

New Brunswick Association for Community Living

Position Statement on Disability Supports

Purpose

To ensure that people who have an intellectual disability have access to the individualized disability supports that they require and which they choose in order to live, work and participate in the community as full citizens.

Background

Historically, services for people with an intellectual disability have been designed and provided on the basis of programs (residential, day, etc.) in which people were expected to fit. Programs were often defined by places that people needed to go to if they wanted support. Initially, this meant people receiving services in institutions. Later, with the development of community-based services, people were offered or provided services in smaller residential facilities and sheltered workshops/activity centres. Many of these services still exist - in fact, in some areas, they are the only services that are available to people who have an intellectual disability. Community based services also include support to children and adults with an intellectual disability to live with their families.

More recently, many jurisdictions, including New Brunswick, have begun to shift their support systems for people with intellectual and other disabilities. In part, this has been in response to discussions at a national level about the future of supports and services for people with disabilities. In 1998, the *In Unison* framework proposed a "Canadian approach" to disability issues which established the following vision:

Persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of society. The realization of the vision will allow adults with disabilities to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being through access to required supports and the elimination of barriers that prevent their full participation.

The values that stem from this vision are expressed in the concept of citizenship. According to *In Unison 2000: Persons with Disabilities in Canada*:

The concept of citizenship is central to disability issues. Citizenship is the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society - the ability of the person to be actively involved within their community. Full citizenship depends on equality, inclusion, rights and responsibilities and empowerment and participation.

The concept of "disability supports" has emerged as a way to describe the support and assistance that people with disabilities may require in order to achieve full citizenship.

Primarily, disability supports are seen as "tools for inclusion" and are critical to ensuring that people with disabilities are "going to lead fulfilling lives and participate fully in their communities".

This vision for people with disabilities has been adopted by the government of New Brunswick and serves as the "cornerstone" for developing policy in the area of disability supports.

Principles

The following principles are from the *Report of the New Brunswick Disability Framework Working Group* (2002). In 2003, they were formally adopted by the government of New Brunswick.

- **Empowerment and Self-Determination** - Persons with disabilities require the means to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being. Individuals must have control over their own lives; support mechanisms must recognize and encourage each individual's freedom of choice.
- **Rights and Responsibilities** - People with disabilities have the same rights and same responsibilities as other Canadians. They are entitled, as others are, to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law and require measures for achieving equality.
- **Participation** - New Brunswickers with disabilities have the right to participate, and to be invited to participate, in all aspects of the economic, social and cultural life of New Brunswick.
- **Individualization** - Government policies and programs will be based on determining and enhancing individual strengths and capacities as well as individual approaches which seek to maximize an individual's potential and opportunities to participate in society. Programs and services will be flexible so as to provide for individually focused and personalized supports.
- **Respect** - New Brunswickers with disabilities have the right to have their abilities, right of choice and dignity respected in all stages of their lives.
- **Access** - New Brunswickers with disabilities have the right to places, events, services and functions that are generally available in the community.
- **Equality** - New Brunswickers with disabilities have access to disability supports which are goods and services that will provide individuals with disabilities equality of opportunity and outcome.

Definitions

- **"Disability Supports"** are goods and services that assist people with disabilities in overcoming barriers to participating fully in their homes and communities. Supports can include human supports (such as personal attendants, support workers, roommates, interpreter services and respite);

technical aides and devices (such as wheel chairs, talking computers, other communication devices, etc.) and other supports such as counselling (adapted from *In Unison 2000: Persons with Disabilities in Canada*).

- **“Individualized Funding”** is an allocation of public money, directly to an individual (or in the case of a child, their parents or legal representative) or indirectly to an agency to provide support for disability-related needs. Individualized funding is determined by identifying the individual’s and/or family’s specific needs and goals. Through individualized funding people decide how disability supports will be provided and who provides these supports.
- **“Independent Planning Facilitation”** is a way for people with disabilities to get information, advice and help to:
 - Identify life goals and the required disability supports and services to help work towards them as well as different ways to have supports and services provided.
 - Develop a disability support plan and negotiate with government or with service agencies about ways to receive disability supports and services (including ways to use individualized funding that may be provided).
 - Identify ways to learn about and access other community or natural supports.

Independent planning facilitation is provided by one or more people acting independently or through an agency or organization that is **not** involved in funding or providing disability supports and services.

Position Statements

It is NBACL’s position that:

1. Disability supports play a central role in ensuring that many people with intellectual and other disabilities have real opportunities to live, work and participate in their communities as full citizens.
2. People must have the right to plan for, choose and control their own disability supports with the support of their family and/or personal network.
3. Individualized funding is a key component of the disability support system. Individualized funding can be provided directly to an individual/family or may be contracted to and delivered by a service provider. People must have the right to choose the manner in which they will be provided financial assistance for disability supports.

4. People must have access to the assistance that they may require to manage direct individualized funding and to undertake the "paperwork" that may be necessary to meet any requirements for financial or legal accountability.
5. Independent planning facilitation is also a key component of the disability support system. People with an intellectual disability must have access to independent planning facilitation to help them identify life goals and the required disability supports that will allow them to achieve their goals.
6. Disability supports must be highly personalized and designed to meet the unique goals and needs of each person who is eligible to receive such supports. As such, disability supports must not be subject to limiting "menus" of services and should provide people with maximum flexibility to identify their personal goals, needs and priorities.
7. People must have the flexibility to use individualized funding in the best way that meets their needs from time to time. This means that people must have the right and opportunity to "move" funding from one month to another or from one need to another as they determine necessary. Reporting on the use of direct individualized funding should happen annually or semi-annually.
8. Those who work within the disability support system (social workers, government and agency supervisors and managers, home and community support workers, etc.) must have adequate and ongoing training so that they fully understand the rights of people to make choices and to control their disability supports.
9. If individuals choose to use agencies to provide disability supports and services, the disability support system must provide the resources and assistance necessary to ensure that such agencies are prepared and able to offer innovative opportunities for delivering individualized disability supports in a manner that respects the vision and principles identified in this document.
10. Those individuals or agencies that provide disability supports must adhere to quality assurance standards including the achievement of "personal outcomes" for people receiving supports. Government must ensure that effective ways to measure the quality of supports are in place and are regularly being implemented.