



Disability Policy  
Research Program



# 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

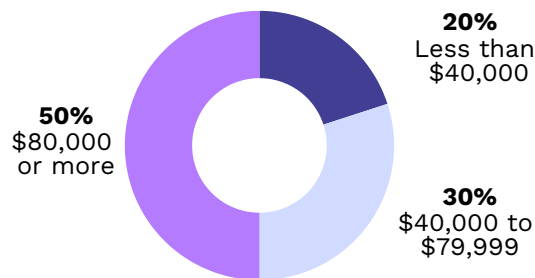
Males: 8%  
Females: 91%  
Non-binary: 1%

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

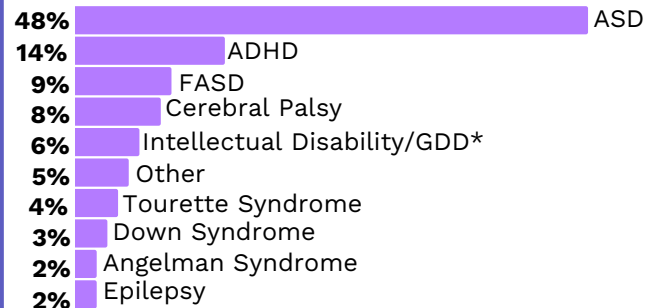
Participants

Youth

## Household Income



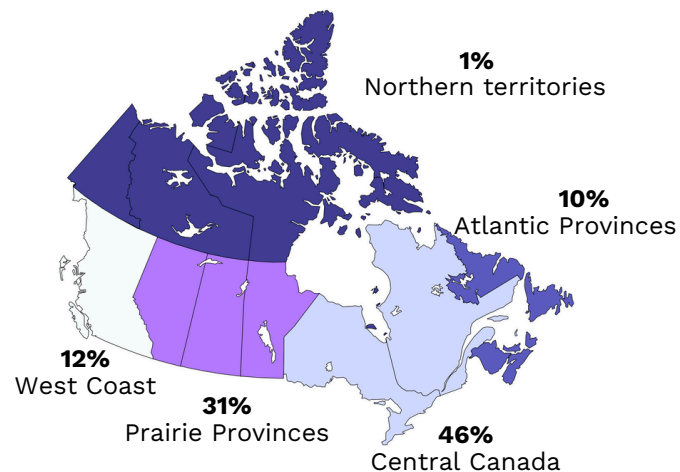
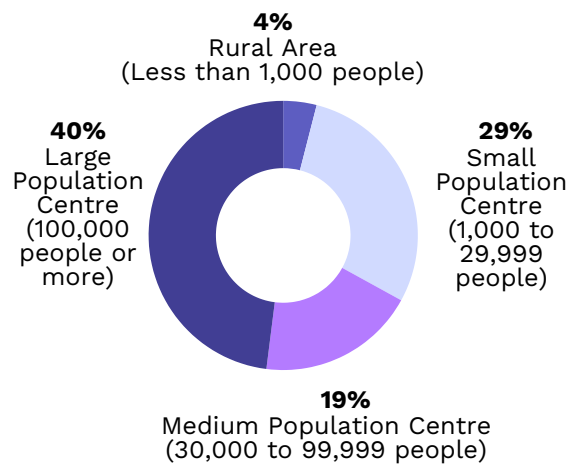
## Primary Diagnosis



**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**

- Kathleen O’Grady, QUOI Media and Concordia University
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- Logan Wong, IDEAA Perspectives Training & Consulting
- Philip Ney, Inclusion Alberta
- Nilima Sonpal-Valias, Alberta Council of Disability Services
- Shino Nakane and team, Autism Society Alberta
- Erika Cedillo, Inclusion BC
- Michelle Hewitt, Disability Without Poverty
- Michael Prince, University of Victoria
- Tim Stainton, University of British Columbia
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- Ken Pike, Inclusion New Brunswick
- Haley Flaro, Ability New Brunswick
- Ntibabaza Nigene and Colleagues, Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society
- Denise McKee, NWT Disabilities Council
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- 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

