



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

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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.

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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

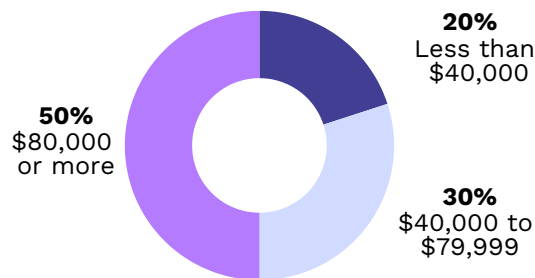
Males: 8%
Females: 91%
Non-binary: 1%

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

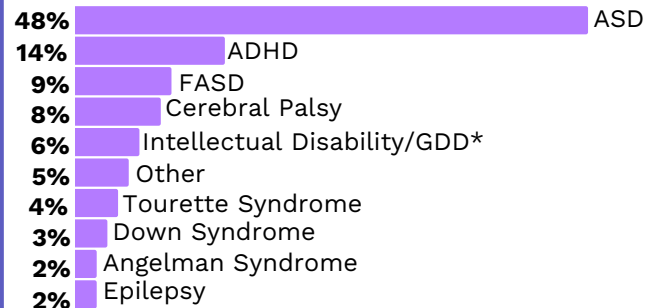
Participants

Youth

Household Income



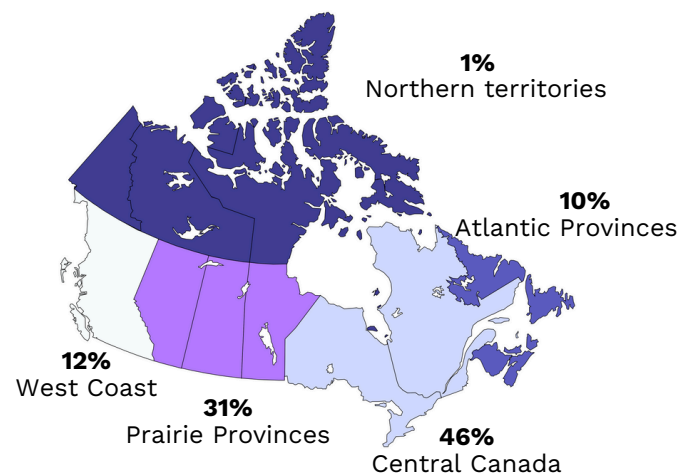
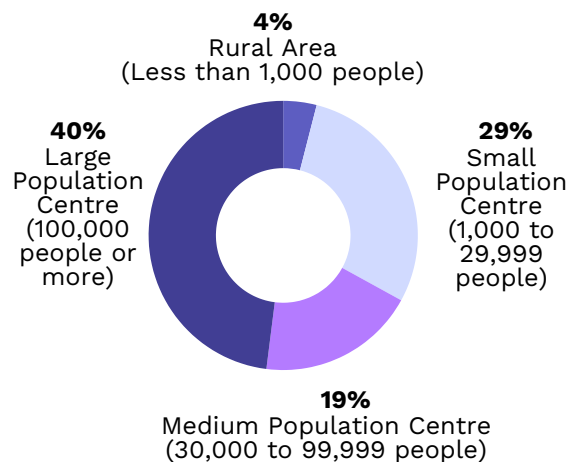
Primary Diagnosis



40% Have more than one diagnosis

*GDD = Global Developmental Delay

Location



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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
- Hajer Chalghoumi, Kids Brain Health Network
- 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
- Brenda Lenahan, BC Complex Kids Society
- Melissa Graham, Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities
- Leanne Fenez, Abilities Manitoba
- Ken Pike, Inclusion New Brunswick
- Haley Flaro, Ability New Brunswick
- Ntibabaza Nigene and Colleagues, Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society
- Denise McKee, NWT Disabilities Council
- Guillaume Parent, Finautonome
- 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

