

## Access to Disability Supports and Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

---

### Plain Language Version

Adopted June 2025

Everyone must have access to the community-based supports and services they need to live well and have a good quality of life. These supports should be designed to be inclusive of people with disabilities.

Supports and services should be:

- Timely
- Fair
- Accessible
- Culturally safe<sup>1</sup>
- Focused on each person's needs
- Supportive of the whole person

All levels of government need to act on their responsibility to help people reach their full potential and support their right to participate fully in their communities. This requires all government departments to work together to make sure supports and services work well and provide everything that is needed.

We recognize disability as part of human diversity. Supports and services should help people thrive, participate in their communities, and achieve a sense of belonging. Belonging means feeling accepted, respected, connected, and safe. This position statement focuses on the needs of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Another position statement, *Access to Disability Supports and Services for Children and Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, will be available in Fall 2025.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cultural safety means working in ways that are fair for people from a diversity of backgrounds, and free from discrimination. Cultural safety is an outcome based on respect where people feel safer asking for and receiving supports and services.

Supports and services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities are provided and paid for in different ways. Community Living BC (CLBC) and a group of service providers work together and are mainly responsible for services like community living and inclusion supports. These are paid for by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. However, other important supports and services are also provided or paid for by government partners, like health and housing. For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, it can be confusing and hard when these different groups don't work well together. This position statement shows important service gaps and opportunities for working together that will make a difference in people's lives.

Our position statement aims to challenge racist,<sup>2</sup> ableist,<sup>3</sup> ageist,<sup>4</sup> colonial,<sup>5</sup> and other unfair ideas about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our goal is to include everyone in the community, no matter how much money they have, where they come from, what their religion is, if they are married or not, what their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression is, their age, or the type of disability they live with.

We recognize and support Indigenous rights and titles throughout the province of British Columbia, the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 94 Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

[To skip directly to the calls to action, click here.](#)

---

<sup>2</sup> Racist – discriminatory ideas against a person or group of people because they belong to a particular racial or ethnic group.

<sup>3</sup> Ableist – discriminatory ideas against people with disabilities

<sup>4</sup> Ageist – discriminatory ideas against people because of their age.

<sup>5</sup> Colonial – ideas imposed from one group of people on another

## Background

### Rights of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

In 1982, Canada made a law called the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#). It says that everyone is equal under the law, including people with disabilities. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right to live a good life. They should be able to get the supports they need.

In 2010, Canada agreed to follow a set of international rules called the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#). These rules say people with disabilities must be treated fairly and equally. This includes getting the same chances as everyone else in things like:

- Health care
- School
- Jobs
- Safe housing
- Access to other important services

#### *Important Parts of the UNCRPD:*

- [Article 19](#): People with disabilities have the right to live and participate fully in their communities. Community supports and services should be inclusive and available to people with disabilities like they are for everyone else.
- [Article 28](#): People with disabilities should be able to get:
  - Appropriate and affordable services and disability-related equipment
  - Help with money, training, and care
  - Support for disability-related costs
  - Public housing

In 2021, Canada passed a law to follow the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). This declaration says:

- Indigenous people with disabilities should get help from the government to make sure their lives get better both financially and socially.
- Indigenous people have the right to access health and social services without being treated unfairly.

That same year, **British Columbia made a new law** called [the Accessible British Columbia Act](#) to make the province more accessible. It says public services must find and fix the barriers<sup>6</sup> that make life harder for people with disabilities. It also says that people may face more than one kind of unfair treatment at the same time.

In 2023, the [United Nations reviewed](#) how Canada is doing. They said **Canada needs to:**

- Improve its laws and policies to match the rights of people with disabilities.
- Spend more money to help people with disabilities live healthy, safe, and happy lives.
- Make sure people with disabilities can get the support they need for their physical, social, mental, and financial well-being.

In 2025, the [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) said Canada still needs to do better. They want Canada to invest more money and make changes to help people with disabilities. The changes should include improvements to systems that help end poverty and provide access to health, housing, and other supports in people's communities.

