



# Newcomers With Disabilities - Navigating The System

**Date/Time:**  
March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 / 1:00PM – 3:00PM

**Location:** Zoom

**Chairs:** Mezaun Lakha-Evin, Michael Farr

**In Attendance:**

Abdullah Ahmed (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers)  
Aida Sarbassova (U of C)  
Ashija Joshi (ASSIST Community Services Centre)  
Christian Ladores (Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies)  
Diyana Woldegebreal (The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth)  
Emma Kieftenbeld (Edmonton Employment Resource Centre)  
Francia Boakye (Action Dignity)  
Katie Dodd (Children's Link Society)

Lester Valenzuela (Center for Newcomers)  
Manisha Dave (Immigrant Services Calgary)  
Meri Topchieva (Alberta Ability Network)  
Mezaun Lakha-Evin (Alberta Ability Network)  
Michael Farr (Employabilities)  
Mirzeta Mujanovic (Training Inc.)  
Nada Starcevic (Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies)  
Sarah Brazeau (Easter Seals Alberta)  
Sam Mason (Voice of Albertans with Disabilities)  
Taylor Bauer (Canadian National Institute for the Blind)  
Teagan Catingub (Catholic Social Services)  
Tessa Turner (ACT Alberta)  
Yuki Landry (Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton)

## Meeting Minutes

Welcome  
Land Acknowledgement  
Breakout Rooms  
Meeting considerations  
Review of last month's meeting minutes

**On March 16, 2023, Const. Travis Jordan, 35, who had been with the Edmonton Police Service for 8.5 years, and Const. Brett Ryan, 30, who had been with the service for five and a half years, were killed on duty.**

**In recognition and honor, a moment of silence was observed.**

Spotlight Agency:

**Barrier Free Alberta Election Campaign 2023**

- BFA is targeting all candidates running for the Provincial election parties, and recommending they put accessibility legislation on their platforms.

- We have sent emails to all Chambers of Commerce throughout Alberta and Community Associations in Calgary to spread the word amongst all communities and book meetings with BFA for further clarification.
- We have 2 different types of posters, one for candidates and one for the public. Information is different as the 2 different demographics are focused on different topics.
- We are currently booking meetings with the Chambers of Commerce throughout Alberta, MLAs and candidates. More updates will be provided once we meet with them.
- Our first presentation is on April 3<sup>rd</sup> with MLA Marie Renaud.
- BFA has created a monthly newsletter that will be sent to all supporters that register above.
- A social media blitz is being developed.
- We need to share this information outside the disability sector.
- Accessibility legislation largely helps people with disabilities, but it helps everyone in general. For example, plain language helps people with intellectual disabilities, but it will also help a person whose first language isn't English.
- If you haven't already, please sign up as a supporter at the following link <https://www.barrierfreeab.ca/support>.

## **Supporting Newcomers with Disabilities EmployAbilities – Michael Farr**

- While learning about support tools for supporting newcomers with disabilities, it was realized that nothing short has been created for service workers. This presentation aims to provide a short introductory training about newcomers with disabilities.
- Canada's federal government defines disabilities as "... covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions."
- For example, a participation restriction is having a meeting on the second floor, inviting a person with a disability to the meeting, and not having accessible alternatives such as an elevator or ramp.
- 1 in 4 people has a disability. This is a global statistic and not exclusive to Canada. This is approximately 1.6 billion people globally.
- People with disabilities have often experienced high levels of stigma, shame, and discrimination.
- Medical conditions are disabilities too. Some are arthritis, HIV/AIDS, chronic pain, and learning disabilities.
- Mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression are also disabilities. However, many people from different cultures do not use those words to describe their condition, it is usually labelled as "stress" as there are still a lot of stigmas associated with the words "anxiety" and "depression".
- Invisible disabilities are harder to identify because people with depression or anxiety do not have to disclose their condition.
- Over the summer, AAN conducted agency recruitment and some agencies said they do not serve people with disabilities because they do not have any clients in wheelchairs. Some agencies were unaware of how broad the term "disability" is.



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- One thing agencies can do is add the question "Do you have a disability? Yes/no" to their existing surveys and see what percentage of people with disabilities they are serving. Knowing your clients and how to support them is crucial to all work. Also, funding dollars are attached to supporting people with disabilities.
- The Canadian immigration system discriminates against people with disabilities by viewing them as economically burdensome and dependent on social and healthcare systems.
- The system is based on discrimination and promotes people to hide and be shamed for their disabilities.
- If someone does have a medical disability as per Canada's guidelines then they can apply for the DTC, RDSP, medical benefits, get accommodated at work, AISH and PDD and more.

## **CIWA - Translation of the Resource Guide**

- CIWA translated the Newcomers with Disabilities Resource guide into 6 languages Mandarin, Persian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Arabic. The guide will be shared with table members and their clients.
- We will be sharing these documents with the table soon.

## **Action Items:**

- If your logo isn't on the Barrier Free Alberta website or if you haven't signed up as a supporter, please click <https://www.barrierfreeab.ca/support>.
- Let us know if you would like to present your organization at the next meeting

Wrap Up Adjournment

## **Next Meeting:**

**Date:** April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Time:** 1:30 – 3:30 pm

**Location:** Zoom