# NOVA SCOTIA

## PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

Income Support 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Income Assistance Disability Supplement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Support and Income Assistance</li> </ul>
Laws and Policies 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessibility Act</li> <li>Inclusive Education Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Adult Protection Act</li> <li>Education Act</li> <li>Human Rights Act</li> </ul>
Advocacy, Awareness and Action Plans 	
<b>Disability-Specific</b>	<b>Blended</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accessibility Directorate</li> <li>Accessibility Advisory Board</li> <li>Access Awareness Week</li> <li>Access includes everyone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission</li> <li>Nova Scotia Ombudsman</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>



### Disability-Specific

- Disability Support Program – Includes:
  - Home for Special Care
  - Flex Program
  - Independent Living Support (ILS)
  - Alternative Family Support (AFS)
  - Direct Family Support Program for Children and Enhanced Family Support for Children
  - Adult Service Centres
  - Wheelchair Recycling Program
  - Approved Community-based Homes
- Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA)
- Tuition Support Program (TSP)
- Nova Scotia Grant for Services and Equipment
- Nova Scotia Student Loan Forgiveness Program
- Workplace Support Program
- Disabled Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program
- Access-A-Home Program
- HST Rebate on a computer for a person with disabilities







### Blended

- Continuing Care
- SchoolsPlus
- Pharmacare Benefits
- Family Pharmacare
- Accessible Parking Identification Permits

## ACRONYMS

AFS	Alternative Family Support
APSEA	Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
HST	Harmonized Sales Tax
ILS	Independent Living Support
TSP	Tuition Support Program

# INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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






The Employment Support and Income Assistance program is available to residents of Nova Scotia 19 years of age or older (or between 16 and 18 years in certain situations) that need financial support to cover their basic needs. There are three main types of support provided under this program. The first is Basic Needs Assistance, which provides financial assistance to cover basic needs such as clothing, shelter, fuel, utilities, and personal items. The amount of financial support an individual receives is based on their family size and living situation (whether an individual rents, owns, or boards). For example, single individuals with no dependent children that rent or own their home receive \$686 per month, whereas couples with a dependent child that rent or own their home receive \$1,393 per month. An enhanced rate is available for individuals that have a disability or chronic conditions, are age 16 to 18 years (inclusive) or over the ages of 54 years, or are fleeing an abusive situation.

The second type of support is Special Needs Assistance, which provides financial support for things that support an individual's health, safety, and work or training. The amount received is based on each individual's personal situation. Examples of special needs that can be covered include the following: ambulance costs, child care, furniture, hearing aids, guide or service dogs, medical equipment, prescription drug coverage, and respite, among many others.

The third type of support provided is Employment Support Services, which provides support to allow individuals to become more self-sufficient (as defined by each individual accessing the program). Recipients of this program meet with a caseworker to determine goals and create an employment action plan, which outlines the types of supports they will access under the program. Examples of supports provided by this program include support with education, job- and training-related costs, finding and maintaining employment, and employment-related expenses (which can include assistive equipment and technology).

In November 2023, the Government of Nova Scotia announced a new Income Assistance Disability Supplement, which provides an additional \$300 per month to people on income assistance who are not currently accessing the Disability Support Program (see more information below) and who cannot work. The rollout of this program began in April 2024.

# LAWS AND POLICIES

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

The Accessibility Act was passed in 2017 and has the primary goal of making Nova Scotia inclusive and barrier-free by 2030. As a result of the passing of this Act, the Government of Nova Scotia is required to develop accessibility plans to help meet the goals set out in the Act. To date, the government has published two, three-year accessibility plans. The Government of Nova Scotia is also responsible for making accessibility standards in the following six areas:

- Built environment, which focuses on making buildings and outdoor spaces accessible.
- Education, which aims to make all levels of the education system accessible to all students.
- Employment, which aims ensure persons with disabilities are supported when looking for work and in the workplace.
- Goods and services, which aims to ensure persons with disabilities have equitable access to goods and services.
- Information and communication, which aims to ensure all forms of public information and communication are accessible.
- Transportation, which focuses on providing access to accessible transportation options.



## Did you know?






The Government of Nova Scotia recently announced that it will not be barrier-free by 2030, as outlined in the Accessibility Act. All six standards and associated enforcement are set to be completed by 2030 but the goal of being barrier-free will not be met. Notably, the first two standards were supposed to be enacted in 2021, with the rest to follow in 2023 and 2026. Estimates now suggest that the built environment standards will be enacted in 2024, with other standards to follow in 2025 and 2029.

