



Disability Policy  
Research Program

kids  
brain health  
network



réseau pour  
la santé du cerveau  
des enfants

# Disability Policy in Canada: Provincial and Territorial Report

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# ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Disability Policy in Canada Provincial and Territorial Report was commissioned by Kids Brain Health Network (KBHN), and developed in collaboration with researchers from the Disability Policy Research Program (DiPo) and McGill University. The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of disability policy across Canadian provinces and territories. This report can serve as a baseline against which future progress in policy changes can be assessed, or at least understood.

In this report series, we aim to be as comprehensive as possible by including all policy related to persons with disabilities in each province and territory. We acknowledge that this report reflects a point in time assessment of disability policy. As such, information and links will likely change over time as governments and policy change. All information included in this report is accurate as of the date of publication. To maximize the accuracy of this report, it has been reviewed and verified by individuals with expertise in and/or lived experience with disability policy across Canada.

In an effort to be comprehensive while also succinct, we chose to apply a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria to the disability policy tools included in this report. The focus in this report series is to include legislation, plans of action, advocacy/awareness initiatives, tax programs, and services that support children and adults who have disabilities that are permanent and present from birth or that develop in early childhood. This includes neurodevelopmental disabilities and physical disabilities, deafness and hearing impairments, and blindness and vision impairment. We do not include policy tools that exclusively provide support to individuals that develop disabilities later in life, for example due to accidents or workplace injury. In some cases, there are policy tools that are accessible to all citizens and so are not explicitly designed for persons with disabilities and their families. We refer to these programs as 'blended' and include them in our analysis as they may be relevant to persons with disabilities and/or have unique

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

eligibility criteria for them. This is particularly important in provinces and territories that do not have policy tools and programs specifically designed for persons with disabilities to highlight other avenues through which they can receive support.

We chose to focus this report on children and adults with disabilities, and do not include programs that support seniors (65 years of age or older) with disabilities. The caveat to this is that we do include programs that support seniors if they also support adults under the age of 65 years with disabilities. This report is also focused on current government-funded or administered programs. We include some non-profit and community organizations that administer programs on behalf of government, but acknowledge that there are many more that we do not mention that are instrumental to the provision of support for individuals with disabilities across the country.

With respect to education, this report includes legislation and government directives relating to inclusive education, as well as outlines the bodies that are responsible for administering inclusive education, when available. We also include specific government funding streams or government-funded programs that support inclusive education. We do not include specific programs administered by school boards or other entities.

## **Measuring Up**

In this report, we provide information about the experiences of parents and caregivers when applying for and accessing disability programs, as well as information that emerged during the research process or from our peer reviewers. This information is provided in “Measuring Up” boxes throughout the report. Our intent in including this information is to provide additional context regarding the realities of accessing the policy tools outlined in this report and to give a voice to those with lived experience. It is important to note that these perspectives reflect opinions and experiences of a select group of individuals and may not align with the experiences of all individuals within a given province or territory.

Parent and caregiver experiences were sourced from a [study](#) completed by our team, which involved conducting an online survey and follow-up interviews with participants across Canada. We provide more information about the individuals we spoke with during this study on the following page.

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

**499** Survey Participants **81** Interview Participants

English Speakers: 93%  
French Speakers: 7%

**14%** Spoke more than one language in their home

Average age: 42 years  
Range: 22-70 years

Average age: 11 years  
Range: 0-30 years

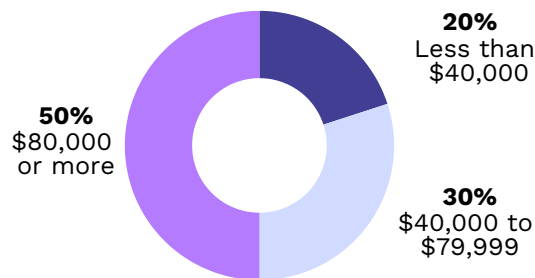
Males: 8%  
Females: 91%  
Non-binary: 1%

