



# 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

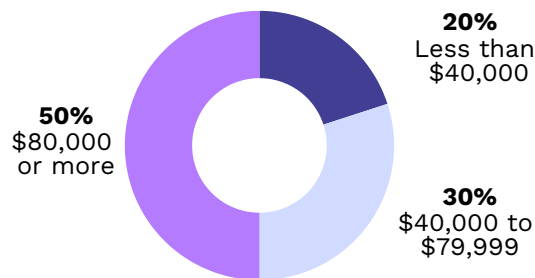
Males: 8%  
Females: 91%  
Non-binary: 1%

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

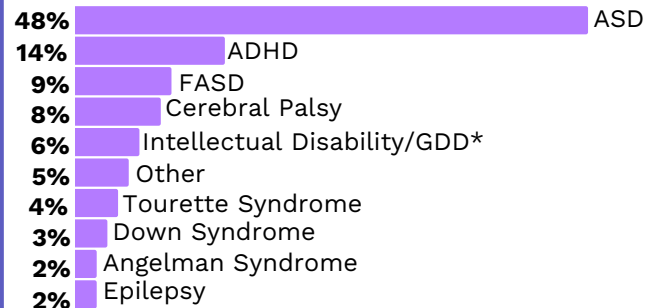
Participants

Youth

## Household Income



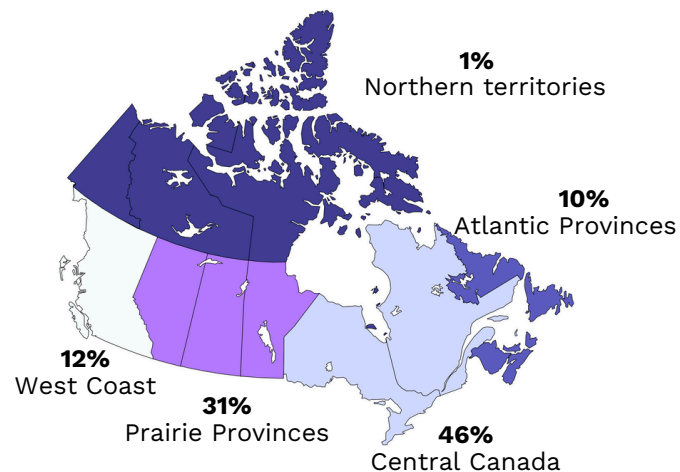
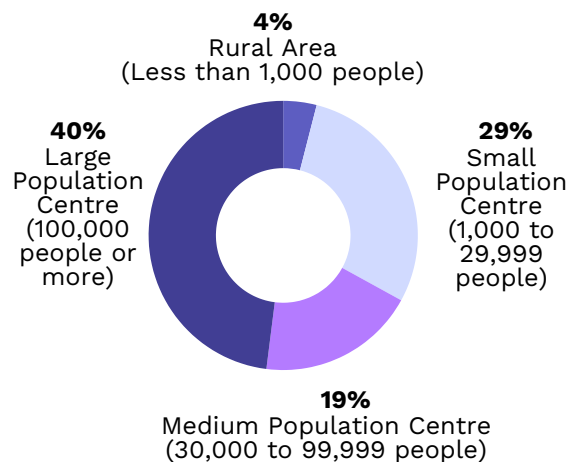
## Primary Diagnosis



**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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- Logan Wong, IDEAA Perspectives Training & Consulting
- Philip Ney, Inclusion Alberta
- Nilima Sonpal-Valias, Alberta Council of Disability Services
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- Tim Stainton, University of British Columbia
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- Leanne Fenez, Abilities Manitoba
- Ken Pike, Inclusion New Brunswick
- Haley Flaro, Ability New Brunswick
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- Denise McKee, NWT Disabilities Council
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- Keiko Shikako, McGill University
- Natasha Rumsey, Rumsey Consulting
- 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

# NEW BRUNSWICK

## PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

Income Support 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Assistance (Extended Benefits Program)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Assistance (Transitional Assistance Program)</li> </ul>
Laws and Policies 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility Act</li> <li>• Policy 322 – Inclusive Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Rights Act</li> <li>• Supported Decision-Making and Representation Act</li> <li>• Education Act</li> </ul>
Advocacy, Awareness and Action Plans 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Premier’s Council on Disabilities</li> <li>• Disability Action Plan</li> <li>• Disability Awareness Week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ombud NB</li> <li>• New Brunswick Child and Youth Advocate</li> <li>• New Brunswick Human Rights Commission</li> </ul>
Programs Provided by the Tax System 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability amount for self</li> <li>• Disability amount transferred from a dependent</li> <li>• Amount for infirm dependents age 18 or older</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical expenses for self, spouse or common-law partner and your dependent children born in 2006 or later</li> <li>• Allowable amount of medical expenses for other dependents</li> <li>• Caregiver amount</li> </ul>