With respect to education, the Government of Nova Scotia published an Inclusive Education Policy (effective September 2020) that applies to all K-12 students and employees of the Nova Scotia public education system. The Policy provides principles, directives, and roles and responsibilities relating to inclusive education in Nova Scotia. Roles and responsibilities are specified in this Policy for students, parents and guardians, employees of the public education system, teachers, school administrators, teaching support teams, regional centres for education, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

- The Adult Protection Act deals with protecting adults over the age of 16 from significant risk of self-neglect and/or abuse when they are unable to protect themselves from that risk.
- Education Act: Outlines the requirement for regional centres for education to “develop and implement educational programs for students with special needs within regular instructional settings with their peers,” for teachers to “participate in individual-program planning and implement individual program plans, as required, for students with special needs,” and for parents to have the “opportunity to participate in the development of an individualized program for the child.”
- The Nova Scotia Human Rights Act protects all individuals in Nova Scotia from discrimination based on personal characteristics, including but not limited to physical and mental disability.

## ADVOCACY, AWARENESS, AND ACTION PLANS

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

The Accessibility Act (see above) resulted in the creation of two main bodies that support the implementation of the Act. The Accessibility Directorate is responsible for administering and working towards the goals outlined in the Accessibility Act and advancing disability issues with government, through collaborations with persons with disabilities, municipalities, businesses, post-secondary institutions, and other entities. Responsibilities of the Directorate include the following:

- Providing policy, programming, communication, and administrative support on all aspects of the Act.
- Enhancing awareness of the Act through public education initiatives.
- Finding areas of improvement within current policies and practices to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Gaining an understanding of the concerns of the disability community and recommending government action as needed.

Further, the Act also established the Accessibility Advisory Board, which makes recommendations and provides advice to the Minister of Justice about ways to improve accessibility in the province. The board has up to 12 members and has the following responsibilities:

- Developing standards in the six areas outlined above (with the support of sub-committees).
- Evaluating the alignment of existing measures, policies or practices with the Act.
- Setting long-term goals related to accessibility.



Nova Scotia recognizes Access Awareness Week annually to bring attention to the importance of removing barriers for people with disabilities through public awareness, community partnerships, educational events, and dialogues. Additionally, the Government of Nova Scotia launched a public awareness campaign, Access includes everyone, to demonstrate how accessibility fosters inclusion for Nova Scotians with disabilities. The campaign aims to increase awareness regarding the fact that accessibility is a human right and about the barriers that make it difficult for Nova Scotians with disabilities to participate in everyday life.



## Did you know?

Disability Employment Awareness month is recognized annually in October by the city of Halifax. Initiatives scheduled throughout this month aim to bring awareness to the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities and encourages the creation of more inclusive and accessible workplaces.

Other offices in Nova Scotia related to persons with disabilities include the following:






- The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission is an independent government agency that administers the Human Rights Act. The mandate of the Commission is to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia. Under this mandate, the central responsibilities of the Commission are to resolve allegations of discrimination at the individual and systemic level, and to eliminate barriers and prevent discrimination through education, training, public engagement, and policy development.
- Nova Scotia Ombudsman is an independent Officer of the Legislature that investigates complaints involving provincial and municipal governing bodies.



## Did you know?

In March 2024, legislation was tabled to establish an Office for Children and Youth, which will provide an official advocate and voice for children and youth throughout Nova Scotia.

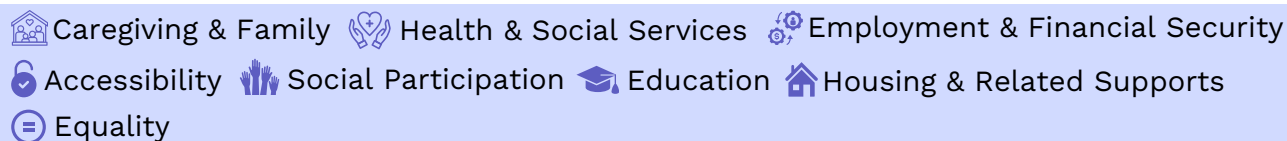
# PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE TAX SYSTEM

