



# AAN Newcomers with Disabilities

Date/Time: Jan 25, 22 / 1:30-3:30pm

Location: Zoom

Chairs: Mezaun Lakha-Evin, Kim Marion

<b><u>In Attendance:</u></b>	Veronica Aliu (CIWA)
Mezaun Lakha-Evin (AAN)	Wandyer Paquiz (U of C / AAN)
Kim Marion (Lead Foundation)	Michael Farr (EmployAbilities)
Ermira Kusari (AAN)	Arevik Tokmajyan (CLIP)
Yahya El-Lahib (U fo C)	Ben Patmore (CCIS)
Christopher Gordon (CNIB)	Michael (ILRCC)

## Meeting Minutes

Land Acknowledgement  
Virtual meeting considerations  
Welcome and Introductions

Review/Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Topics of Discussion:

**Agency Updates:**

*CCIS: Support for the Afghan refugees*

- There has been an outpouring of support for the refugees with donations.
- In terms of disabilities, have identified primarily developmental disabilities
- The biggest challenge has been respite: applying for programs and finding appropriate respite agencies. CCIS has been connecting with Deaf and Hear Alberta to offer an ASL class for refugees that do not speak English.
- Many families that arrived stayed in Calgary; a number of them are going to Edmonton. Calgary was turned into a point of entry.

*Lead Foundation*

- For families that have children with developmental delays, the families will need to start registering their children into programs now for the fall at Renfrew, PaceKids, Providence who have on-site programs.
- Government deadline for new clients (children) for Lead Foundation has passed therefore they cannot take in new children.
- FSCD programs are running in person however the Alberta Education programs ...

- Offering groups programs for parents and children together and offering the Triple P program.

*CIWA*

- Offering Triple P program and also other supports through the Family Resource Network.

*EmployAbilities*

- No updates; carrying on with the usual programs.

*CLIP*

- Welcome campaign for the refugees (phase 2) and hoping to distribute swag to the community (pins, masks) and looking to share a form around to see if anyone is interested in ordering swag, join in on the hashtag and take pictures Alberta-wide. <https://www.calgarylclip.ca/refugeeswelcomehere>

### **Collaboration opportunity with University of Calgary student**

- The student will be utilizing the resource list that Wandyer is working on compiling Alberta-wide to identify the gaps between the disability and settlement sectors and how unifying the sectors can help agencies better serve the community.

### **Frontline worker training and intersectionality of settlement and disability**

- Due to the ever-changing nature and the retention issue of frontline workers at various agencies, we need to take another look at the frontline worker training.
- Construction of inadmissibility continues to target persons with disabilities and there have been conversations to discuss ways to address these issues (The excessive demand clause has shifted however has not been eliminated).
- It is important that we start thinking about ways to extend our priorities as a network in regard to educational experiences of frontline workers.
- There is a need to push for more inclusive immigration policies.
- Looking into moving the training into a virtual format that is accessible and has hands-on opportunities.
- The goal of the training provided by Yahya and his team is to provide an overall snapshot that also looks into the realities that newcomers with disabilities face as they go through the immigration process, the settlement experiences and what that entails in terms of accommodation, restrictions from an organizations perspective dur to funding restrictions, go over various cultural understanding of disability.

Discussion: it might be useful to bring in the other tables that specifically deal with issues to e.g. housing, recreation, etc. – one of the challenges for refugees and immigrants and programs and services that are available relates to their status which determines what they may or may not be eligible for.

- EmployAbilities and AISA are working on providing a training (102 hours) to frontline workers with the goal to provide an overview of the topics that they

may encounter. The goal is that this overview training be followed with more in-depth training.

- Suggested that a subcommittee be formed to work on updating the training with a potential fist session of the training by April – May. – Ermira to draft and send a quick poll to identify table members interested in contributing to the subcommittee identify a date and time for the first subcommittee meeting.

### **Report back from the meeting with AAISA**

- Discussed the needs of the disability sector and ways in which AAISA can support it.
- Discussed options that we could look at in term of funding and the programs that they offer, a search database that they are working on and conferences.
- We need to continue to work as a table to unify the voice of the disability sector to ensure that we can influence policy and decision making.
- Newcomers with disabilities are not a priority for the government with the exception of cases of refugees and showing their support for them publicly (according to research). At the provincial level, it depends on who is on the driver's seat. At the municipal level it comes down to funding restrictions primarily.

### **Summary of the “Meet the New Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Alberta” event**

- This was the largest event that AAN has hosted to date with more than 160 people in attendance at the height of the event. Those who registered through the Eventbrite platform had the opportunity to submit questions that they would like to ask the new Advocate and 13 questions were selected from the pool. The Advocate, Greg McMeekin, provided responses to the questions that he could speak to as he is settling into the new role and noted that as he becomes familiar and further settles into the new position he will be connecting with the community to hear about the issues that people are dealing with and working towards identifying solutions and ways to address them.

#### **Events:**

Respite Connections III

Jan 26, 2022 at 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

<https://www.generoussolutions.com/e/respite-connections-iii-713>

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

- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CySeJi27hDGhxSO4mj0PVAOrnf6aNV1?usp=sharing>



## AAN Newcomers with Disabilities

**Action items:**

- All members to review the quick poll to sign up to lend their support for the subcommittee.

Wrap-Up/Adjournment

**Next meeting:**

**Date:** February 22, 2022

**Time:** 1:30 – 3:30 pm

**Location:** Zoom