluctance to work in homes where positive C-19 cases are reported.

ACDS advocates for clear guidance from AHS, and for CSS to allow unbudgeted coverage costs to be claimed under C-19 expenses. CSS invites input from ACDS on developing a collaborative process to address sustainability challenges through system transformation.

August 19, 2020

At SPPC, service providers express concerns about staffing and challenges related to unbudgeted costs as communities open up and more staff and individuals test positive for C-19

August 19, 2020

ACDS advocates for clear and consistent guidance from AHS, streamlined reporting process for positive cases, and for CSS to cover unbudgeted expenses as part of C-19 costs

Early to Mid August, 2020

CSS approaches ACDS for input on developing a collaborative process to address systemic challenges and sustainability issues

Early to Mid August, 2020

ACDS advocates for engagement that includes clear parameters, systems design expertise, and representation from community disability service providers, families, and individuals

August 1, 2020

Mandatory mask bylaws are put into place in multiple cities, including Calgary and Edmonton

ACDS Government Relations Committee supports the development of a new engagement body for ACDS to connect with families of individuals receiving community based services



July 2020

Visitation restrictions relax in long-term care facilities and school re-entry plan is announced.

ACDS supports CDS sector relaunch, SPPC resumes discussions on systemic issues, and ACDS submits formal response to Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

July 21, 2020

Alberta Education announces schools re-entry plan for September under scenario 1 (near normal operations with health measures in place)

July 16, 2020

CMOH order 29-2020 issued, giving long-term care facilities greater visitation flexibility

Alberta Health releases an updated Q&A for CMOH 23-2020, answering questions on health screenings, testing, and isolation

July 7, 2020

Bill 32, the Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act, is introduced in the Legislature

July 6, 2020

Minister Sawhney and senior CSS staff consult with academics and researchers to discuss opportunities and challenges in PDD, FSCD, AISH, and Income Supports

July 31, 2020

ACDS submits formal response to Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society consultation, advocating for: sustainable and flexible funding; reduced regulatory burdens; supports to enhance overall organizational capacity (not just service delivery); better understanding of cross-system impacts; and stronger collaboration mechanisms

July 20, 2020

ACDS is invited to participate in Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society consultation on what Alberta's civil society needs to guide recovery

July 10, 2020

ACDS makes their return to office guidelines publicly available as an example for any organization planning their own return to office

July 9, 2020

SPPC COVID Learnings Working Group summarizes key learnings and provides recommendations to support governance, flexibility, collaboration, and innovation in the sector

July 6, 2020

ACDS Director of Strategic Services and Stakeholder Engagement is invited to participate in Minister Sawhney's Disability Advisory Forum



June 2020

Phase 2 of Alberta's reopening begins June 12; public health emergency is lifted June 15. Health guidelines increasing some allowances while restricting others create confusion and conflicting pressures. Reopening of non-essential services creates new staffing deployment issues.

ACDS advocates for CSS to engage with Health to make appropriate adjustments and exemptions to mandatory regulations to reflect differences in risks between sites, and to provide services with information and tools to make reasoned risk assessments in their reopening approach. Invoicing process is clarified and SPPC launches COVID Learnings Working Group to assess responses and identify key learnings from the pandemic.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

June 23, 2020

Dr. Hinshaw hosts Town Hall on visitor policy for supportive living and long-term care facility residents

June 19, 2020

Alberta Disability Workers Association (ADWA) launches letter-writing campaign to advocate for at least \$2/hr wage increases for CDS workforce

June 19, 2020

SPPC Contract Management Working Group continues to meet. ACDS shares feedback regarding ongoing invoicing challenges and implementation inconsistencies

June 18, 2020

New SPPC COVID Learnings Working Group convenes to examine responses to pandemic, and identify practices to retain or amplify

June 15, 2020

Alberta ends state of public emergency

June 12, 2020

Phase 2 of Alberta's reopening announced

June 11, 2020

CSS releases relaunch guidance for disability service providers

June 11, 2020

ACDS updates its decision-making and planning tool to incorporate the guidance from CSS

June 10, 2020

SPPC recommences pre-pandemic conversations related to PDD sustainability and data sharing, and creates new COVID Learnings Working Group to capture recent learnings

June 4, 2020

ACDS informs service providers of tools and resources to assist with reopening planning, including sharing response strategies being developed in some regions



May 2020

Phase 1 of Alberta's reopening begins May 14. Health orders gradually and cautiously relax restrictions.

ACDS advocates for clear guidance from CSS for the reopening of community access programs and prepares a tool to assist service providers develop their reopening plans. ACDS also provides workforce information to the Minister and a statement advocating for wage top-up. A one-pager on workforce data is also released to support sector advocacy.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

May 27, 2020
Alberta Health holds three days of webinars to clarify questions from CMOH 23-2020

May 25, 2020
CMOH order 23-2020 issued, increasing allowances for activities in supportive living and continuing care sites, while maintaining restrictions to protect staff and resident safety

May 19, 2020
Alberta Health Services launches a toll-free Rehabilitation Advice Line, providing advice and strategies to adults with disabilities

May 14, 2020
Phase 1 of Alberta's reopening announced

May 29, 2020

SPPC Contract Management Working Group clarifies invoicing template and process

May 25, 2020

CET accreditation surveys relaunched, with online and virtual options, depending on service provider capacity