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

Outlined below are the tax-related programs provided by the Government of Nova Scotia that are available to individuals with disabilities and their families. More information about Nova Scotia 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 \$7,341 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 \$2,798 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 \$8,481.</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 \$18,575 and with an impairment in physical or mental functions can claim this amount (up to \$4,898 for each dependent).</li> <li>This amount can also be claimed for an eligible parent or grandparent.</li> </ul>

# SERVICES AND SUPPORTS



## Programs for Children and Adults

The main program supporting children, youth, and adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness, and physical disabilities is the Disability Support Program. This program provides a range of community-based, residential, and vocational/day programs based on the needs and goals of each individual in the program. Care coordinators work with recipients of the program and support them in choosing programs that best suit their needs. Supports provided under this program include the following:

- Home for Special Care. Includes a continuum of residential supports for persons with disabilities with varying support needs. Options include Small Option Homes, Group Homes, Residential Care Facilities, Adult Residential Centres, and Regional Rehabilitation Centres.
- Flex Program. Provides funding to individuals to help them purchase supports that can promote their independence, self-reliance, and social inclusion.
- Independent Living Support (ILS). Provides funding for support services from a Service Provider for individuals that require support to live on their own.
- Alternative Family Support (AFS). Provides support to individuals with disabilities in an approved, private family home.
- Direct Family Support Program for Children and Enhanced Family Support for Children. Provides financial support for families to help them support their child at home and to purchase respite services.
- Adult Service Centres. Provides day programming for youth and adults with a range of disabilities in their communities. Types of day programs that may be available include, but are not limited to, the following: skills development and training, employment programs, and social and recreational activities.
- Wheelchair Recycling Program. Provides wheelchairs to children and adults with a net family income that falls within program guidelines. This program is funded by the Department of Community Services and administered by the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia (housed within Easter Seals Nova Scotia).
- Approved Community-based Homes. Residences that offer programs designed to meet the support needs of people with disabilities.

## Education

While The Department of Education and Early Childhood provides guidelines, oversight, monitoring, and funding for special education initiatives and programming throughout the province, the bulk of service delivery and student support is coordinated by regional centres of education and within individual public schools.



## MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

### Nova Scotia Remedy Report

Disability programs and services in Nova Scotia are experiencing a time of significant change resulting from a finding of systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia detailed in the 2023 [Remedy Report](#). This report stemmed from a complaint filed in 2014 against the Province of Nova Scotia for the “discriminatory failure to provide persons with disabilities the supports and services they need to live in the community.” On October 6, 2021, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal agreed with the allegations of discrimination outlined in the complaint. In their decision, the Court of Appeal found that “there is systemic discrimination in Nova Scotia against persons with disabilities in the provision of social assistance.”

As a result of this, an independent review process was initiated by the Disability Rights Coalition and the Department of Community Services through the Disability Support Program, with the goal of developing and recommending a Remedy that will end discrimination and change the way that supports are provided in Nova Scotia. The Remedy Report contains six key directions, each containing specific recommendations, to address the discrimination highlighted in the complaint. Below, we list the key directions outlined in this report.



**A new system of Individual Planning and Support Coordination to drive more person directed and local community-based supports and services.**



**Closing Institutions**



**Building a broader system of community-based supports and services – a home and life in the local community.**



**Province wide multidisciplinary support program with regional hubs including other clinical supports to support local options.**



**Individualized Funding as the basis of the transformed system with “backbone” support functions.**



**Strengthening whole Disability System capacity to enable transformation to a human rights approach.**

At the time of publication, the Government of Nova Scotia is in the early stages of implementation of recommendations contained in the report.

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). Additionally, students with a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or a learning disability that have secured a placement in a special education private school are able to receive funding to partially cover the cost of their tuition through the Tuition Support Program (TSP).

Post-secondary students with disabilities may be able to access the Nova Scotia Grant for Services and Equipment, a non-repayable grant for services or equipment an individual needs to support their education. Examples of services and equipment that grant funding can help cover include tutors, note-takers, voice dictation software, and technical aids. Additionally, post-secondary students that require more time to complete their program of study may be able to have their student loans forgiven through the Nova Scotia Student Loan Forgiveness Program. Through this program, students with disabilities that take a reduced course load because of their disability do not have to incur larger student debt than their peers without disabilities.