---

<sup>6</sup> The Act says barriers are anything that prevents the full and equal participation in society by people with an impairment

## History of Disability Supports and Services

In the 1970s, people started speaking up for better supports for people with disabilities. They wanted to move away from institutions and instead have services in local communities. **In 1996, BC became one of the first provinces in Canada to close all its institutions for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.** BC began to focus on removing barriers and making things more accessible.

A law called the [Community Living Authority Act](#) was passed in 2004 to help create services that include people in their communities. These efforts led to the start of **Community Living BC (CLBC)** in 2005. CLBC helps adults (19 and older) with developmental disabilities get support for:

- Planning their future,
- Getting involved in their community,
- Health and well-being, and
- Living in a home that works for them.

CLBC works with community-based organizations and offers individualized funding to meet people's needs. But over time, **there hasn't been enough money put into the support system to help it grow fast enough** to help everyone. Even though more people need help and support needs have become more complex, there haven't been enough new services or changes to how services are delivered. Many families and people with disabilities feel that:

- Services are hard to access,
- People don't always get to make their own choices,
- There aren't enough chances for community participation,
- Services limit opportunities for relationships, and
- Services focus more on putting people in programs than on meeting their personal goals and needs.

There have been many conversations with people with disabilities, their families, and community organizations about making services better. This has made community living supports and services better. However, it hasn't done enough to improve government services so that they meet people's housing, health, and income needs.

## Government Plans to Improve Services

In **2018**, the **Re-imagining Community Inclusion Initiative** was started. It brought together people from different groups to talk about how to improve community inclusion. In **2021**, they made a [work plan](#) with four main goals:

1. Indigenous people design and choose services for themselves
2. Better access to health and mental health services
3. More flexible housing options
4. More opportunities for jobs

In **2021**, BC passed a [new law](#) to improve accessibility. This was a big step because it recognized supports for people with disabilities as a **human rights issue**, meaning everyone deserves fair treatment and access. But it's still hard to make these changes happen, especially when old ways of doing things haven't changed. Using a rights-based model of disability to design supports and services can help make sure people's rights are respected.

## Recent Reviews and Concerns

In **2023**, CLBC began talking again with people with disabilities, families, and service providers as part of the **Community Inclusion Service Review project**. Their work is supposed to improve community inclusion services and make sure they match today's needs. Updates about the next steps of this work are expected to come out in the second half of 2025.

Another area of focus has been **home share services** (where someone with a disability lives in another person's home and gets support). In **2018**, a person living in a home share died. This led to a serious review.

In **2021**, the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia gave [five recommendations](#) to make home shares better. In **2025**, the BC Coroner's inquest led to [15 more important recommendations](#). This shows that **BC needs to work across government departments to fix the problems quickly and properly**.

## Funding and Next Steps

In [Budget 2025](#), the government added more money for CLBC, but most of it will go to helping the growing number of people needing support. There are still **no new investments for creative solutions** to meet people's changing needs.

The [province expects](#) CLBC to:

- Improve how fast people get help,
- Better support people through transitions, and
- Make sure the needs of people waiting for support are addressed.

## Challenges and Barriers to Community Participation

Supporting people's needs helps make sure everyone has a fair chance at a good quality of life and can be healthy and included in their communities. But there are still many challenges to getting people the support they need. In BC, **disability services depend on the government's budget and are seen more as charity than a right**. This has caused problems like:

- Long wait times for services,
- Limited supports in some areas, and
- Different types of services not working together (like health care, social services, and education).

To fix these problems and address people's disability-related support needs, **BC needs a Provincial Disability Strategy**.