## Services and Supports for Activities of Daily Living



Disability-Specific	Blended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Supports for Children with Disabilities Program</li> <li>• Inclusion Support Program</li> <li>• Preschool Autism Program</li> <li>• Disability Support Program</li> <li>• Vision Loss Rehabilitation</li> <li>• Employment and Support Services Program (ESSP)</li> <li>• Training and Employment Support Services (TESS)</li> <li>• avenueNB Cooperative</li> <li>• Student Services</li> <li>• Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA)</li> <li>• Community Residences</li> <li>• Portable Rent Supplement Program</li> <li>• Housing Assistance for Persons with Disabilities</li> <li>• Vehicle Retrofit Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Services Programs</li> <li>• Special Care Homes</li> <li>• New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program</li> <li>• Disabled Parking Permit</li> </ul>

## ACRONYMS

APSEA	Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
EBP	Extended Benefit Program
EECD	Education and Early Childhood Development
ESSP	Employment and Support Services Program
FSCD	Family Supports for Children with Disabilities Program
HELP	Health Equipment Loan Program
PLP	Personalized Learning Plan
TESS	Training and Employment Support Services

## INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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

The Social Assistance program provides financial support to individuals over the age of 18 years (or over the age of 17 years for the Extended Benefit Program (EBP), described below) who are unable to meet their basic needs. To receive

support, individuals must earn an income under the income threshold for their family size. In addition to financial supports, this program provides many other types of supports that individuals may be eligible for based on their needs and situation. For example, those looking to transition into the workforce can access Career Development Opportunities, which provides training and employment opportunities, as well as financial support to pay for employment-related expenses such as child care, textbooks, and work clothes. Other benefits include support for the following:

- Day care
- Emergencies
- Funerals
- Health
- Prenatal and postnatal care
- Special benefits/supplements
- Fuel
- Household furnishings
- Treatment program transportation

The Social Assistance Program is comprised of two individual programs: the Transitional Assistance Program and the EBP. The Transitional Assistance Program provides short-term financial support for adults over the age of 18 years that are willing and able to re-enter the workforce. The EBP provides support for adults 18 years of age and older who have been assessed as blind, deaf, or disabled by the medical advisory board.



### Did you know?

According to Statistics Canada data, 35 percent of New Brunswickers are living with a disability - the second highest rate in Canada. The rate of disability in New Brunswick is also increasing faster than anywhere else in Canada, rising 8.6 percentage points between 2017 and 2022.

## LAWS AND POLICIES

Equality Legal Capacity & Justice Education Social Participation  
 Accessibility

The Accessibility Act was introduced in the legislature in May 2024 and received Royal Assent on June 7, 2024. The purpose of this legislation is to affirm New Brunswick's commitment to implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and with the aim of creating a more accessible and inclusive New Brunswick. The Act outlines the following actions for the province:

- Establish a governance model through an Accessibility Office in the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

- Establish accessibility standards in regulations relating to government services, transportation, education, employment, built environment, housing, information and communications, and sports and recreation.
- Establish requirements to adopt accessibility plans that identify, remove, and prevent barriers to government programs and services.
- Enforce compliance with standards.
- Establish mechanisms to evaluate progress, including reviews of regulations.






At the time of publication, the Accessibility Office has been established and the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is in the process of increasing staff resources within the Office. Additionally, the Government has committed to publishing a minister’s five-year strategic plan by spring 2025, and public sector accessibility plans by the end of 2025.

With respect to education, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) released Policy 322 – Inclusive Education in 2013 to outline requirements to ensure that all New Brunswick public schools and school boards are inclusive. Information is provided in this Policy regarding goals for inclusive public education, requirements and standards with respect to inclusive education, and regarding Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs).

The following other pieces of legislation include information that mentions or is relevant to persons with disabilities in New Brunswick:

- The Human Rights Act protects all individuals in New Brunswick against discrimination based on a variety of personal characteristics, including disability, and promotes equal dignity and human rights for all people.
- Supported Decision-Making and Representation Act “protects and promotes the autonomy and dignity of persons who require support in relation to decision-making” by ensuring that individuals “receive the support they need to make or to participate in the decisions about their lives to the greatest extent possible.”
- Education Act outlines requirements to develop a PLP when needed by students to support their learning, and to provide services and programs aligning with the PLP in the common learning environment to the fullest extent practical, while still respecting the rights and needs of other students.