May 21, 2020

ACDS publishes a decision-making and planning tool to assist day programs develop reopening strategies

May 14, 2020

ACDS releases 2019 CDS Workforce Infographic to support advocacy activities by the sector

May 13, 2020

SPPC Contract Management Working Group reconvenes to seek feedback on new invoicing process and address areas of concern

May 12, 2020

ACDS provides Minister Sawhney with requested information and data on staff retention and wages, along with a statement advocating for wage top-up

May 4, 2020

ACDS invites photos to showcase innovative methods of providing support during the pandemic

May 1, 2020

ACDS, ALIGN, and ECVO release updated list of federal and provincial services and benefits



April 2020

Health orders restrict staff movement across care facilities, and there is confusion in how these apply to community disability residences; staffing challenges and access to PPE are exacerbated.

ACDS advocates for CSS to coordinate access to PPE, provide written communication to help clarify health orders, and raises concerns about staffing challenges. Through SPPC, ACDS supports CSS to develop revised C-19 invoicing for greater contract flexibility.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

April 28, 2020

CSS releases C-19 invoicing process giving greater contract flexibility and recognizing C-19 costs

CMOH Order 12-2020 issued, providing guidelines to support quality of life, testing directives and an expanded list of C-19 symptoms

CMOH Order 14-2020 issued, allowing temporary replacement for designated essential visitor and allowing outdoor visits with some restrictions

April 23, 2020

CSS responds to ACDS pressure for:
(i) increased clarity and communication, by launching weekly Q&A for disability sector based on questions brought to ACDS and regional councils;
(ii) PPE supplies, by temporarily coordinating orders via regional PDD offices

April 10, 2020

CMOH Order 10-2020 issued. Part 1 restricts staff to single care facility effective April 23, causing concerns of loss of staff to better-paying facilities. Continuous masking mandated for direct care work causes concerns arising from inadequate PPE supplies. Part 2 updates operational and outbreak standards. Complexity of order causes widespread confusion for disability sector home operators.

April 7, 2020

CMOH Order 09-2020 issued; visits to mandated facilities restricted only to provide essential care or if resident is near death

April 2, 2020

Telephone Town Hall with Minister Sawhney, Minister Schulz and Dr. Hinshaw to provide clarity on health guidelines for licensed sites

AHS C-19 Coordinated Response Line is available to support congregate living site operators with symptom reporting, questions or concerns

CMOH 08-2020 issued; movement of staff across sites is restricted and strict guidelines are in place for reporting C-19 outbreak

April 24, 2020

SPPC develops detailed parameters for funding flexibility and invoicing to address C-19 costs

April 23, 2020

ACDS publishes flowchart to clarify Order 10-2020 for various disability service facility designations

2019 Workforce Survey released to support advocacy for frontline wages

April 17, 2020

ACDS compiles resources related to federal support programs and initiatives, and links to funding sources for non-profits

April 10, 2020

ACDS continues to advocate for access to PPE

COVID19@ACDS.ca email created to efficiently gather service providers' pandemic-related concerns

April 8, 2020

SPPC discusses staffing challenges arising from federal CERB and administrative challenges of navigating changing employment standards

April 6, 2020

ACDS e-update clarifies which disability care sites are mandated to follow Order 08-2020, and what CSS recommends for service providers

ACDS CEO presents video message on what ACDS has heard from agencies, current areas of advocacy and emerging issues or concerns



March 2020

Provincial public health emergency issued. Public health orders guide operations at care sites.

ACDS advocates CSS to enhance direct communication with service providers, allow service delivery and staffing flexibility, recognize COVID costs, and support agencies to interpret health guidelines and access PPE.

EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ACDS ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES

March 27, 2020

Virtual biweekly meetings between CSS, regional PDD representatives, and regional service provider councils begin

March 27, 2020

ACDS is a core participant at biweekly meetings between CSS and regional service provider councils

March 25, 2020

CMOH Order 06-2020 issued, with extensive operational protocols for symptom notification and response, distancing, cleaning, and PPE use. Service providers have issues accessing adequate PPE

March 25, 2020

ACDS, ALIGN, and ECVO release list of federal and provincial services and benefits, and non-profit resources and initiatives related to C-19

First case of C-19 announced in PDD group home

March 22, 2020

CMOH Order 03-2020 issued; licensed supportive living and long-term care sites to limit visitors and conduct health screenings. Agencies express concerns about having enough thermometers

March 22, 2020

ACDS CEO speaks to Minister Sawhney about issues facing the sector and advocates for direct and ongoing engagement

March 20, 2020

CSS releases direct communication assuring a coordinated CSS and community response to C-19; requests agencies to track C-19 related costs

March 19, 2020

CSS ADM and ACDS CEO begin daily briefings

ACDS stresses the need for direct communication from CSS to service providers

March 17, 2020

Alberta declares public health emergency

March 16, 2020

CSS agrees to provide agencies service delivery and staffing flexibility as resources are re-deployed to maintain essential supports

SPPC begins meeting weekly to address emerging C-19 issues and develop solutions

March 13, 2020

ACDS begins regular C-19 e-updates to support agencies with information and resources

Pandemic resources are curated on ACDS website

