

Maximizing Impact through Seamless, Integrated Systems

About Community Disability Services

Community disability service organizations are vital partners with the Government of Alberta in the delivery of supports to facilitate the citizenship of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Funded by the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program, community-based organizations provide adults with developmental disabilities with home living, employment, community access, and specialised supports in their local communities. PDD also funds government-run operations and provides funding to families to manage their own supports through Family Managed Services (FMS). Some families choose to contract with community disability service organizations to provide necessary professional supports to their family member.

In 2017-18:

- **12,061** Albertans received supports and services from the PDD program¹
- About **9,000** individuals (**70%-75%**) receive supports from **157** community disability service providers²
- **157** community service organizations provided supports across Alberta¹
- **15,000** workers were employed by community disability service organizations³
- **\$900 million** supported community service delivery (service provider contracts, FMS, PDD program/regional offices), and \$47 million for direct operations, for a total operating cost of \$947 million⁴

Our Vision and Framework for Impact

Our vision for vibrant communities is places where all citizens feel safe, healthy, connected, and valued. Community disability services provide essential, personalized supports to Albertans with disabilities to facilitate their full potential for citizenship. The capacity of community disability services to have maximum impact rests on three pillars; these pillars are the guiding principles for our recommendations to the Government of Alberta to maximize the impact of community disability supports. One of these guiding principles is the existence of **seamless and integrated systems**.



Changing context

Like all Albertans, people with disabilities encounter and are impacted by a wide range of programs, services, and systems such as income supports, health, justice, housing and seniors, to name a few. The scope of supports that agencies need to provide has expanded as individuals with disabilities are living longer and participating in the community in more diverse ways. In addition, many individuals with disabilities receiving community-based supports have complex, and in some cases increasingly ultra-complex, behavioural and medical support needs.

The issues

PDD eligibility criteria. Different programs have different criteria and approaches. Individuals eligible for supports under Family Supports for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) program may suddenly lose them the day they turn 18 years of age. If a person is eligible for PDD but also needs mental health supports, accessing the latter is not automatic. When programs operate in silos, navigating these become challenging, resource intensive, and may create a crisis for the individual and potential risk in the community. Most community disability service providers favour broadening the eligibility criteria, provided services are properly resourced to meet added responsibilities and scope of needs.

The parallel system. For individuals with complex needs, the intersections with certain systems and policy areas are more frequent, intense, and demanding than most other individuals in service. The costs of these transactional interactions are largely borne by PDD. As the number of people with complex and ultra-complex needs increases, the cost of this parallel system keeps burgeoning. Furthermore, several supports that should be available to people with disabilities through existing programs are being provided by duplicate processes within PDD, creating, in effect, a “parallel system.” There is a risk of potential financial inefficiency, or even gaps if one system believes the other is covering off responsibilities.

Inconsistencies and incongruencies. Although many social service programs are under the Ministry of Community and Social Services, there are significant differences across departments. Interactions between departments are often incongruent, with each having its own access criteria, processes, and service protocols. Many programs have been designed without intentional consideration of their impact on individuals with disabilities. Individuals receiving supports may experience these programs in different ways than what they are accustomed to, or what might be optimal for their needs.

Recommendations for maximizing impact through seamless, integrated systems

The lives of individuals with disabilities intersect with multiple programs, services, and policy areas.

To maximize the impact of the opportunities created by these connections, we recommend the government:

- **Expand the eligibility criteria for PDD programs** to include individuals who may otherwise fall through the cracks, including those transitioning from Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD), provide broader access to services, and widen the involvement of people who know the individual in the assessment process. Expansion to the criteria must be accompanied with proper resources to community agencies, including enhanced funding for staff training, to address increased demands.
- **Review program and systems access** to address the overlap between PDD and other systems and programs, and the barriers and inconsistencies in access criteria and approaches by ensuring people with development disabilities can access appropriate systems outside PDD, consistent with other Albertans.
- **Conduct a disability-based analysis** to review government policies, programs, and initiatives to assess and address their potential impact on individuals with disabilities in the same way that the government has committed to conduct analysis of its policies, programs and processes for other frequently impacted groups.

Sources

1. PDD Program Review Discussion Guide. 2018
2. Estimated from: Alberta Community and Social Services. “PDD by the Numbers” webpage. Last updated October 4, 2016
3. Estimated from ACDS 2017 Annual Workforce Survey
4. Alberta Ministry of Community and Social Services. Annual Report 2017-18. Voted Actuals

Vision	People with disabilities live full lives as citizens supported by a vibrant network of services in their communities
Mission	ACDS is the collective voice of our members, advancing excellence and best practices, advocating for effective public policy, and championing disability services