## Employment

The Workplace Support Program provides support for persons with disabilities to help them participate in the labor force. This program is funded by the Government of Nova Scotia and administered by TEAM Work Cooperative. This program can provide funding for workplace attendants or technical aids and devices that support individuals with disabilities in their workplace.

## Housing

Individuals with disabilities are also able to access support from the Government of Nova Scotia to help them make modifications to their home. The Disabled Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program provides financial assistance to landlords and homeowners to help make their homes more accessible. Landlords are able to receive a maximum loan of \$24,000 (depending on rental type) that are completely forgivable if the accessibility modifications are made for low-income tenants. Homeowners can receive a maximum, forgivable loan of \$16,000. Additionally, wheelchair users can receive a non-repayable grant of up to \$7,000 to make the home they occupy wheelchair accessible through the Access-A-Home Program.

## Technology

Finally, individuals with disabilities are able to access an HST Rebate on a computer for a person with disabilities. A rebate of up to \$375 is available to individuals that need to purchase or modify a computer for use by a person with physical, vision, or hearing impairments or mental challenges. The rebate is equal to the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) paid on the computer.



## MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

### Parent Experiences: Program Rejection

In Nova Scotia, 17 parents and caregivers completed our online survey and two parents and caregivers participated in an in-depth, follow-up interview. During both phases of the study, we asked participants about their experiences with rejection from disability programs.

**75%** of survey participants reported that they experienced rejection from disability programs in Nova Scotia

Similarly to participants in Saskatchewan, the most common reason shared by participants for program application rejection was that their income level prevented them from accessing programs. Often, participants reported that income cut-offs for various programs failed to adequately take into account the true cost of expenses associated with their child's disability. Many participants shared that they struggled to afford the cost of their child's disability-related expenses but did not qualify for government support at their current income level.

*"It's based on income. All those therapies costs what they cost and I guess I understand their thinking that you might, if you make more, you, you have more of a cushion before, you know, you're starving and homeless to provide for your child, but I wish it wasn't so tied to income, I wish there was a little leeway because I don't qualify for some of the things that if I made less money, I would qualify for.*

*-Parent Research Participant*

### 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:

- Continuing Care. Provides support to individuals that need care outside of a hospital setting in their homes or in their community on a short-term or long-term basis. Many different supports are provided through this program, two of which provide support specifically to individuals with disabilities and their families:
  - Caregiver Benefit, which provides financial support (\$400 to month) to individuals caring for an adult over the age of 18 years assessed as having a high level of impairment or disability that requires significant care over time and as having an income under a certain level.

- Self-Managed Care, which provides funding to individuals with physical disabilities for a care provider, who can provide support with activities of daily living.
- SchoolsPlus. A collaborative interagency approach supporting the whole child and their family with the school as the center of service delivery. The services provided at each SchoolsPlus site respect and address the unique needs of the community. All children and youth can receive support through this program, particularly those with additional needs.
- Pharmacare Benefits. Provides prescription drug coverage to certain groups of individuals, including Disability Support Program clients.
- Family Pharmacare. Provides support with the cost of prescription drugs for families who have no drug coverage or who have high prescription drug costs that become a financial burden.
- Accessible Parking Identification Permits. License plates or Identification Permits are available for vehicles regularly used for the transportation of persons with disabilities. To be eligible, applicants must have a medical practitioner certify that they have limited mobility as a result of permanent severe physical disability caused by paralysis, lower limb amputation, heart or lung disease or another debilitating impairment.



## Support for Individuals and Families

Family Resource Centres throughout the province provide community-based programs and services that support the health and well-being of children and youth and their families. Specifically, these centres offer programs in parent education and learning, family support, child and youth development, and community linkages.

Additionally, there are many non-profits, charities, and other organizations that advocate for and provide support to individuals living in Nova Scotia with disabilities and their families. A selection of these organizations include the following:

- Easter Seals Nova Scotia
- Inclusion NS
- Diverse Abilities NS
- Independent Living Nova Scotia
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians