



AAN Newcomers with Disabilities

Date/Time: Mar 1, 22 / 1:30-3:30pm

Location: Zoom

Chairs: Mezaun Lakha-Evin, Kim Marion

In Attendance:

Mezaun Lakha-Evin (AAN)
Sarosh Rizvi (AAISA)
Ermira Kusari (AAN)

Fiona Lowes (CIWA)
Michael Farr (EmployAbilities)
Keri McEachern (Self-advocacy Federation)

Meeting Minutes

Land Acknowledgement
Welcome and Introductions

Review/Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Topics of Discussion:

AAISA (Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies)

- work with agencies across the province who work with newcomers
- represent 56 agencies right now and focusing a lot more on the smaller and rural areas.
- 3 areas of programming:
 1. professional development – training for settlement practitioners and professionals
 2. team engagement research and policy
 3. member relations
- Part of a number of national networks - to bring issues to the national level
- Currently working more extensively with Afghan refugees around settlement.
- A number of project taking place provincially.
- Working on increasing the scope of service mapping across the province

Self-Advocacy Federation

- Edmonton-based south advocacy federation since 2006.
- Started out of a PDD program. Only self-advocacy group in Alberta of attached to the Government or a service provider.
- Work revolved around poverty, access, ableism. Work with Albertans Advocating for Change Together and Disability Without Poverty. Meet with

the Ministry in a regular basis and bring concerns that directly affect persons with disabilities.

- Have done a bit of work with newcomers to Canada helping them navigate services and supports and providing information on their rights.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCP-Hhy8YQQ>

Agency Updates:

EmployAbilities: met with the National Accommodations Advisory Council and the OCASI director and Manitoba Possible to discuss the state of the frontline training. Still in the process of identifying more francophone speakers to test the French portion. The training will be available on the OCASI website and potentially other platforms.

* AAISA has been doing such training for the past two years and mainly working with Saskatchewan and Manitoba. When it comes to professional development funded by the Federal Government, the training cannot be offered to anyone else unless there are cost-free ways to offer it and have been looking into exploring those options through self-paced courses.

* BC has been providing webinars, a fairly new endeavor.

- The pandemic has impacted referrals and not seeing as many referrals coming through as expected.

* There continues to be some hesitation from agencies to refer to other agencies out of fear that they might lose the clients and eventually the funding.

* CIWA: referrals are coming through, some of which have complex needs, and given that it is a recent program, not sure if all the needs are being met but working to connect them better with other agencies.

* For newcomers with disabilities, as per the current system that is in place, in order to get an assessment (which would be followed by the referral), they have to go to the GP or family doctor. However, that can be challenging for newcomers that might not know how to ask for the assessment. Assessments can also be costly, depending on the status of the person seeking it in Canada. Even things like guardianship orders or capacity assessments or assessments to get on AISH and PDD are thousands of dollars and are private pay

* Newcomers with disabilities are often wary of seeking supports out of fear that it might impact their immigration status, therefore sometimes do not even disclose the disability.

* There continues to be a gap between the disability and settlement sectors in the sense that each sector is only serving the newcomers with disabilities in terms of needs of the one sector only.



It is hence important to bring the sectors together to learn, share information and collectively find solutions to issues that newcomers with disabilities continue to face, including accepting and dealing with a diagnosis.

- AAISA is willing to facilitate introductions of AAN with the agencies which would be very helpful to expand the dialogue and collaboration.
- Liaising with schools is important to make sure that we can share what we know and see as sectors with school counselors and other providers to make sure that the needs of children with disabilities are being met and they have full access to education.

Link to the AAN Transportation table folder on the Shared Google Drive:

- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CySeJi27hDGhxSO4mj0PVAOrnf_m6aNv1?usp=sharing

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

Next meeting:

Date: March 29, 2022

Time: 1:30 – 3:30 pm

Location: Zoom