## ADVOCACY, AWARENESS, AND ACTION PLANS

 Equality  Public Education & Information  Legal Capacity & Justice  
 Accessibility  Social Participation

The Premier’s Council on Disabilities was created to advise the provincial government on matters relating to the status of persons with disabilities in the province of New Brunswick. This Council aims to provide leadership to improve

the quality of life for all persons with disabilities in the province. The Council published their Disability Action Plan in 2020 for consideration by the Government of New Brunswick. This multi-year action plan contained 43 recommendations that were developed based on consultation and engagement with the disability community. Recommendations focused on employment, education, poverty, housing, disability, supports, accessibility, transportation, and recreation and wellness. The overall goal of this Action Plan is to ensure all persons with disabilities are able to reach their full potential.

The Council also hosts several events annually as part of Disability Awareness Week, with the aim of raising awareness of existing barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from fully and equally participating in society and ways to overcome these barriers, and celebrating best practices and advancements made towards full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the province.

Other offices in New Brunswick that can provide support to persons with disabilities include the following:

- Ombud NB is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly that investigates public complaints relating to government departments, other public sector organizations, and organizations that hold personal health information in an impartial manner. The services provided by this Office are free to use and confidential, and include responding to inquires by citizens, resolving issues, and conducting investigations.
- The New Brunswick Child and Youth Advocate works to uphold the rights and protect the interests of children and youth aged 19 years old and under. This includes investigating complaints a person has about how situations are handled by government agencies.
- The New Brunswick Human Rights Commission is the government agency that is responsible for administering the Human Rights Act. This means that they are responsible for promoting awareness of the Act through education, promoting compliance with the Act, and receiving and resolving human rights complaints by New Brunswick residents.








## Did you know?

Access Awareness Week has been celebrated in New Brunswick since 1988 to promote better community access for people with disabilities. In 1998, New Brunswick changed the name of this week to Disability Awareness Week to “ensure that all issues related to persons with a disability could be promoted.”



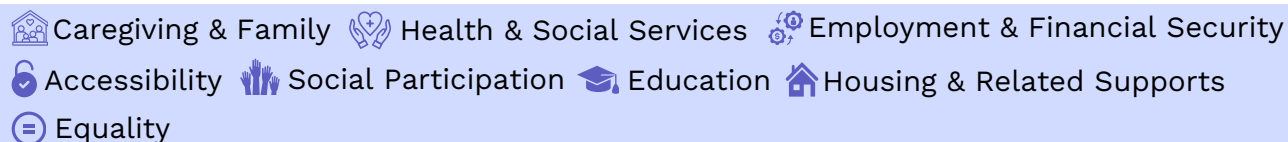
# PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE TAX SYSTEM

 Equality 
  Caregiving & Family 
  Health & Social Services 
  Social Participation  
 Employment & Financial Security

Outlined below are the tax-related programs provided by the Government of New Brunswick that are available to individuals with disabilities and their families. More information about New Brunswick 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 \$9,309 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>Amount for infirm dependents age 18 and older</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This amount (up to \$5,431 for each dependent) can be claimed for dependents over the age of 17 years with an impairment in physical or mental functions.</li> <li>The dependent must have a net income under \$13,136.</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>Caregiver amount</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals caring for a dependent over the age of 17 years with a net income under \$23,976 and with an impairment in physical or mental functions can claim this amount (up to \$5,430 for each dependent).</li> <li>This amount can also be claimed for an eligible parent or grandparent.</li> </ul>

# SERVICES AND SUPPORTS



## Services for Children

The primary program for children with disabilities in New Brunswick is the Family Supports for Children with Disabilities Program (FSCD). This program provides financial support to help cover the costs associated with a child's disability. Children under the age of 19 years with a disability and a written letter of support or assessment from a professional that indicates the nature of their disability are eligible to access this program. Examples of support provided by this program include the following:

- Medical equipment
- Medical transportation
- Incontinence supplies
- Day-care or after-school program aid
- Relief care
- Home support services
- Family support workers for social inclusion activities and skill-building
- Support for therapeutic-based recreation activities
- A health card (for families without health insurance)

This program can be accessed by families directly through a self-referral or through a third-party referral from a professional. The application process involves a screening call and a home visit to complete a Determination of Needs Assessment, which determines whether a family is eligible for the program. Eligible families will work with a social worker to create a Family Support Plan, which outlines the needs of the child and family, and the services required to meet those needs. Families enrolled in this program are expected to work with a social workers, and, families that are able, are expected to contribute financially towards services utilized by their child. Children and families that are eligible for this program are able to choose between two options for case management:

- Social worker managed, where an FSCD worker provides ongoing support and service coordination.
- Family managed, where the family will coordinate and manage services. Funds are provided to families directly to manage and direct services.