Males: 68%  
Females: 31%  
Non-binary or other: 1%

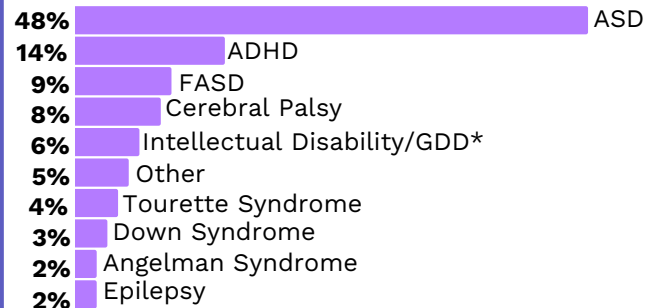
Participants

Youth

## Household Income



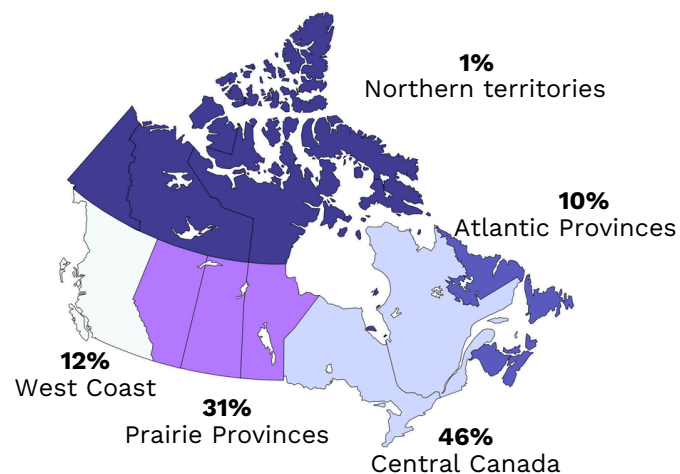
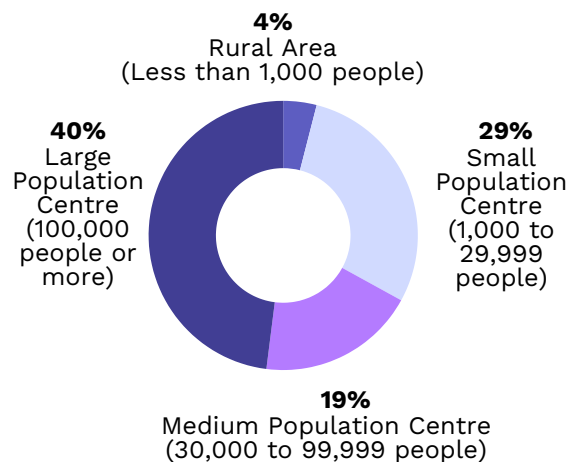
## Primary Diagnosis



**40%** Have more than one diagnosis

\*GDD = Global Developmental Delay

## Location



# ABOUT THIS REPORT

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all of the families that shared their experiences with our team and all of the community peer reviewers that provided insightful feedback on this report. The creation of this report would not have been possible without their contributions.

## **Peer Reviewers**

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- Michael Prince, University of Victoria
- Tim Stainton, University of British Columbia
- Brenda Lenahan, BC Complex Kids Society
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- Leanne Fenez, Abilities Manitoba
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- Cynthia Anaba, University of Regina
- Haley Jones, parent and advocate
- Marli Robertson, parent and advocate

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# BACKGROUND

## INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITY POLICY

“Public policy can be generally defined as a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives.”

*-Kilpatrick, 2016*

“A set of interrelated decision taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where these decisions should, in principle, be within the power of these actors to achieve”

*-Jenkins, 1978*

### **What is Disability Policy?**

There are many different ways to conceptualize and define public policy, and by extension, disability policy. For the purposes of this report, disability policy is broadly defined as what governments and other decision-making entities chose to do or not do that impacts persons with disabilities and their families.

### **Provincial and Territorial Disability Policy**

In Canada, disability policy is delivered by all levels of government in many different sectors, including health, education, finance, and social services. Our previous [report](#) provides an overview of disability policy at the federal level in Canada. This report series focuses on disability policy provided by provincial and territorial governments. For the purposes of this report, we provide information about disability policy for all provinces and territories in alignment with the following five categories:

1) [Income Supports](#) are programs that provide financial assistance to individuals with a low-income so they are able to afford basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, and other daily needs. Persons with disabilities in Canada at a lower income level or who experience barriers to employment can access financial assistance from income support programs. Some provinces and territories provide income support programs specifically designed for persons with disabilities, while others provide an additional allowance for persons with disabilities within their general income support program. Others still offer one income support program that all individuals with a low income who meet eligibility criteria can access, with no additional supports for persons with disabilities, specifically.

2) Laws and Policies include laws and policy documents that allow systems to be put in place to help governments carry out changes they want to make to systems and structures. Laws are created from bills that are introduced in the provincial or territorial legislature. To become law, bills must pass through a specific legislative process. Policy documents are often published by ministries and can provide guidelines with respect to a specific topic. Legislation may stipulate that ministers can publish policy documents related to the topic of the piece of legislation (for example, education-related legislation often gives ministers the power to publish policy guidelines related to inclusive education).

3) Advocacy, Awareness, and Action Plans include councils, offices or events funded by provincial and territorial governments that can serve a variety of purposes, such as advocating to government on behalf of individuals with disabilities, advising on the development of government programs or policies, connecting individuals with disabilities with programs in their community, awareness building and education, support for mistreatment and discrimination, and, in some cases, direct service provision. This category also includes provincial and territorial action plans related to persons with disabilities that outline policy priorities and recommendations for government action.

4) Programs Provided through the Tax System include refundable and non-refundable tax credits, as well as tax deductions, that aim to offset the additional costs associated with having a disability by reducing the amount of income taxes an individual owes each year. Non-refundable tax credits reduce the amount of income tax owed but do not produce a tax refund if the amount of the credit exceeds the income tax owed, whereas refundable tax credits reduce the amount of tax owed and will create a tax refund if the amount of the credit exceeds the income tax owed. Tax deductions allow for certain expenses to be deducted from taxable income to lower the amount of taxes owed. In Canada, provincial and territorial governments develop their own tax law and policies; however, the Canada Revenue Agency collects and administers individual income taxes on behalf of provincial and territorial governments (except for the province of Quebec, where taxes are administered by Revenu Quebec).

5) Services and Supports for Basic Needs and Activities of Daily Living are services, supports, and programs that provide assistance to persons with disabilities in their day-to-day lives. This can include community-based support, employment programs, home and housing support, respite, early intervention, transportation support, and rehabilitation, among others. For each province and territory, we provide sub-categories within this section for added clarity.

