



Newcomers With Disabilities - Navigating The System

Date/Time:
January 31st, 2023 / 1:00PM – 3:00PM

Location: Zoom

Chairs: Mezaun Lakha-Evin, Michael Farr

In Attendance:

Abdullah (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers)
 Aisha Siddiqui (ASSIST Community Services Centre)
 Alex Montiel (Diversecities)
 Arevik Tokmajyan (Calgary Local Immigration Partnership)
 Ben Patmore (Calgary Catholic Immigration Society)
 Camila Ramirez (Centre for Newcomers)
 Christian Ladores (Alberta Association Of Immigrant Serving Agencies)
 Jaya (Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council)
 David Nicholas (University of Calgary)
 Diyana Woldegebrael (The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth)

Fiona Lowes (Calgary Immigrant Women's Association)
 Heather Hansen (Pacekids)
 Ilse Barrios (Immigrant Services Calgary)
 Jocelyn Cook (Community Advocate)
 Julie Boucher (Edmonton Down Syndrome Society)
 Lester Valenzuela (Centre for Newcomers)
 Meri Topchieva (Alberta Ability Network)
 Melinda Noyes (Autism Edmonton)
 Mezaun Lakha-Evin (Alberta Ability Network)
 Michael Farr (Employabilities)
 Nada Starcevic (Alberta Association Of Immigrant Serving Agencies)
 Teagan Catingub (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers)
 Yahya El- Lahib (University of Calgary)

Meeting Minutes

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

Acknowledgment of Alberta Ability Network's members and stakeholders for 2022

Number of participants on all AAN tables - 235
Number of volunteer hours – 5985

Thank you everyone for your efforts and continued support.

Spotlight Presentations:

Alberta Resource Guide for Persons with Disabilities – Aisha Siddiqui -Practicum Student

- Aisha presented her practicum project "Resource Guide for Persons with Disabilities as they settle in Alberta and try to access services.
- While there was a plethora of information during the research stage, some information was also hard to find.

- This resource guide will be treated as a living document, where stakeholders can add new agencies and updated information.
- The resource guide is separated into 6 topics: Settlement and Housing Services, Employment Services, Education Services, Health and Assistance Services, Family Support, and Community Services.
- There is critical information about each agency such as their location, address, website, phone number, and a summary of the services that they provide.
- Some websites were easier to navigate than others in regard to finding the programs and services they offer.
- Some resources that helped Aisha in her research were an environmental scan of newcomer-serving agencies throughout Alberta and the resources given to her by people with lived experience.
- The goal is to have this document translated into five languages, making it more accessible for newcomers.

Presentation by Dr. David Nicholas

- The presentation focused on enhancing service navigation for individuals with neurodevelopmental disabilities and how to strive toward an accessible, efficient, and sustainable service navigation network.
- Some of the resources that a family with a child with a disability must maneuver are health, information advocacy and leadership, schools, support, legal and financial supports, recreational activities and community, developmental assessment, and more.
- Some barriers that families experience are a risk of delay to access a diagnosis, unfamiliar resources and service systems, lack of coordination and support, logistical barriers such as cost, using the English language, inappropriate services based on cultural and religious beliefs, insufficient financial resources and insufficient service availability and coordination.
- In collaboration with Dr. Yahya El-Lahib and the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary, they are working on a grant where they will build partnerships across the province to provide better navigation to services.
- Integrated care is displayed as a tiered approach where resource information is the bedrock, peer navigational support is the 2nd from the top and networked services are at the top.
- Peer navigational support is escalating care challenges and needs and engagement with community resources. Networked Services is a paraprofessional telephone navigator and support and advocacy.
- Some of the partners they have to date are EFAN, Autism Edmonton, University of Calgary, CASA, Kids Brain Health Network, University of Alberta, Children's Link, McMaster University, Athabasca University, CFAN, CP Kids and Families, McGill University, and the University of British Columbia.
- If interested in partnering with Dr. Nicholas please email him at nicholas@ucalgary.ca.
- CCIS has been experiencing the challenges Dr. Nicholas talked about when supporting newcomers with disabilities. They had an information session about their services which was translated into 4 languages. CCIS is planning to continue the workshops and contacting Dr. Nicholas for further discussion and collaboration.

- Need to find out how to move beyond services that reflect an insufficient structure and instead focus on how to benefit the community.
- Mezaun will share the continuous work that Dr. Nicholas does at future meetings.

Family Resource Centers

- Melinda Noyes is the ED of Autism Edmonton and the ED in charge of Resources and Training for Family Resource Centers(FRC) across Alberta.
- Autism Edmonton houses their websites and workshops.
- All FRCs are pan-disability.
- Autism Edmonton has FRCs in Medicine Hat, Crows Nest, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Saint Paul, Grande Prairie, and more.
- The FRC website has hundreds of resources for families, adults, or children with disabilities.
- Offers training twice a week for a variety of topics such as abuse reporting protocol, crisis intervention, how to navigate trusteeship and guardianship, and more.

Topics of Discussion:

Calgary Newcomers Center Update – YYC Initiative

- Calgary Newcomers Center has a new initiative called Immigration Arrival Center that started in December 2022.
- The collaborative that started the initiative is called the Calgary Newcomers Collaborative. This is a collaboration made up of several agencies in Northeast Calgary.
- This initiative started because there was an influx of Ukrainian families coming to Calgary.
- Resources have been set up at the Calgary airport when Ukrainian families are coming in.
- While they do not do direct settlement work, CFNC will provide resources to people needing them.
- Looking forward to working with AAN and the distribution of the resource guide as it will be a great resource for newcomers.

Ben Patmore – CCIS

- One of the biggest challenges CCIS has been facing over the last year is with FSCD and PDD.
- The wait times for FSCD and PDD before the pandemic averaged about 4 months and they have grown steadily since then. Current wait times are more than 10 months.
- PDD applications are straightforward but require support.
- FSCD caseworkers are not staying connected after contracts are signed.
- Communication with PDD has been better than with FSCD. These applications are only available online.
- After signing their contract, clients get no support and are essentially left on their own to find respite care and services on their own.



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- Melinda meets regularly with FSCD and PDD, at least quarterly, to bring concerns forward. She will bring forward CCIS's concerns in the next meeting and report back.
- Ben will be re-joining the Poverty Reduction table as FCSD and PDD are one of the main concerns the table's tackling.

Strategy development for partnerships and relationship building

- During our November meeting, we heard from stakeholders that they want to have an opportunity to share what they do and learn about what other agencies are doing.
- Currently looking to develop a strategy for how to connect people.
- Partnerships and sustaining relationships are how the network was created and is what the Alberta Ability Network strives to do.
- One way to develop a partnership strategy is to pool all the resources everyone has and send them to Meri.
- Once we receive the resources from everyone, we will go through them, separate them into groups, and submit the resource guide to everyone at the table.

Action Items:

- Mezaun will reach out to some family resource centers to present to this table.
- If your agency's information was not in Aisha's resource guide, please email Meri at mtopchieva@cpalberta.com so she can include you.
- Please email your newcomers with disability resources so we can include it in the master list.

Wrap Up Adjournment

Next Meeting:

Date: February 28th, 2023

Time: 1:30 – 3:30 pm

Location: Zoom