QUEBEC

PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

Income Support 	
Disability-Specific	Blended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Solidarity Program (SSP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic Income Program (BIP)
Laws and Policies 	
Disability-Specific	Blended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Act Act to recognize and support caregivers Act respecting health services and social services Building Act Act to combat maltreatment of seniors and other persons of full age in vulnerable situations Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms
Advocacy, Awareness and Action Plans 	
Disability-Specific	Blended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office des personnes handicapées du Québec Semaine québécoise des personnes handicapées 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecteur du citoyen Human Rights Tribunal of Quebec Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse Vérificateur général du Québec
Programs Provided by the Tax System 	
Disability-Specific	Blended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount for a Severe and Prolonged Impairment in Mental or Physical Functions Disability Supports Deduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenses for Medical Services Not Available in Your Area Amount for Medical Expenses Refundable Tax Credit for Medical Expenses

Programs Provided by the Tax System



Disability-Specific

- Tax rebates for persons with disabilities

Blended

- Tax Credit for Childcare Expenses
- Work Premium Tax Credits
- Tax credit for an on-the-job training period

Services and Supports for Activities of Daily Living



Disability-Specific

- Programs provided through integrated health and social services centres (CISSS) and integrated university health and social services centres (CIUSSS):
 - Assistive devices programs
 - Services for persons with a physical or intellectual disability or an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
 - Family Support Program
 - Daily living and domestic assistance program
 - Travel Expense Program
 - Adapted Tricycles and Bicycles Program
 - Agir tôt program
- Supplement for Handicapped Children
- Supplement for Handicapped Children Requiring Exceptional Care
- Programs provided by Service externe de main d'oeuvre (SEMO)
- Contrat d'intégration au travail
- Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) Disability Component
- Allowance for Special Needs Program – Adult
- Allowance for Special Needs Program – Youth
- Programme ministériel des aides techniques à la communication
- Visual Devices Program
- Hearing Devices Program

Blended

- Technical Walking Aid Program
- Mobility scooter program
- Long-Term Care Centre
- Accessible Parking Permit

Services and Supports for Activities of Daily Living



Disability-Specific

Blended

- Devices that compensate for a physical deficiency program
- Programme d'adaptation de véhicule pour les personnes handicapées (PAV)
- Residential Adaptation Assistance Program (RAAP)

ACRONYMS

AQLPH	Association québécoise pour le loisir des personnes handicapées
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BIP	Basic Income Program
CHSLD	Long-term care centre
CISSS	Integrated health and social services centres
CIUSSS	Integrated university health and social services centres
CPP	Canada Pension Plan
PAV	Programme d'adaptation de véhicule pour les personnes handicapées
PMATCOM	Programme ministériel des aides techniques à la communication
QPP	Quebec Pension Plan
RAAP	Residential Adaptation Assistance Program
SEMO	Service externe de main d'oeuvre
SSP	Social Solidarity Program

INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS





 Employment & Financial Security  Equality  Social Participation

The Social Solidarity Program (SSP) provides financial support to individuals with a severely limited capacity for employment, meaning that these individuals encounter barriers, either personal or in their environment, that make it impossible for them to work full time and support themselves financially. The goal of this program is to provide financial assistance and promote integration and social participation. Access to this program is dependent on an evaluation by the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity. The amount of financial

support received depends on family composition, type of accommodation, and income or assets. A single adult currently receives a maximum of \$1,205 per month through this program.

The Basic Income Program (BIP) is for people who have participated in the SSP on a long-term basis and have a persistent, severely limited capacity for employment. This program came into effect on January 1, 2023. Individuals who have been receiving benefits under SSP and had severely limited capacity for employment for at least 66 months over the previous 72 months are automatically admitted into this program. Through this program, individuals can receive a basic benefit of \$1,211 per month, which is indexed each year. Single individuals can receive an additional adjustment of \$337 per month, individuals with a dependent child under the age of 18 years can receive an additional adjustment of \$20 per month (in addition to the \$337 per month for an individual), and individuals with a dependent child over the age of 17 years attending a postsecondary institution can receive an additional adjustment of \$345 per month. These adjustment amounts are also indexed each year. The amount of the basic benefit is dependent on an individual's income for the year. Program recipients can earn up to \$14,532 per year without decreasing the basic benefit amount. Every dollar that an individual earns over \$14,532 will decrease their annual benefit by \$0.55.