### **Disability Policy Outside Government**

In many provinces and territories, disability policy is delivered by entities outside of government, such as Crown Corporations, non-profit organizations and registered charities. In some cases, these organizations are funded and/or contracted by the provincial or territorial government to provide these services. We specify these cases whenever possible throughout the report. We also provide a list of these organizations at the end of the section on each province and territory as a resource for individuals and families looking for support.

# UN CRPD

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) is an international treaty that upholds and protects the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. Canada, along with 183 other states parties, has adopted the UN CRPD, which means that they accept the legal obligations contained in the UN CRPD. These obligations include ensuring that there are national laws to prevent discrimination, eliminating barriers to accessibility, and working to promote the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities. Associated with the creation of laws are the provision of disability programs that have the purpose of providing support to persons with disabilities to ensure they are able to fully participate in society.

Contained in the UN CRPD are processes that help to ensure that states parties are meeting the obligations outlined in the UN CRPD. For example, states parties must regularly report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to explain what actions they are taking to implement the UN CRPD. In Canada, the Canadian Human Rights Commission is also tasked with monitoring how well Canada is implementing the obligations outlined in the UN CRPD.

Canada and 99 other states parties have also signed on to the Optional Protocol to the UN CRPD. The Optional Protocol creates a process for people to make complaints directly to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities if they have exhausted all other legal options within Canada.

While the UN CRPD is ratified federally, many of the obligations contained in the UN CRPD can be met by policy and programs delivered at the provincial and territorial level. In fact, due to the federalist nature of Canada, many articles, such as Health (Article 25), Habilitation and Rehabilitation (Article 26), and Education (Article 24) are met to a greater extent by programs provided by provincial and territorial governments, rather than the federal government.

To demonstrate how government actions can fulfill requirements under the UN CRPD, we link UN CRPD articles with the various disability policy tools we include in this report. For the purposes of this report, we have sorted the 50 articles of the UN CRPD with similar aims into 10 categories (outlined below). Articles that are not included in this report are administrative in nature, related to reporting requirements, or are outside the scope of government action in this context. The icons used on the following pages will be used throughout the report to demonstrate how provincial and territorial disability policy is aligned with the UN CRPD articles.





## Equality

### Description

This category includes articles that promote equality for persons with disabilities both before and under the law, and ensure that persons with disabilities do not face discrimination.

### Relevant Articles

Article 4: General obligations

Article 5: Equality and non-discrimination

Article 6: Children with disabilities

Article 7: Women with disabilities

Article 10: Right to life

Article 14: Liberty and security of person

Article 17: Protecting the integrity of the person

Article 22: Respect for privacy



## Accessibility

### Description

This category includes articles that ensure that persons with disabilities can access public spaces, systems, and facilities, such as the physical environment, transportation and communication technologies.

### Relevant Article

Article 9 – Accessibility



## Social Participation

### Description

This category includes articles that ensure that persons with disabilities are able to participate in society fully and on an equal basis with others.

### Relevant Articles

Article 18: Liberty of movement and nationality

Article 20: Personal mobility

Article 21: Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

Article 29: Participation in political and public life

Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport



## Employment and Financial Security

### Description

This category includes articles that ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to work, and have access to inclusive and accessible workplaces. It also includes articles that outline the responsibility of states parties to alleviate poverty and promote financial security of persons with disabilities.

### Relevant Articles

[Article 27](#): Work and employment

[Article 28](#): Adequate standard of living and social protection



## Health and Social Services

### Description

This category includes articles that ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to healthcare and social services that allows them to have the highest attainable standard of health and well-being, achieve inclusion and maintain maximum independence.

### Relevant Articles

[Article 25](#): Health

[Article 26](#): Habilitation and rehabilitation



## Public Education and Information

### Description

This category includes articles that require states parties to provide public information about persons with disabilities to foster respect and combat stereotypes.

### Relevant Article

[Article 8](#): Awareness-raising



## Legal Capacity and Justice

### Description

This category includes articles that ensure persons with disabilities have equality with respect to legal capacity and access to justice.

### Relevant Articles

[Article 12](#): Equal recognition before the law

[Article 13](#): Access to justice



## Caregiving and Family

### Description

This category includes articles that ensure that persons with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life.

### Relevant Articles

[Article 23](#): Respect for home and the family



## Education

### Description

This category includes articles that maintain the right to education for persons with disabilities through the provision of inclusive and quality education, accommodations, and support.

### Relevant Articles

[Article 24](#): Education



## Housing and Related Supports

### Description




This category includes articles that ensure that persons with disabilities have equality in their ability to choose where they would like to live and are able to live as independently as possible in the community through the provision of in-home and community supports.

