



AAN NEWCOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

Date/Time:
May 31st, 2022 / 1:00PM – 3:00PM

Location: Zoom

Chairs: Mezaun Lakha-Evin, Michael Farr

In Attendance:

Mezaun Lakha-Evin (AAN)
Michael Farr (EmployAbilities)
Maria Mora (Centre for Newcomers)
Michelle Ledo (CIWA)

Meri Topchieva (AAN)
Ginger Mullen (The Gingerbread Way Program)
Fiona Lowes (CIWA)
Greg McMeekin (Advocate for Persons with Disabilities)

Meeting Minutes

Land Acknowledgement
Welcome and Introductions

Review/Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Topics of Discussion:

Recruitment feedback

- Many organizations that Mezaun contacted for recruitment were settlement agencies from rural areas. Many of the workers/tram leads are newcomers themselves and did not have a good understanding of the disability sector.
- When agencies were asked how many peoples with disabilities they serve, the largest number given was 4. Many people contacted did not know if the people they were serving have disabilities.
- There are many pre-conceived biases that influence how people view "disability". According to the Government of Canada, 1 in 5 people have a disability. Disabilities can be visible, invisible, permanent, or temporary.
- One way for agencies to understand their clients better is by surveying their membership and asking if they have a disability and what disability they have. Agencies can access government grants if they do not have the bandwidth to conduct surveys with their resources.
- We will contact AAISA to put us in touch with the 35 organizations they work with and see if their partners would be interested in joining AAN's tables.

AAISA RDSP initiative Update

- AAISA has been recruiting for the RDSP position for the last two months and are currently conducting reference checks. They will have the position filled by next month.

The Gingerbread Way Program

- Ginger is leading a Parent-Child Mother Goose program in collaboration with Family Matters at the Genesis Centre.
- This program offers parents and their young children a focus on learning literacy skills with the help of rhythms, songs, and stories. This also gives the opportunity for families to come together.
- There is still room for the 1-4 program which occurs on all Mondays during June: June 6, 13, 20, and 27, from 11 AM – 12 PM

Survey update: Part One – Assessments

- A survey was distributed internally within the Newcomers table to discuss what the table's main priorities should be.
- Question 1 "What changes would you like to see for assessments for Newcomers with Disabilities?"
- The in-depth diagnostic assessments are funded by the provincial government. However, many newcomers are not aware of this and are usually referred to do a private diagnostic test by their doctor. Private assessments are very expensive and have a large backlog of people who need assessments.
- We will need the support of medical professionals when we advocate to the provincial or federal government and ask them for improvements on assessments for newcomers.
- The process for assessments needs to be simplified and streamlined so that newcomers to Canada can properly integrate into our society.
- We will write a letter to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and include some of the solution/recommendations each agency has and what the best practices for assessments would be.
- One of the best practices would be to form a collective of committees, tables, and individuals where we can come together and advocate for changes to assessments.
- We need to find agencies that can support our ask to IRCC.

Survey Update: Part Two - Welcome Package insert for Newcomers with Disabilities upon arrival to Alberta/Canada

- Question 2 "What disability resources should be included in the orientation packages for all newcomers?"
- Michael attended an online orientation for newcomers that Catholic Social Services provides, where 211 was one of the resources not shared with newcomers.
- We need to know what information other resettlement organizations provide to newcomers in order to fill the information gap.
- Most newcomers do not know their rights, we need to work on educating newcomers about what they are entitled to.

Newcomers to Disability Environmental scan University of Calgary update

- The student has recently started working on the Newcomers with Disability environmental scan.

Presentation of tool kit

- EmployAbilities created an overview of disabilities for settlement workers in Canada.
- The presentation goes over what constitutes a "disability" in Canada, how common disabilities are, medical conditions that are included in disability, the charter of rights and freedoms overview, and more.
- If workers are interested in learning more, they can take an in-depth course that other agencies provide as this course is a quick overview.
- Michael will provide this as a free course once he gets approval from his Executive Director as this is the intellectual property of EmployAbilities.



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Agency Updates

Centre for Newcomers

- Have received an increasing number of Ukrainian refugees.

EmployAbilities

- Starting to get more referrals from settlement agencies.

Calgary Local Immigration Partnership's (CLIP)

- Join Tareq Hadhad, the founder and CEO of the successful Nova Scotia chocolate company, Peace by Chocolate, in celebrating World Refugee Day on Monday, June 20, from 12:00 – 2:00 pm at the Central Library (800 3 St SE). **Register here:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/world-refugee-day-tickets-353355143747>
- In partnership with the Calgary Justice Film Festival, the Calgary Local Immigration Partnership (CLIP) and their community partners are hosting a Refugees Welcome Here Film Festival to raise awareness of the global refugee crisis. Takes place on Saturday, June 18, from 1:00 – 7:00 pm at the Central Library (800 3 St SE). **Register here:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/childrens-hour-refugees-welcome-here-film-festival-tickets-353980393887>
- CLIP is seeking new members for its Immigrant Advisory Table. They are looking for volunteers who were born outside of Canada and who represent a variety of ages, educational backgrounds, countries of origin, and experiences. Please **apply** here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3XCX6VQ>. The application is due June 22nd. 2022.

Action Items:

- Draft a letter (before our June meeting) to IRCC and include the changes that need to happen for assessments in Canada.

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

Next meeting:

Date: June 28th, 2022

Time: 1:30PM – 3:30PM

Location: Zoom

Please note that there are no meetings for July and August