LAWS AND POLICIES

 Equality  Legal Capacity & Justice  Accessibility  Social Participation
 Health & Social Services  Caregiving & Family  Education






The Act to secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights with a view to achieving social, school and workplace integration is the provincial law governing the rights of persons with disabilities and the obligations for governments and municipalities. The Act provides a series of measures to “secure handicapped persons in the exercise of their rights” and to improve the social participation of people with disabilities, in particular by asking Government of Quebec departments and agencies to produce action plans and annual reports about measures for people with disabilities. The Act also created the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (see more information below).

Other laws in Quebec that include information relevant to persons with disabilities include the following:

- Education Act, which mentions that all students have a right to education. In the case of students with disabilities, this right extends to age 21 years (compared to 16 years for those without disabilities).
- Act to recognize and support caregivers, which serves to recognize family caregivers and provide them with support through a national policy for caregivers.

- Act respecting health services and social services, which states that all individuals, regardless of their condition, have the right to be informed of services to which they are entitled and to receive those services.
- Building Act, which requires the adoption of a construction code containing accessibility standards for new construction of buildings or equipment for public use. Obligations under the construction code do not apply to old buildings or smaller housing infrastructure.
- Act to combat maltreatment of seniors and other persons of full age in vulnerable situations, provides measures to prevent maltreatment of seniors and other persons of full age in vulnerable situations (including those with disabilities).
- Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to equality for persons with disabilities. The Charter is a quasi-constitutional law, meaning that, while the Charter is not part of the Constitution of Canada, all Quebec laws have to respect its content. It also means that the courts give it more importance over other provincial laws (but not over federal law or the Constitution of Canada). The Charter lays out a set of rights for Quebec citizens and prevents discrimination on the bases of many characteristics including disability.

ADVOCACY, AWARENESS, AND ACTION PLANS

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

The Office des personnes handicapées du Québec is a government organization that helps increase the social participation of people with disabilities. The main actions of the Office are as follows:

- Provide information and some services to persons with disabilities and their families.
- Conduct research and evaluation work on social participation of persons with disabilities in Quebec.
- Support and advise the government, ministries and their networks, public and private organizations as well as municipalities.
- Works with relevant organizations to find effective and applicable solutions to make society more inclusive.

Semaine québécoise des personnes handicapées occurs every year from June 1st-7th. The purpose of this week is to highlight the importance of taking action to improve the social participation of people with disabilities, as well as the successes achieved and obstacles still present. This week also includes the DuoEmploi event, where businesses in various sectors provide one week internships to persons with disabilities.

Other entities that are related to persons with disabilities in Quebec include the following:

- The Protecteur du citoyen ensures that the rights of citizens are respected when dealing with Quebec’s public services. Individuals with complaints concerning public services can bring them to this office for investigation. This office can also provide recommendations to improve the quality of public services based on citizen complaints.
- The Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms created the Human Rights Tribunal of Quebec and the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse. The purpose of the Tribunal is to hear cases brought forward by the Commission, who represents citizens who feel their rights as outlined by the Charter have been violated or they have faced discrimination.
- Vérificateur général du Québec has a mission to contribute, through audits and other work, to better management of resources as well as parliamentary control, for the benefit of the citizens of Quebec.

PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE TAX SYSTEM

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

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

Tax Credit

Description and Eligibility

Amount for a Severe and Prolonged Impairment in Mental or Physical Functions

- This non-refundable tax credit reduces income tax payable for adults 18 years of age and older with a severe and prolonged impairment in mental or physical functions. This impairment must be certified by a professional.
- The federal Disability Tax Credit certificate can be used to verify eligibility for this tax credit.
- Adults can claim \$3,815 on their taxes for this amount.

Expenses for Medical Services Not Available in Your Area

- This non-refundable tax credit allows individuals to claim expenses for themselves, their spouse or their dependent to receive medical services not available in their area.
- To claim this credit, individuals must have travel and lodging expenses to obtain medical services in Quebec not available within 200 kilometers of their home or moving expenses to move within 80 kilometres of a health establishment in Quebec located 200 kilometres or more from their former home.