### Relevant Articles

[Article 19](#): Living independently and being included in the community

# BRITISH COLUMBIA

## PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

Income Support 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disability Assistance</li> </ul>	
Laws and Policies 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessible British Columbia Act</li> <li>Special Education Policy</li> <li>K-12 Funding – Special Needs Policy</li> <li>Individual Education Plan Order M638/95</li> <li>Special Needs Students Order M150/89</li> <li>Support Services for Schools Order M149/89.</li> <li>Special Education Programs and Funding - Independent Schools Policy</li> <li>Individual Education Plan Order M638/95</li> <li>Special Needs Students Order M150/89</li> <li>Support Services for Schools Order M149/89</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Rights Code</li> <li>Adult Guardianship Act (AGA)</li> <li>School Act</li> </ul>
Advocacy, Awareness and Action Plans 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provincial Accessibility Committee (PAC)</li> <li>Accessibility Directorate</li> <li>Technical Committees</li> <li>Office of the Advocate for Service Quality</li> <li>BC Disability Employment Month</li> <li>Indigenous Disability Awareness Month</li> <li>AccessAbility Week</li> <li>Community Inclusion Month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representative for Children and Youth</li> <li>BC Human Rights Tribunal</li> <li>BC Human Rights Commissioner</li> <li>BC Human Rights Clinic</li> </ul>

## Programs Provided by the Tax System



### Disability-Specific

- Disability amount for self
- Disability amount transferred from a dependent

### Blended

- Medical expenses for self, spouse or common-law partner and your dependent children born in 2006 or later
- Allowable amount of medical expenses for other dependents
- Caregiver amount
- British Columbia home renovation tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities
- Training tax credit

## Services and Supports for Activities of Daily Living



### Disability-Specific

- Early Childhood Intervention Programs
- Children and Youth with Support Needs – Includes:
  - Autism Funding
  - FASD Key Worker Program
  - Family Support Services
  - The At Home Program
- Complex Developmental Behavioral Conditions (CDBC) Network
- BC Autism Assessment Network (BCAAN)
- Community Living BC
- Developmental Disabilities Mental Health Services
- Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults (CAYA)
- Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD)
- Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (PDHHS)
- Provincial Resource Programs (PRPs)
- School-Aged Therapy
- Work-Able Graduate Internship Program
- WorkBC Assistive Technology Services

### Blended

- Supportive Housing
- BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations
- Independent Living BC Program
- Subsidized Housing
- Home and Community Care Publicly Funded Programs
- Property Tax Deferral Program
- Fair Pharmacare plan
- Rental Assistance Program (RAP)
- Complex-Care Housing
- Nursing Support Services
- Parking Permit Program for People with Disabilities

## Services and Supports for Activities of Daily Living



### Disability-Specific

### Blended

- B.C. Access Grant for Students with Disabilities
- B.C. Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities
- B.C. Supplemental Bursary for Students with Disabilities
- Learning Disability Assessment Bursary
- B.C. Access Grant for Deaf Students
- Assistive Technology Resources provided by Assistive Technology BC, CAPER-BC, and SetBC
- Home owner grant for people with disabilities
- Low income grant supplement for people with disabilities
- Fuel tax refund program for persons with disabilities

## ACRONYMS

AGA	Adult Guardianship Act
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASL	American Sign Language
BCANDS	British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society
BCANN	BC Autism Assessment Network
CAYA	Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults
CDBC	Complex Developmental Behavioral Conditions
CLBC	Community Living BC
CSIL	Choice in Supports for Independent Living
CYSN	Children and Youth with Support Needs
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
IDC	Indigenous Disability Canada
PAC	Provincial Accessibility Committee
PDHHS	Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
PRP	Provincial Resource Programs
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RAP	Rental Assistance Program
RDSP	Registered Disability Savings Plan
STADD	Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities

# INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

 Employment & Financial Security  Health & Social Services  Equality  
 Social Participation  Accessibility

Individuals with a severe physical or mental impairment that is expected to continue for more than two years with significant restriction in their ability to perform daily-living activities under a certain income level are able to access financial and health benefits, as well as other benefits (outlined below), through the Disability Assistance program. This program requires an individual to apply for a Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Designation, which requires a medical professional and prescribed professional to fill out portions of the form. A shortened application process is available to those who are already accessing certain government programs, such as Community Living BC and the At Home Program. In some cases, transportation and health benefits provided under this program may continue even if an individual leaves the program.

Individuals are able to earn up to a certain amount of employment income per year before their benefits are reduced. This amount differs depending on family size – for example, the income exemption for a single person with a PWD designation is \$16,200 per year as of January 1, 2024. Individuals that receive assistance are also eligible for supplements that provide money or services to cover extra costs. Examples of supplements available under this program include the following:

- **Transportation support:** Individuals with a PWD designation are able to receive a bus pass (BC Bus Pass program) or additional funds added to monthly disability assistance payment.
- **Camp fees:** Individuals with a child or an adult with a disability may receive funds to support camp fees for their child.
- **Guide dog/service dog:** Provides funds to help with costs for a guide dog team.
- **Travel:** Individuals with a developmental disability can receive funds for travel to attend a self-help skill or work-placement program approved by Community Living British Columbia.
- **Health supplements:** Various health supplements, such as dental and optical coverage, are available to eligible assistance clients. Disability assistance clients may be able to receive a monthly nutritional supplement.
- **Social Services Camping Fee Exemption:** People with disabilities on assistance do not have to pay base camping fees. Individuals accessing the At Home Program (see more information below) can also access this exemption.