Additionally, young children under the age of five years of age with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder can access the Preschool Autism Program before they enter school. Services are provided by VIVA Therapeutic Services, which has a contract with the Department of EECD and delivers services across all seven school districts in the province. Two types of intervention are delivered through this program: comprehensive Intervention (higher intensity intervention targeting multiple developmental/behaviour goals and ongoing intervention),

and consultative intervention (lower intensity intervention that focuses on addressing a specific challenge of the child/family). Intervention received is based on a personalized learning plan developed in collaboration with families

## Services for Adults

The primary program for adults (19 to 64 years of age) with disabilities in New Brunswick is the Disability Support Program, which provides personalized and flexible supports. The types of supports provided by this program include the following:

- Home Support Worker
- Respite
- Personal supports and assistance within and outside the home
- Supports for community involvement and participation
- Personal living skills training
- Transportation supports that are disability specific
- Technical supports and assistive devices not covered under other programs
- Medical services or prescription drugs
- Residential facility services

Part of the application process for this program is a financial assessment, which determines how much program recipients will contribute towards the cost of supports based on an individual's income level. Recipients of this program are able to self-manage their services or request the supports of a social worker to coordinate the supports they need. In both cases, program recipients are required to meet with department staff to discuss their unmet needs and create a case plan to address these needs.

## Services for Children and Adults

Residents of New Brunswick with vision loss that create challenges in daily activities can receive support from the Vision Loss Rehabilitation program. Vision Loss Rehabilitation specialists can help program recipients create a personalized rehabilitation plan, coordinate services and support, provide information, resources, and emotional support, and provide mobility and technology training. Individuals can self-refer for this program or receive a referral from an educator, employer, or a health professional.

## Employment

Individuals receiving support from the Disability Support program are able to access the Employment and Support Services Program (ESSP), which provides services to help people with disabilities find and maintain employment or volunteer opportunities, develop skills that help promote independence, and make connections in their community through social and recreation-related opportunities. This program is delivered by 38 different non-profit agencies that are funded by the Department of Social Development.

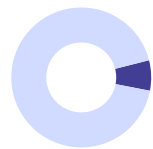
Additionally, Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) provides supports to New Brunswickers receiving case management services who have a



## MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

### Barriers to Program Access in New Brunswick

In New Brunswick, 23 parents and caregivers completed our online survey and seven parents and caregivers participated in an in-depth, follow-up interview. During the survey, we asked participants about their level of familiarity with nine of the programs discussed in this report.



7%

*of the time, survey participants were currently accessing or had previously accessed disability-related programs in New Brunswick*

Considering such a low number of participants were accessing programs, we looked deeper into survey and interview data to determine underlying reasons. We found two main barriers to access and highlight these below.



#### Lack of Information

Fifty-eight percent of participants did not know about the existence of the various disability programs we asked about in our survey. Many participants shared that they did not know where to go to find information about programs and many shared that they relied on word of mouth from other parents and caregivers to learn about programs.



#### Waitlists and Delays

Many participants discussed that a shortage in physicians resulted in long waitlists to receive a diagnosis and help filling out forms to access programs. The waitlists often continued when applying for programs, with many sharing that they did not hear back for an extended period of time after submitting an application or had to send supplemental information to government staff multiple times.

*“First it's hard to find programs and then when you do it's hard to find the right person, you get the paperwork and it's the wrong one. Takes ages to hear back and when you do, they say there is nothing in our province available.”*

*“Anytime you go through government, you wait weeks and weeks and weeks and you gotta call them back and it's, you know, telephone tag and, ‘Oh, we didn't get this form, so you gotta send this back.’ It seems like the government is just letting the paperwork, like, fall under the desk.”*

permanent physical, intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, or sensory disability to participate in training and/or employment opportunities. Specifically, this

program works collaboratively with persons with disabilities to determine their needs and abilities with respect to developing the skills they need to enter the labour force, and provides services in line with these needs and abilities. To be eligible for this program, an individual must:

- Have an active Employment Action Plan.
- Be a resident of New Brunswick or a First Nation Community in New Brunswick.
- Be a high school graduate; or a high school student during part time or summer employment; or be at least 18 years of age; or be enrolled into an adult learning program.
- Have a documented permanent physical, intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, or sensory disability.

Individuals with disabilities can also receive support from [avenueNB Cooperative](#), a non-profit organization that manages the delivery of employment services for persons with a disability in New Brunswick through third-party specialized organizations. This organization receives long-term funding from the Government of New Brunswick through the Canada-New Brunswick Workforce Development Agreement. At the time of publication, there are 22 member agencies within the cooperative that provide the training, tools, support, and opportunities to ensure persons with disabilities are able to succeed in the New Brunswick labour market.