Amount for Medical Expenses

- This non-refundable tax credit can be claimed for individuals that paid for medical expenses that exceeded 3 percent of their net income for themselves, their spouse or their dependent.

Refundable Tax Credit for Medical Expenses

- This refundable tax credit can be claimed for medical expenses if the following conditions are met: resident in Quebec, 18 years of age or older, income was \$3,470 or more, and either the amount for medical expenses or disability supports deduction was claimed.

Tax Credit for Childcare Expenses

- This refundable tax credit can be claimed by parents/caregivers for a dependent child if the following conditions are met: resident in Quebec, child care expenses were incurred to allow parents/caregivers to seek employment, work or study, and the child lived with the claimant.
- This credit also requires the child attending child care to be under the age of 16 years. The age requirement is removed for children with a mental or physical impairment.
- The amount claimed on an individual's income tax return is the product of qualifying child care expenses and a tax credit rate, which is based on family income level.

Work Premium Tax Credits

- A refundable tax credit that can be claimed by individuals 18 years or older with lower income levels in a certain range that is determined based on family situation.
- For example, single adults living alone must have an income between \$2,400 and \$22,794.72 to claim this credit.
- Individuals receiving benefits through SSP, BIP or who are entitled to the amount for a severe and prolonged impairment in mental or physical functions are able to claim an additional amount on their taxes called the Adapted Work Premium.

Disability Supports Deduction

- Allows individuals with a disability to deduct the expenses paid for goods and services that allowed them to carry out employment duties, actively carry on a business, do research for which they received a grant, take a course offered by a designated educational institution, or attend a secondary school.

Tax rebates for persons with disabilities

- QST rebates are available on goods and services specifically for people with disabilities, including vehicles, automatic door openers, certain medical services, health care services, and recreational programs, among others.

Tax credit for an on-the-job training period

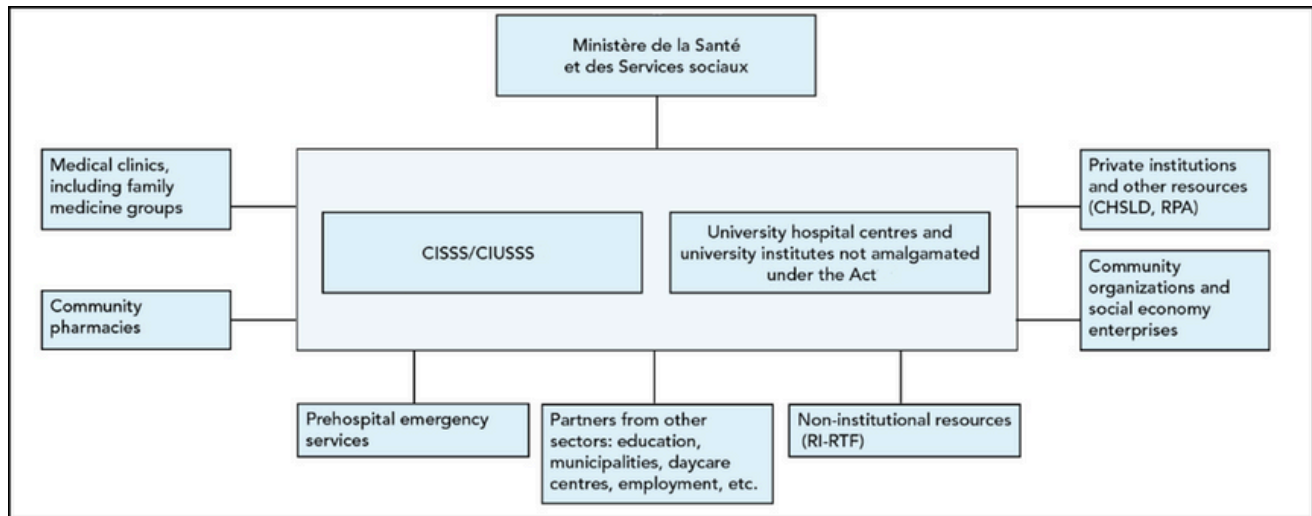
- This refundable tax credit can be claimed by individuals that run a business in Quebec for expenses related to an eligible trainee.
- A supplement is available for trainees with disabilities.