# LAWS AND POLICIES

 Equality  Legal Capacity & Justice  Education  Health & Social Services  
 Accessibility  Public Education & Information

In 2021, the Accessible British Columbia Act became law. The Government of British Columbia has a plan to implement this Act for years one through ten, which involves key actions in four different areas:

- Culture change: This includes ongoing awareness and working with stakeholders and the public to increase accessibility.
- Requirements for B.C government: This includes building a tool to provide feedback for government, developing the government’s accessibility plan (and publishing on an annual basis), establishing the Provincial Accessibility Committee (see below), and developing initiative regulations for organizations.
- Monitoring and evaluation: The government will report each year on progress and success, with the first independent review occurring after five years.
- Standards development: Standards will be developed two at a time and will be implemented in a phased approach. As implementation begins for a standard, work will begin on developing the next one. In 2024, the Government of British Columbia started developing standards for Accessible Service Delivery and Employment Accessibility. Public engagement processes for these standards is ongoing at the time of publication.

In addition, the following pieces of legislation include information that mentions or is relevant to persons with disabilities in British Columbia:






- The British Columbia Human Rights Code protects the rights of individuals, including those with physical and mental disabilities, against discrimination and harassment.
- The Adult Guardianship Act (AGA) protects vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, or self-neglect.
- Section 11 of the School Act states that “if a decision of an employee of a board significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student, the parent of the student or the student may, within a reasonable time from the date that the parent or student was informed of the decision, appeal that decision to the board.” These appeals can be related to a decision not to provide a student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The Government of British Columbia has published a number of ministerial orders, legal and administrative documents that support the day-to-day operations of the ministry, relating to inclusive education: Individual Education Plan Order M638/95, Special Needs Students Order M150/89, and Support Services for Schools Order M149/89.

Additionally, the Government of British Columbia has published a number of policies that provide regulated learning standards that promote student success and achievement in B.C. These policies come from legislation or from decisions made by elected officials. Policies relevant to students with disabilities include the public school Special Education Policy and K-12 Funding – Special Needs Policy, and the Special Education Programs and Funding - Independent Schools Policy.



# ADVOCACY, AWARENESS, AND ACTION PLANS

 Equality  Public Education & Information  Health & Social Services  
 Legal Capacity & Justice  Accessibility

The Government of British Columbia, as part of the implementation of the Accessible British Columbia Act, established the Provincial Accessibility Committee (PAC) to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The PAC is comprised of persons with disabilities, individuals from organizations that support persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples. The PAC has 11 members who are appointed by, and report to, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. The PAC achieves its goals through the following actions:

- Developing and recommending accessibility standards to the Government of British Columbia.
- Engaging with the public on accessibility standards.
- Providing general advice to the Minister about the province's efforts to promote accessibility.

The PAC receives support from and provides direction to technical committees to develop recommendations for accessibility standards. Currently, there are two technical committees that align with the two standards currently in development: employment accessibility and accessible service delivery.

The Accessibility Directorate is a branch within the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction that provides administrative support for the PAC, supports the government's implementation of the Accessible British Columbia Act, works across government and with the disability and business communities to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, and tracks and reports on progress addressing and removing barriers to accessibility. The Directorate also provides support to many advisory committees. Currently, the Directorate supports the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) Action Group, which brings together leaders from the financial sector and disability organizations to provide advice to government and promote use of the RDSP.

Adults and teenagers with a developmental disability and their family members can also access the Office of the Advocate for Service Quality, a neutral third party that aims to ensure that high quality services are available throughout the province. This Office can provide individuals with information and advice, support service navigation, review complaints and concerns with services, track and raise awareness about systemic issues, and make recommendations to decision makers to improve policies and practices.

The Government of British Columbia also has four main awareness-building initiatives throughout the year:

- BC Disability Employment Month: Celebrated in September, this month highlights the significant role people with disabilities play in British Columbia's workforce. During this month, employers can learn about resources to reduce barriers to inclusion and people with disabilities can discover supportive services to help build their careers.
- Indigenous Disability Awareness Month: Recognized in November, this month highlights and celebrates the unique contributions First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples with disabilities make to communities throughout the province.
- AccessAbility Week: The last week of May is AccessAbility Week, which promotes inclusion and accessibility by highlighting individuals and organizations that are working towards removing barriers for people with disabilities, as well as celebrating people in the disability community.
- Community Inclusion Month: Observed in October, this month honours the dedication of individuals, families, and community members who tirelessly work towards creating more inclusive communities and opportunities for all British Columbians, especially those with developmental disabilities.








## Did you know?

Indigenous Disability Canada (IDC)/British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS) created Indigenous Disability Awareness month in 2015 to highlight and celebrate the unique contributions First Nations, Métis and Inuit people with disabilities make to communities throughout the province.

Other initiatives in British Columbia related to persons with disabilities include the following:

- Representative for Children and Youth: A non-partisan, independent officer of the Legislature that supports children and youth and their families in dealing with the provincial child and youth welfare system. This office also provides oversight to the system and makes recommendations for improvement.
- BC Human Rights Tribunal: An independent entity that is responsible for dealing with complaints under the Human Rights Code.
- BC Human Rights Commissioner: An independent office of the Legislature that is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in British Columbia through shifting laws, policies, practice, and culture.
- BC Human Rights Clinic: Provides free legal services to people who need help with a provincial human rights complaint.

# PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE TAX SYSTEM

 Equality
  Caregiving & Family
  Health & Social Services  
 Housing & Related Supports
  Employment & Financial Security

Outlined below are the tax-related programs provided by the Government of British Columbia that are available to individuals with disabilities and their families. More information about all British Columbia taxes for the 2023 tax year can be found [here](#). All dollar amounts provided in this section are accurate for the 2023 tax year.

Tax Credit	Description and Eligibility
<b>Disability amount for self</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces tax payable for persons with disabilities.</li> <li>Individuals can claim this on their taxes if they have been approved for the federal Disability Tax Credit.</li> <li>Adults 18 years of age or older can claim \$8,986 on their tax return.</li> </ul>
<b>Disability amount transferred from a dependent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals can claim this on their taxes if their dependent has been approved for the federal Disability Tax Credit and does not need to claim all or part of the disability amount on their tax return.</li> </ul>
<b>Medical expenses for self, spouse or common-law partner and your dependent children born in 2006 or later</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals can claim the same medical expenses on their provincial tax return that they claimed through the federal medical expenses tax credit.</li> <li>Dependents must be under the age of 18 years.</li> </ul>
<b>Allowable amount of medical expenses for other dependents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals can claim the same medical expenses on their provincial tax return that they claimed through the federal medical expenses tax credit for their other dependents 18 years of age or older.</li> </ul>
<b>British Columbia caregiver amount</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals can claim this amount (up to \$5,243 for each dependent) for a spouse or common-law partner or an eligible relative who was dependent on them because of an impairment in physical or mental functions at any time in the year.</li> <li>Dependents must be 18 years of age or older and have a net income below \$22,985.</li> </ul>

**British Columbia home renovation tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities**

- Seniors or Disability Tax Credit-eligible individuals (or members of their family) can claim this credit if they paid or incurred eligible expenses for improvements to their principal residence or the land that their principal residence is situated on.
- Eligible expenses include expenses that allow the senior or person with a disability to gain access to, or to be more mobile or functional within, the home or on the land, or reduce the risk of harm to a senior or a person with a disability within the home or on the land or in gaining access to the home or the land.
- Individuals can claim \$10,000 or the amount of eligible expenses incurred, whichever is less.

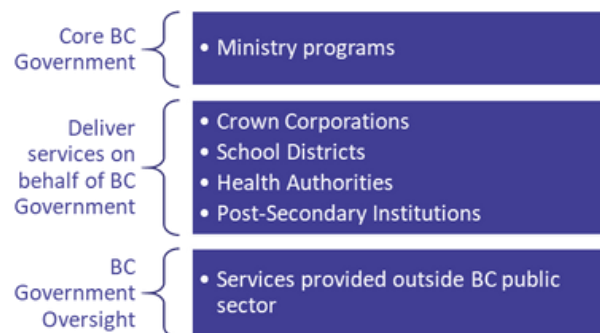
**Training tax credit**

- The training tax credit is for employers and apprentices who take part in eligible apprenticeship programs administered through SkilledTradesBC.
- An enhanced credit is available for persons with disabilities.

# SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

- Caregiving & Family
- Health & Social Services
- Employment & Financial Security
- Accessibility
- Social Participation
- Education
- Housing & Related Supports
- Equality

The Government of British Columbia contracts service providers, non-profits/community organizations, and Indigenous organizations to provide services for persons with disabilities throughout the province. These organizations can be reached through government offices, Crown corporations, referrals from health professionals, or directly by individuals looking to access services. The intention behind structuring the system in this way is to allow individuals and families to access services locally that are tailored to their specific needs. In addition to contracting services out to other providers, the government does administer some services directly. Other organizations, such as school districts, post-secondary institutions, and Health Authorities, also provide services to persons with disabilities and their families. The figure below provides a summary of disability service delivery in British Columbia.



Modified from [Government of BC](#)

## Services for Children

There are two main service lines funded by the Government of British Columbia that provide services and support for children with disabilities. The first is Early Childhood Intervention Programs, which provides community-based support for infants and young children who show signs of or who are at risk of developing a developmental delay or disability. Referrals to supports can be provided by public health nurses, family physicians, or by Child Development Centres. Examples of specific programs within this service line include the Infant Development Program, the Aboriginal Infant Development Program, Supported Child Development, Aboriginal Supported Child Development, and Early Intervention Therapy.

The second service line is Children and Youth with Support Needs (CYSN). There are many CYSN offices across the province that families can contact to learn about the services and supports in their community that are available to them. Examples of programs administered specifically by CYSN include the following:

- Autism Funding: provides families with funding to pay for approved services and therapies that promote communication, social-emotional, academic, and life skills development for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Families can receive up to \$22,000 per year for children under the age of six years and \$6,000 per year for children aged 6-18 years.
- FASD Key Worker Program: provides support to families with a child with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and can provide referrals to services in the community. This support is provided free of charge and prior to an assessment.
- Family Support Services: provides respite services and support services to families with children with intellectual disabilities.
- The At Home Program: provides support to children and teenagers with a severe disability or complex health care needs. Enrolled families can receive respite benefits, medical benefits, and in-school support.

Children and youth in British Columbia can also access publicly-funded diagnostic assessments through the Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions (CDBC) Network and the BC Autism Assessment Network (BCAAN). Both programs require a referral from a physician and can be accessed in various regions across the province. Both program websites also note long wait times for accessing assessments, with the BCANN wait times listed as 80.6 weeks as of December 2022.

