



AAN NEWCOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

Date/Time:

April 26th, 2022 / 1:00PM – 3:00PM

Location: Zoom

Chairs: Mezaun Lakha-Evin, Michael Farr

In Attendance:

Mezaun Lakha-Evin (AAN)
 Michael Farr (EmployAbilities)
 Lori James (Pacekids Programs)
 Maria Mora (Centre for Newcomers)
 Michelle Ledo (CIWA)
 Fiona Lowes (CIWA)
 Greg McMeekin (Advocate for Persons with Disabilities)

Meri Topchieva (AAN)
 Ryan Popplestone (Manager for Advocate’s Office)
 Nada Starcevic (AAISA)
 Yasmin Mohamed (Children’sLink Society)
 Renee Kirby (Calgary Alliance Common Good)

Meeting Minutes

Land Acknowledgement
Welcome and Introductions

Review/Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Topics of Discussion:**Renee Kirby - Calgary Alliance for the Common Good**

- Presentation discussing how climate change and disability intersect. Renee is looking for support and input about perspectives surrounding how climate change affects everyone, including persons with disabilities, differently. If anyone is interested in connecting with Renee, please find her contact details below:
- renee@calgarycommongood.org (403-466-6885)

AAISA RDSP initiative Update

- AAISA successfully received the RDSP grant and will be providing RDSP education in partnership with Cerebral Palsy Alberta and ActionDignity.
- Currently in the hiring process of finding a Project Lead for the RDSP initiative. The posting has been taken down as turnout was lower than expected, however, AAISA is personally inviting individuals with the correct credentials to apply.

- If anyone within their network knows a qualified individual who would be interested in this opportunity, please email Nada or Sarosh.
- Please find Sarosh's and Nada's emails: srizvi@aaisa.ca and nstarcovic@aaisa.ca
- Are in discussions about creating an advisory committee for the RDSP initiative, creating facilitated and self-paced courses where newcomers with disabilities can easily navigate the process of applying for RDSP, and creating an environmental scan of Alberta with resources of RDSP initiatives.

Cerebral Palsy Alberta RDSP Initiative:

- The Ministry of Community and Social Services reached out to CPA about applying for a grant which funds the RDSP Initiative. CPA and AAISA were both successful in receiving the grant.
- With the new grant in place, CPA has hired Levi Nilson to work on the RDSP initiative and increase the program's uptake for the next year.
- There are many barriers to accessing the RDSP program, one of which is the exclusive language for people with literacy disabilities.
- Levi will be joining our meetings soon to share what he will be doing to increase the uptake of the RDSP program.
- As part of the terms for receiving the grant, CPA will be hosting 12 virtual workshops

Inviting Minister of Immigration, Kaycee Madu for table discussion

- The table wants to invite Minister Madu to a meeting.
- Purpose of the meeting is to share ongoing challenges and system barriers for newcomers with disabilities.

Ongoing challenges and system barriers:

- There are many barriers that immigrants must face; if that person also has a disability, they will face even more barriers.
- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) instructors do not have resources to share with newcomers when they are struggling with their courses due to their disabilities. We need a permanent solution to help newcomers with disabilities to Canada.
- Newcomers will be suggested to get a diagnosis from their family doctor. However, if the newcomer doesn't have any history of a disability, if they're afraid that their diagnosis is going to affect their residency status, and they're informed that a diagnosis costs \$1000, they will not seek help.
- Some newcomers have language barriers where they will not fully understand what advice a doctor will give them, making healthcare inaccessible to them. We need a government-funded group of translators who can specifically help newcomers with disabilities as most organizations do not have the funds for translators.
- Additionally, finding family doctors is difficult as most doctor's offices are backed up with clients who have been on their waitlist for a long time, many offices do not offer family doctors, and it is difficult finding information as to what doctor's clinics are readily available for new clients.
- The newcomer families will sometimes need to get referrals from their family doctor to a specialized doctor and the specialized doctor will sometimes need

to refer them to a specialized disability doctor. These processes take a minimum of 8 months for the correct doctor to connect with the newcomers.

Newcomers with Disability Environmental scan - University of Calgary

- A University of Calgary student is working on creating an environmental scan of all related agencies across the province.
- Mezaun and Meri will be using this environmental scan to recruit more agencies across Alberta to this table. Specifically focusing on rural and smaller communities within Alberta as we are heavily Calgary and Edmonton based.

Welcome Package insert for Newcomers with Disabilities upon arrival to Alberta/Canada

- Newcomers with Disabilities in Canada do not know what rights and services they have access to once they enter the country. It is necessary to find a way to have a list of resources and services in their first language so newcomers can utilize those resources.
- There have been many newcomers to Canada who are unaware of basic resources such as 211,311,411,811 because it is not communicated to them properly.
- Disability resources must be included in the "Welcome to Alberta" and "Welcome to Canada" orientation packages.

Agency Updates

Children's Link:

- Children's link is celebrating its 25th anniversary on May 25. They are hosting a premiere of their film "LINKed Together" at the Village Commons in Calgary Downtown. To register, please click the link below.
- <https://www.generoussolutions.com/e/childrens-link-25th-anniversary-celebration-740>

Calgary Local Immigrant Partnership – Sharing Perspectives: Coming Together for Newcomer Mental Health:

- CLIP is hosting a two-day event where it will bring together mental health providers to share new ways of supporting newcomers to Canada. Please complete the following survey to register for the event.
- <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z36RRSP>

Centre for Newcomers:

- Continuing working from home.
- Will be moving soon to their new office.

AAISA:

- Continuing to work from home.
- Integration conference will be done annually instead of biannually.

CIWA:

- Continuing with renovations for the expansion.



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- Recently employed a Disability Liaison for the first time.
- The new CEO of CIWA is Paula Calderon effective June 6, 2022.

EmployAbilities:

- Met with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and they are putting together a National Accessibility Advisory Council.
- OCASI created online training for front line workers, training sessions begin May 24th.
- Working together with AAISA, put together a short introduction to supporting newcomers with disabilities. AAISA received federal funding to support this initiative. The online training course is called "Building Access and Equity for Im/Migrants and Refugees with In/Visible Disabilities".
- To register please click here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/building-access-equity-for-newcomers-with-invisible-disabilities-tickets-318782917287>

New Business:

- The Newcomers with Disabilities table will not be meeting in the months of July and August

Action Items:

- Meri and Mezaun will start sending recruitment letters to new stakeholders across Alberta in the next couple of weeks.
- Briefly write down (in point form) 1) What changes you would like to see for assessments for newcomers with disabilities and 2) What disability resources should be included in the orientation packages for all newcomers. After we compile the data on what changes need to be made, we will search for agencies that can help us achieve those changes and present our findings to the government.
- Please answer through this link: <https://forms.gle/EpHz8iW4W8tQofAj8>

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

Next meeting:

Date: May 31st, 2022

Time: 1:30PM – 3:30PM

Location: Zoom