## Education

[Student Services](#), which is part of the Department of EECD, is responsible for the development, implementation, and coordination of special education programming. They provide consultative services to schools, school districts, other government departments, and non-government agencies that provide services to schools. Personnel from Student Services work with School District personnel to ensure that students are provided with support services for learning, which include speech and language therapy, social work, and psychology and health supports, among others.

Students under the age of 21 years with low incidence sensory impairments (including those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind, or visually impaired) can access educational services, programs, and opportunities through the [Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority \(APSEA\)](#).

## Housing and Transportation

Individuals receiving support from the Disability Support program are also able to access other programs provided by the Department of Social Development. [Community Residences](#) provides 24-hour care and supervision to individuals who require assistance with daily living tasks and personal care. There are 88 privately owned Community Residences across the province that are required to follow the standards and procedures determined by the Department of Social Development.



## MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

### Parent Perspectives: Challenges Accessing Support in Schools

Most of our interview participants discussed difficulties accessing adequate support for their children in the K-12 school system in New Brunswick. Some mentioned that they were not able to access an educational assistant at their child's school, while others discussed the challenges associated with having an educational assistant that is shared between many students, such as the lack of needed one-on-one support. Some parents also discussed that there was a lack of awareness of disability and the needs of students with disabilities within schools. Many suggested that more resources were needed to support their children in school.

“Since my daughter has autism, she's high functioning, she goes to school. They, they have an [educational assistant] EA in the classroom, but they might have one or two EA's and six or seven or eight students and the ones that are, that, that have behaviour problems, um, get more attention than the quiet ones. And my daughter needs a lot of one-on-one help and she can't get it because it's a shared EA. And because of that, she's delayed in school by, like, she's in grade five, but really she would be more, or sorry, she's in grade six. She'd be more like a grade four level. She's not getting the one-on-one that she really, really needs.”

Renters with disabilities can receive support through the [Portable Rent Supplement Program](#), which provides a subsidy to renters with disabilities to help with their rent payments each month.

Individuals who need to make accessibility modifications to their homes for a person with a disability can access funding through the [Housing Assistance for Persons with Disabilities](#) program. Forgivable loans of varying amounts are available depending on the type of modification needed. For example, landlords and homeowners making accessible modifications to their household are able to receive a forgivable loan up to \$10,000, whereas a maximum forgivable loan of \$24,000 is available to those looking to build a secondary or garden suite for a person with a disability.

Individuals with physical disabilities that need to modify their vehicle to add accessibility features can access financial assistance through the [Vehicle Retrofit Program](#). This program can cover up to 80 percent of the cost of eligible accessibility features, up to a maximum of \$8,000. Examples of costs that can be covered through this program include wheelchair or scooter lifts and ramps, changes to the roof, floor, and doors, special-needs seating, hand controls, and wheelchair tie-downs and passenger-restraint systems. Items not included in this list may also be considered for coverage on a case-by-case basis.

## 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:

- Health Services Programs. Provides support to Social Development clients that need help paying for health services or medical supplies. Includes support for mobility aids through the Mobility and Adaptive Equipment Program, and hearing aids through the Health Aid Program, among other types of support.
- Special Care Homes. Provides homes with 24-hour support services (including support with personal care, medications, housekeeping, and social/recreational programming) for clients of the Disability Support Program and seniors in the Long Term Care program.
- New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program. Provides coverage for prescription drugs to eligible individuals. Social Development clients are one group of individuals eligible for coverage under this program.
- Disabled Parking Permit. Individuals with a disability or a condition that impedes their ability to walk more than 50 metres can apply for a parking permit to allow them to park in designated parking stalls. Temporary permits, valid for up to five years, and permanent permits, renewable after five years, are available. A healthcare professional is required to fill out a portion of the application form for this program.



## Support for Individuals and Families

Parents and professionals can access courses and resources through the Autism Learning Partnership, a branch of the Department of EECD. This branch delivers training that promotes a common understanding of autism and skill development to help learners with autism reach their full potential. Additionally, there are many non-profits, charities, and other organizations that advocate for and provide support to New Brunswickers with disabilities and their families. A selection of these organizations include the following:

- The Canadian Red Cross (specifically, Health Equipment Loan Program (HELP))
- Easter Seals New Brunswick
- Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick
- Ability New Brunswick
- Canadian Deafblind Association-New Brunswick Inc.
- Inclusion NB
- New Brunswick Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
- New Brunswick Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
- Urban/Rural Rides