## Services for Adults

Community Living BC (CLBC) is a crown corporation funded by the Government of British Columbia, which in turn funds supports and services for adults (19 years of age or older) with developmental disabilities, as well as individuals who have a diagnosis of ASD or FASD. Services are also provided through contracts with community agencies. CLBC facilitators work with individuals and families to understand their goals and needs and ensure they are supported through activities, services, and supports in their communities. Facilitators can do this by connecting individuals with activities in their community and to funded



# MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

## Program Spotlight: Autism Funding

In British Columbia, 61 parents and caregivers completed our online survey and 10 parents and caregivers participated in an in-depth, follow-up interview. This Autism Funding program was most frequently discussed by survey and interview participants was the Autism Funding program. Below we highlight successes of the program, as well as opportunities for positive changes. We also provide quotes from our participants to provide additional information.

### Successes



#### Information Provided at Diagnosis

Many participants were provided with information about this program at the time of diagnosis, which streamlined and simplified the application process. This is an important contrast to other programs, where difficulties finding information about applying and accessing was a significant barrier to access.

“The moment that you get your diagnosis, you’re encouraged to submit the clinician’s report, the OT report, the speech report and all the pediatricians’ reports, all of those documents to the Ministry of Child and Family Development.”



#### Flexibility

Participants appreciated the flexibility to use program funding on services and supports that best met their child’s needs.

“I don’t want ABA therapy for my children, so I don’t have to have ABA therapy for my children. We focus mostly on speech.”

### Opportunities



#### Insufficient Financial Support

Financial support provided through this program was not always sufficient, particularly when considering the cost of services and supports.

“I think sometimes people say oh, you have all this autism funding, you don’t need other help. But I don’t think they always realize that how little that funding is.”



#### Service Availability a Barrier to Access

Some individuals expressed challenges accessing services that they were funded for because of a lack of availability in their region.

“In the region that we live we don’t have a music therapist, which is a funded service. But they won’t cover music lessons because we don’t have a music therapist. Whereas my son is extremely, extremely musical and he really does find it to be a great release for him and he’s calmer after playing music, and it’s quite relaxing for him, it’s unfortunate that they won’t cover music lessons because we don’t have a licensed therapist.”

services and support. Examples of support provided by CLBC and associated community agencies include community inclusion, employment support, skills training and development, home-based support, psychological support, and service coordination, among others.

Youth and adults (12 to 14 years of age, depending on the region, and older) with developmental disabilities can also access Developmental Disabilities Mental Health Services through their local health authority. Examples of services provided through this program are assessments, treatment, counselling, music, art or behavioural therapy, and education, among others.

Adults aged 19 years and older who require an augmentative/alternative communication system due to a severe communication disability can receive services from the Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults (CAYA). This province-wide service program is funded by the Government of British Columbia and ensures that individuals are able to access the communication tools and professional support that they need.



## Did you know?

A crown corporation is an interesting type of organization, as it is wholly owned by the federal or provincial/territorial governments but operated like a private company. Examples of crown corporations are the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Canada Post. The use of a Crown Corporation to deliver disability services, as is the case with Community Living BC, is unique to British Columbia.

## Services for Adults and Children

Youth between the ages of 16 and 24 years of age with developmental disabilities, ASD, or FASD transitioning into adulthood can access the Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities (STADD) program. This program is a collaboration between many government ministries, school boards, Crown corporations, health authorities, and other community organizations, and is designed to help young people and their families plan for adulthood. Individuals in this program are provided with a Navigator, who helps individuals and their support system create a plan outlining goals and services and supports needed to achieve these goals. Navigators can also help to connect individuals and families with services that meet their needs. This program is available in many communities in British Columbia but not all.

Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (PDHHS) provide a range of support for individuals and families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. This includes American Sign Language (ASL) Services, support for dorm students attending B.C. School for the Deaf, connection to community partners and family networks, and family navigation support. PDHHS, in collaboration with the

Ministry of Children, also offers services in an ASL environment for Indigenous Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, youth, and young adults to connect with each other and support cultural awareness.

## Education and Employment

In British Columbia, specialized education services and programs that support the needs of K-12 students with disabilities, called Provincial Resource Programs (PRPs), are delivered and operated by school districts. The Ministry of Education and Child Care provides funding to school boards for this program, in addition to setting educational standards for inclusive education and overseeing governance of the system as a whole.

Children and youth in the K-12 education system can also access the School-Aged Therapy program, which provides occupational therapy and physiotherapy services to school-aged children and youth with disabilities to allow them to be independent and reach educational goals while at school. This program is funded by the Government of British Columbia and administered in partnership with board of education and independent school authorities.

WorkBC provides a wide variety of resources and services for people with disabilities to support them in pursuing post-secondary education, getting funding or assistive adaptations for education, gaining work experience and job skills, and creating or expanding a business. WorkBC also provides information about community-based and charity organizations that provide education and employment support for persons with disabilities in BC. Examples of programs administered by WorkBC include the following:

- Work-Able Graduate Internship Program - Coordinated paid, 12-month internships across the BC public service for recent post-secondary graduates self-identifying as having a disability.
- WorkBC Assistive Technology Services - Provides equipment and devices to help individuals overcome barriers in the workplace.