Some people facing barriers to CLBC-funded services reach out to the Inclusion BC Community Inclusion Advocacy Program for help. They often say that CLBC staff don't give clear information or communicate in a helpful way. When staff don't get enough training, or when there is a lot of new staff, it's hard to give good support. This can cause confusion, frustration, and delays. It also makes it harder for everyone to work together. Staff like facilitators and analysts need clear information and regular training so they can understand rules and policies, help people get what they need, and offer support that puts people's needs first.

## Fair Access and Culturally Safe Support

The [Re-Imagining Community Inclusion report](#) found that many self-advocates, families, and service providers want to reduce cultural and geographical barriers to supports. To make sure everyone can get the support they need, it is important to consider different parts of a person's identity. For example, there can be more barriers to inclusion for people based on things like their race, Indigenous identity, gender identity and expression, sexuality, or social or economic status.

To be fair to everyone, supports and services must be flexible and should focus on:

- The whole person,
- Respecting people's culture,
- Being aware of trauma,
- Allowing people to have choices and control over their lives, and
- Helping people make their own decisions.

## Youth Transitions

Young adults transitioning from youth services to CLBC often face difficulties. This leaves them without enough support to participate fully in adult life. This is an even bigger concern for Indigenous young adults with disabilities who are part of the



largest minority group in Canada. They are often left out and treated unfairly. Without good planning during this transition, young adults can face problems like homelessness or mental health challenges. To address these issues, **we need early transition planning and funding for each person.**

Young adults who were children in care are more at risk during this transition. The [SAJE Program](#) is a promising approach that offers support with planning, income, housing, health, mental health, training, and cultural supports for people aged 19-27 with child welfare experience. Many people fall through the cracks when they become adults, so having access to transition supports is important.

## Transitions as People Age

Research shows that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are living longer than before. BC faces challenges supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as they age. For example, as people with disabilities get older, their needs become more complex, and they face problems with health care, housing shortages, and a lack of long-term planning. Aging caregivers often struggle to find future supports for their adult children. This shows a need for better planning, policies, and resources to help people age with dignity and security in their communities.

## Health and Mental Health Support

Our Position Statements on Access to [Health](#) and [Mental Health](#) detail the challenges people with intellectual and developmental disabilities face in accessing appropriate health care. For example, **people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have trouble getting good health and mental health care** because many health workers don't know how to treat them. There is also a shortage of services for people who have both disabilities and substance use issues. **This shows a need for a workforce strategy in BC**, to make sure people with disabilities get high-quality and fair support.

Programs like [Health Services for Community Living \(HSCL\)](#), [Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults \(CAYA\)](#), and [Intervenor services](#) offer supports.

However, without enough funding it is difficult to provide high-quality care and for people to access the support they need, when they need it.

The [Developmental Disability Mental Health Services \(DDMHS\)](#) were created for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health challenges. But these services are limited in who they help, have long wait times, small programs sizes, and can be difficult to access in some areas of BC.

Another thing that can lead to services being delayed or unavailable for people with disabilities is confusion around responsibilities for health supports. The [Guidelines for Collaborative Service Delivery for Adults with Developmental Disabilities](#) were created to help service providers work together to make sure people can access the supports they need in their communities.

**It's hard to understand the health needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in B.C. because there isn't enough good data.** There's also no specific data about First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and urban Indigenous people with disabilities. Without clear and complete information, it's difficult to plan and provide the right supports and services.

## Complex Needs

Some people with disabilities also have complex needs.<sup>7</sup> Improving CLBC's ability to support adults with complex needs will help improve access to services and lower health and safety risks. To make this happen, a variety of housing options, health care, mental care, substance use services, and other specialized supports are needed. It is also important that service providers have the right training and skills.

The [Complex Care Housing Program](#) is meant to include people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but the demand is higher than what is available, meaning more needs to be done.

---

<sup>7</sup> Complex needs mean people with disabilities who also experience substance use and/ or mental health challenges, risk of homelessness, overdose, hospitalization, being hurt or taken advantage of, or becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

## Housing Problems

Finding affordable and accessible **housing is one of the biggest challenges for people with disabilities**. People with disabilities are more likely to experience poor living conditions and homelessness than people without disabilities. CLBC offers different housing options, but they don't meet everyone's needs. Many people with disabilities are still waiting for housing, and families have a hard time finding long-term solutions.

