

Skilled and Fairly Paid Workforce



Strengthen the sector through fair compensation and a comprehensive workforce strategy

A comprehensive strategy. Developed in 2022, with funding from the Government of Alberta and sector engagement and research by KPMG, Project Blueprint CDS: A Comprehensive Workforce Strategy for Community Disability Services proposes 18 recommendations to achieve a skilled and sustainable workforce. One of the immediate recommendations is for ***ongoing, adequate, and competitive compensation for community disability workers.***

Wage infusion is welcome but not enough. In December 2022, the Government of Alberta announced a 10% increase to funding for direct services staff compensation; budget 2023-24 extended this funding for three years. The sector welcomes this infusion. However, it comes after almost a decade of no increases to wage funding, during in which period inflation in Alberta increased by 19%. In addition, not all of the 10% is available to increase wages, as some of this has to go towards the increased costs of benefits and mandatory employment-related costs (MERCs). In other words, ***a 10% increase in funding results in significantly less than 10% actually available to enhance staff wages.***

Competing sectors. The recent funding also does little to address a ***chronic wage disparity*** between community disability service workers and workers in competing sectors, many of which are in unionized environments where wages are higher, benefits are better, and inflation-indexed adjustments are commonplace.



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We ask for a commitment to **fair, ongoing wage top-ups** for CDS sector workers to reflect inflation and narrow the wage disparity with competing sectors. **Competitive and planned** top-ups are essential to stem significant recruitment and retention challenges.

54% of the entire CDS workforce in 2020 made **under \$20/hr**

The average wage for the entire sector, including executive and leadership positions, was **\$21.50/hr**

Even with the recent funding infusion of 10%, most workers in the CDS sector will continue to make well under \$25.00/hr.

The average wage for Community Disability Support Workers (\$18.76/hr) is below Alberta's Market Basket Measure (MBM), an index of affordability and basic standard of living across the province. The MBM is \$24.04 in Alberta's metropolitan areas (i.e., Edmonton and Calgary), and \$22.51 in Alberta's rural areas.

Comparable positions in government, such as Individual Support Workers, earn between \$20.63 and \$25.07/hr, which is 10% to 34% higher than the average CDSW hourly wage.

Similarly, hourly average wages for comparable positions in related industries are also higher, e.g., \$25.21 for NAICS 623 - Nursing and residential care facilities workers and \$23.43 for NAICS 624 - Social assistance workers. The recent 10% infusion narrows this gap, but only slightly, and only until competitive workers receive salary increases or inflation-indexed adjustments.

"The sector cannot even compete any longer. Staff [are] able to find unskilled jobs in other sectors with better hourly wage starts and benefits we cannot offer."



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In addition to the immediate and ongoing priority to address compensation challenges, we ask for a commitment to support the implementation of Project Blueprint's full suite of 18 recommendations for a ***comprehensive and cohesive approach to address workforce challenges in the CDS sector.***

Produced by ACDS with support from KPMG, Project Blueprint's sector-driven workforce strategy lists 18 recommendations based on extensive research, labour market analysis, and sector engagement.

Understanding the workforce context

- A1. Build a shared understanding of the economic impact of the CDS sector
- A2. Build a shared understanding of the scope of practice of CDS sector services
- A3. Adopt common workforce classifications
- A4. Adopt a network model to support cross-ministry coordination
- A5. Develop a forecasting model to support strategic workforce planning

Recruiting and retaining the workforce

- B6. Provide immediate and ongoing wage relief
- B7. Build a compensation scale guide for frontline service delivery staff
- B8. Engage CDS sector workers to co-design a community of practice

Developing the workforce

- C9A. Establish a target credential requirement for frontline CDS sector workers
- C9B. Establish a system for microcredentialing
- C9C. Expand post-secondary programming
- C9D. Identify current state of training
- C9E. Develop a provincial training framework
- C9F. Develop a training catalogue
- C9G. Expand the suite of training offered by ACDS
- C10. Identify and address barriers to workforce flexibility within the PDD contract structure
- C11. Implement innovative workforce fund
- C12: Support organizations to build a culture of professionalization