Post-secondary students with disabilities are able to access many different grants and bursaries to help support them through their education:

- B.C. Access Grant for Students with Disabilities - Supports full-time students with a permanent disability, or a persistent or prolonged disability with the cost of education by replacing a portion of student loan funding (up to \$1,560 per program year).
- B.C. Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities - Helps students with disabilities pay for exceptional education-related services and adaptive equipment (up to \$12,000 per year).
- B.C. Supplemental Bursary for Students with Disabilities - Provides a bursary for full-time or part-time students that are eligible for the Canada Student Grant for Students with Disabilities (up to \$800 per year).
- Learning Disability Assessment Bursary - Helps part-time or full-time students with the up-front costs of the learning disabilities assessment, which is needed to determine eligibility for services and/or equipment (up to \$3,500).





## MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

### Barrier to Access: Lack of Information

Among survey and interview participants in our study, one of the main barriers to accessing programs was a lack of information about services and supports. Many participants found it difficult to find information about the programs that they could apply to for their child. Many participants shared that they did not know where to find support after their child received a diagnosis. Participants reported most frequently that they found out about programs through other parents or through parent-led social media groups. Many expressed a desire to access support navigating a complicated system from a professional that is knowledgeable about available disability programs and application processes.



**35%** of the time, survey participants did not know about the existence of various BC disability programs

*"Yeah, I think from access standpoint, you know, I was well educated about the system and how it works and what to do. But for the average family, they're just like floating around in the dark, trying to figure out what's next, there's not anybody telling them or giving them a roadmap or explaining it to them."*

- B.C. Access Grant for Deaf Students – Helps deaf and hard of hearing students with financial need with the additional costs associated with attending a specialized post-secondary institution where the curriculum is delivered in ASL.

Finally, the Government of British Columbia partners with many organizations, such as Assistive Technology BC, CAPER-BC, and SetBC, to provide assistive technology resources to primary, secondary, and post-secondary students across the province.

### Housing and Transportation

The home owner grant for people with disabilities, which reduces the amount of property taxes paid annually for properties that are valued under a certain amount. Low-income individuals with an assessed property value that is higher than the threshold for receiving the grant can access the low income grant supplement for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities can receive help reducing their transportation costs through the [fuel tax refund program for persons with disabilities](#). Individuals 16 years of age or older with a disability that own or lease a vehicle are able to access a fuel tax refund of up to \$500 per calendar year and a 25 percent discount on the basic Autoplan car insurance provided by the Insurance Corporation of BC.

## Blended Programs

Blended programs that may provide support to individuals with disabilities despite the fact that they are not specific to individuals with disabilities include the following:

- [Supportive Housing](#). This program provides subsidized housing with on-site supports for single adults, seniors and people with disabilities at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- [BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations](#). This program provides rebates to low- and moderate-income families to complete home adaptations for seniors and individuals with permanent disabilities.
- [Independent Living BC Program](#). This program is a subsidized, assisted-living program that provides housing with support services to seniors and people with disabilities.
- [Subsidized Housing](#). This program provides long-term housing to people with low incomes that can live independently (including individuals with disabilities). Rental fees for housing provided under this program are calculated based on income level.
- [Home and Community Care Publicly Funded Programs](#). There are a number of programs under the banner of Home and Community Care. Some tend to be delivered to disabled people, some to seniors, and some to people with other needs. Examples include [Adult Day Services](#), [Choice in Supports for Independent Living \(CSIL\)](#), [Group Homes](#), and [Long-Term Care Services](#).
- [Property Tax Deferment Program](#). This program allows individuals (including persons with disabilities) to defer their property tax payment in a given year if they are unable to pay.
- [Fair PharmaCare plan](#). This program helps low-income families with the cost of prescription drugs, dispensing fees and some medical devices/supplies.
- [Rental Assistance Program \(RAP\)](#). This program provides eligible low-income working families with monthly assistance to help with their monthly rent payments. To qualify, families must have a before-tax household income of \$40,000 or less, have been working at some point in the previous year, and have at least one dependent child under a certain age. Notably, the age requirement is removed if the child has a mental or physical disability.
- [Complex-Care Housing](#). Complex care housing supports adults 19 years and over who have significant mental health, addictions, or concurrent issues, as well as functional needs related to acquired brain injury, chronic illness, or physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- [Nursing Support Services](#). A team of community-based registered nurses provides support to parents and caregivers of children and youth (under the age of 20 years) with medical complexities to help them live active, healthier lives in their communities.

- Parking Permit Program for People with Disabilities allows people to receive parking permits to park in designated parking stalls if they need the extra width of designated spaces to get in and out of the vehicles in a wheelchair, use mobility aids or need to park close to a building due to their health. Individuals are able to apply for a permit if they do not have a vehicle. Two types of permits are available: permanent permits, valid for three years and renewable, and temporary permits, valid for one to 12 months and non-renewable.



## Support for Individuals and Families

There are many non-profits, charities, and other organizations that advocate for and provide support to persons with disabilities and their families in British Columbia. A selection of these organizations include the following:

- Indigenous Disability Canada (IDC)/British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS)
- Disability Alliance BC
- Family Support Institute of BC
- Inclusion BC
- Autism BC
- Cerebral Palsy Association of British Columbia