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

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

Services for Children and Adults

In Quebec, most services and supports for persons with disabilities and their families are provided through integrated health and social services centres (CISSS) and integrated university health and social services centres (CIUSSS). These centres act as reference points where people can go to receive services, get information about other services available in their area or be directed to other institutions and organizations that can provide the services and supports that they need. The diagram below provides an overview of the organizational structure of health and social services in Quebec.



Source: <https://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/reseau/systeme-de-sante-et-de-services-sociaux-en-bref/gouvernance-et-organisation-des-services/>

Abbreviations: CHSLD: residential and long-term care centre; RPA: private residence for seniors; RI et RTF: intermediate and family-type resource

Examples of programs that individuals can access after they contact their CISSS or CIUSSS include the following:

- Assistive devices programs. This program allows individuals with a physical or intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder to obtain specialized assistive devices based on their needs. Assistive devices are lent and provided by institutions in the health and social services network.

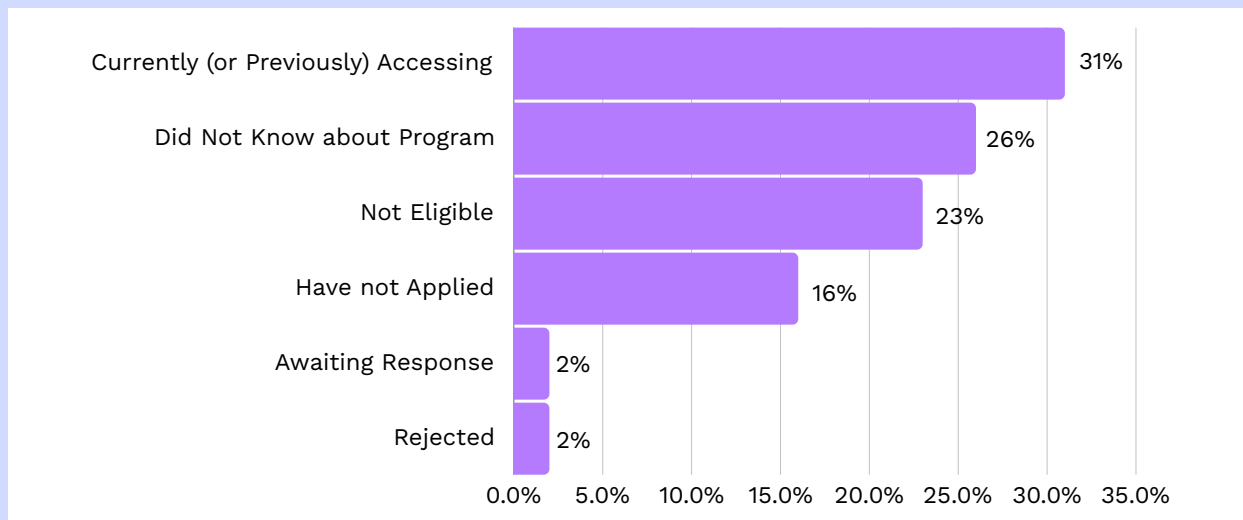


MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

Barrier to Access: Lack of Information about Programs

In Quebec, 55 parents and caregivers completed our online survey and 15 parents and caregivers participated in an in-depth, follow-up interview. During the survey, we asked participants about their level of familiarity with 10 of the disability programs discussed in this report. Below we show their responses aggregated across programs.

Participant's Level of Familiarity with Quebec Disability Programs



Interestingly, just over one quarter of survey participants did not know about the disability programs we asked about in our survey. In line with this, many participants shared in short answer survey questions and during their follow-up interview that they had a lot of difficulty finding out about the programs that they could access. We provide quotes from participants below that demonstrate this challenge.