There is not enough affordable and inclusive housing in BC. This means people with disabilities are more likely to experience poor living conditions and homelessness. People with disabilities, especially Indigenous people, sometimes have to leave their communities to find accessible housing. Housing is a right. It's important to make sure everyone has access to **affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing**. Read more in the Fall 2025 *Position Statement on Access to Inclusive Housing for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.

## Costs and Income

Many people with disabilities can't afford the aids, devices, medication, or health care services they need. The average Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit in BC is not enough to cover all their needs. Many people with disabilities live below the poverty line. The new Canada Disability Benefit is a very needed support, but it will not be enough to fix this problem because the rate is too low.

[Budget 2025](#) recognizes the need for more disability supports in BC but does not fix the problem of low benefit rates. We talk about these issues more in our *Position Statement on Access to Income Security for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.

## Inclusive Communities

Once basic needs like health care, housing, and income are met, people with disabilities need access to things like social, recreational, cultural, and life-skills opportunities in their communities. These things help people live full lives in their

communities. It is not only government supports and services that help people, community organizations and Indigenous organizations also play a big role in making sure people with disabilities are included. It is important that mainstream services are accessible and can support different needs. Too often, people are left out of their communities because services are not designed to be inclusive.

## Education and Employment

People with disabilities also face challenges in education and finding jobs. People with disabilities are more likely to have jobs that do not provide stability, protection, or a good income. Sheltered work programs that pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage or not at all, are still allowed in some situations in BC. This is not fair. **Everyone deserves a fair wage and the opportunity to work.**

BC does offer some programs. For example, [StudentAid BC](#) for post-secondary education and [WorkBC](#) and CLBC for job support, but these services are limited. People with disabilities who do find jobs often earn low wages and lose their benefits when they work. More needs to be done to help people with disabilities access education, find good jobs, and be paid fairly.

**Although progress has been made, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities still face barriers to getting the right supports when they need them.** Services are often not fair, easy to access, culturally safe, or focused on the person's needs. People with disabilities want to move away from harsh rules, stigma, and confusing systems—and toward supports that are respectful, easy to access, and centred on the person.

**Better funding and resources are needed** right away so people with intellectual disabilities in BC can, live safely and get the services they need and deserve. Limited access to supports shows the need for a disability strategy, more funding for community services, and better systems that meet people's needs. This will help people live full and meaningful lives in their communities.

## Calls to Action

To ensure adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities have access to a full range of community-based supports and services they need to ensure their well-being and quality of life, we call on the provincial government to:

- Create a **Provincial Disability Strategy** with actionable steps, including:
  - Provincial accountability and oversight, such as establishing an **independent advocate** to monitor that the government meets their human rights obligations.
  - **Coordination and collaboration** across ministries and crown corporations.
  - A **coordinated workforce development strategy** across ministries and crown corporations.
  - **Adequate funding for person-centred supports and services** that address the social determinants of health and ensure belonging in communities.
- Review, revise, and evolve the **provision of services through a rights-based model** of disability in alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and commit to **innovating** supports and services that adapt and change according to people's needs.
- Create **independent oversight and increase accountability of Community Living BC** to ensure they are meeting their mandate.
- Increase the **capacity of community organizations** by allocating the resources needed to support people, including persons with complex needs, effectively.
- Prioritize efforts to **enhance person-centred planning and community supports**—both in quality and quantity—to meet the diverse needs of people, so they can plan and live full lives.

**Everyone should have access to the supports and services they need to reach their full potential and thrive in their communities.** Supports and services must be timely, fair, accessible, and culturally safe. They should meet each person's needs and focus on the whole person. **We need strong actions to make sure people's changing needs are met. We also need to make sure supports and services respect the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**