

Community Disability Services Workforce

An essential foundation for quality supports

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. **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
- **\$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 million³

About the Community Disability Services Workforce

Community disability service workers are essential for the delivery of quality supports. People with disabilities have the right to a professional, well-trained, and stable workforce.

A skilled, professional workforce:

- Helps individuals with disabilities find meaningful opportunities in their communities and be contributing citizens of our province
- Supports the development of skills so that individuals can work, volunteer and build a better quality of life for themselves
- Helps keep individuals healthy and connected, reducing costs associated with hospitalization, premature institutionalization, or involvement with the justice system
- Supports families to navigate complex systems, provides respite, and helps keep families together
- Supports the Alberta Human Rights Act enshrining the rights of all individuals to opportunities to live and participate in their communities

In 2017-18:⁴

- **15,000** workers were employed by the community disability services (CDS) sector
- **77%** of workers identified as female; **52%** of workers were aged 25 to 44 years
- **About an equal proportion** had completed high school or had a post-secondary certificate (**48%**), as those who had a diploma or Bachelor's degree (**49%**)
- **53%** worked full-time
- **35%** had been at their current workplace for less than 2 years
- **89%** of staff were in frontline direct service positions
- **\$21.06** was the average hourly wage across all positions in the workforce
- **53%** of the workforce earned less than \$20/hr; **84%** earned less than \$25/hr
- **32% turnover** in frontline staff in Community Disability Service Worker positions
- **51% turnover** in staff who had worked for less than one year

The issues



Compensation for staff has been below market value for a long time

- Funding contracts have not provided any wage increases since 2014
- Frontline staff in the CDS sector earn significantly less than workers such as nurses, homecare workers and teaching aides who do similar jobs
- The average hourly wage across all positions in the CDS sector in 2017 was \$21.06,⁴ compared to \$23.59 in non-profit social service organizations, \$27.09 in the for-profit sector and \$37.64 in the public sector⁶
- Occupations classified as care providers (NOC-44) had an average hourly wage of \$19.49 in the non-profit social services sector, compared to \$26.30 in the public sector — a differential of 35%⁶
- Low wages have a significant negative impact on workers, their families, and their health and well-being⁷
- Low wages also have serious implications for the quality of service for people with disabilities.⁷ It can result in poor support, or create a safety risk for individuals, staff and public.

Most post-secondary disability programs have been discontinued

- Since 2008, nine post-secondary disability programs have been discontinued due to low enrollments
- Low wages and demanding work have made the sector less attractive to students
- As older workers retire or reduce their work, there are few qualified young people to hire

Training needs have increased but funding and availability of training have not kept up

- With few students coming out of post-secondary disability programs, service providers are forced to provide training in some of the basic skills needed to work in this sector
- Staff also need a wide range of mandatory training and specialised training in complex supports
- Training budgets are inadequate, and access to training varies greatly across the province
- Time to train staff impacts directly on service provision and quality of life of individuals in service

There is no established certification system to assess and compare staff qualifications

- Since most new workers do not have formal disability service qualifications, it is difficult to assess worker credentials. Different organizations and training bodies have different competency criteria
- A formal professional designation is needed for positions across the community disability sector
- Family Managed Services currently do not have to adhere to the same professional standards and worker training requirements as community-based agencies

Recommendation to address human resource challenges

Human resource issues in the sector are chronic and urgent. Addressing them is not a quick fix but requires a comprehensive strategy encompassing wages, training, workforce development, and professional standards.

➤ A comprehensive human resource strategy

We recommend that the Government of Alberta, in collaboration with community disability services, post-secondary institutions, and community training providers **develop a framework and plan for a comprehensive human resource strategy which includes:**

- Providing adequate and sustainable funding for staff compensation
- Examining the role and obligation of post-secondary institutions to produce the future workforce for the disability sector through dedicated programs
- Providing adequate and sustainable funding for staff training
- Supporting the widescale adoption of a certification system and professional standards applicable to all community disability workers regardless of employment context (community-based service providers or Family Managed Services)

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. Alberta Community and Social Services. Annual Report 2017-18. Voted Actuals

4. ACDS 2017 Annual Workforce Survey, unless cited otherwise

5. Estimated from ACDS 2017 Annual Workforce Survey sample extrapolation

6. Alberta Labour 2017 *Alberta Wage and Salary Survey*

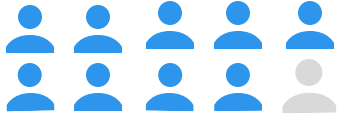
7. ADWA 2018. *The High Cost of Low Wages*.

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

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Community Disability Sector Workforce in 2017-2018



15,000

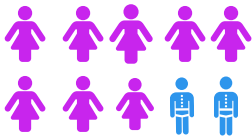


89% of staff were in **frontline** direct service positions*

people employed in the community disability service workforce

* The annual workforce reflects the employment status reported by the employer, not employee. **Many workers in the sector have multiple jobs.**
** Many staff work in more than one position for the organization

Gender



77% of workers identified as female

Age



52% of workers were aged 25 to 44 years

Education



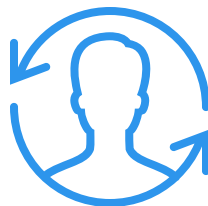
48% had completed high school or had a post-secondary certificate
49% had a diploma or Bachelor's degree

53% of workers earned **less than \$20** an hour



- ▶ 84% of workers earned less than \$25 an hour
- ▶ \$21.06 was the average hourly wage across all positions in the workforce

Worker Turnover



- ▶ 51% turnover in staff who had worked for less than one year
- ▶ 35% had been at their current workplace for less than 2 years
- ▶ 32% turnover in frontline staff in the Community Disability Service Worker position