“Resources are not readily available. While a social worker should be able to guide families, they are not aware of all programs and often do not volunteer information unless asked about specific program you may have heard of.”

“There are few guides about what avenues are available to pursue. It is very much on the shoulders of the caregiver to explore options and application processes. Often the physicians we spoke to were also unfamiliar with the application/approval process.”

“It is extremely difficult to navigate through all of the information. Receiving a new diagnosis is extremely difficult and stressful on a parent and then having to figure out what support, be it financial or services, we are entitled to is near impossible.”

- Services for persons with a physical or intellectual disability or an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This program provides support to individuals with physical or intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder and their families. Three categories of services are available:
 - Support and guidance for carrying out life habits, which includes home support and residential services.
 - Development or recovery of life habits, which includes child development, personal autonomy, and community/leisure integration services.
 - Partner and community support, which provides support to agencies and municipalities to support them in creating facilitators and removing barriers for persons with a disability or autism spectrum disorder.
- Family Support Program. This program includes various measures in the form of direct benefits, particularly to pay for respite services, child care, occasional assistance, and support with parenting through assistance with daily activities. Support is given to families and loved ones who reside with one or more people who have a physical or intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder and take care of them on a daily basis.
- Daily living and domestic assistance program. This program allows people with a disability or autism spectrum disorder to obtain the equipment they need to carry out their daily and domestic activities in their home.
- Travel Expense Program. This program provides financial assistance to people with disabilities to reimburse expenses related to travel to access health and social services.
- Adapted Tricycles and Bicycles Program. This program allows for the allocation of adapted tricycles and bicycles to individuals age 18 years and under with disabilities.
- Agir tôt program. This program is for children aged 0 to 5 years and their families. It aims to identify indicators of developmental difficulties in children so that they can be directed to the right services quickly. The objective of the program is to support children in reaching their full potential and facilitating their start in kindergarten. This program includes screening and early intervention services. In some cases, this program can be accessed directly by families through referrals from a family doctor.

Support for Children and Families

Outside of the CISSS and CIUSSS, the Government of Quebec provides other services for persons with disabilities and their families. Families with children under the age of 18 years can receive the Supplement for Handicapped Children, which provides \$229 per month to families with a child with an impairment in mental functions or a disability that significantly limits them in the accomplishment of life habits for a period expected to last for at least one year. An additional financial benefit, the Supplement for Handicapped Children Requiring Exceptional Care, is available for families with a child under the age of 18 years with severe and multiple disabilities or that require complex medical care. A monthly payment of either \$1,158 or \$770 is available through this program based on the severity of the child's condition and their age. Eligibility for the both of these programs is determined by Retraite Quebec's team of physicians and health professionals.



MEASURING UP: DISABILITY POLICY IN ACTION

Program Spotlight: Quebec Supplement for Handicapped Children

The Quebec Supplement for Handicapped Children was one of the most used and most discussed programs that we asked about in our survey and follow-up interviews.

71%

of survey participants reported that are currently accessing or previously accessed the Quebec Supplement for Handicapped Children.

When asked about their experiences applying for and accessing this program, many parents and caregivers discussed that they found it challenging to complete the application. Many noted that it was lengthy and required coordination of several visits to healthcare professionals and educators (both of which are required to fill out a portion of the application form). Waitlists to see medical professionals to help fill out the form lengthened the application time and some participants shared that professionals were not always familiar with how to fill out the application form. Many recommended that the process be simplified and streamlined so it is easier for families to access the program.

“Being able to have the paperwork filled out by the right medical professional can be a long wait. For us, we waited over a year.”

“The documents needed to apply for financial aid from the Quebec government is very lengthy and not enough guidance is provided.”

Quotes from Parent Research Participants

Employment

For adults with disabilities, employment programs and services are provided primarily by Service externe de main d’oeuvre (SEMO) (example [here](#)). SEMOs are specialized non-profit organizations that receive funding from the government and that help persons with disabilities access employment opportunities in their communities. Additionally, the Government of Quebec subsidizes salaries for some persons with disabilities through the Contrat d’intégration au travail (Employment integration contract), offering these individuals a chance to participate in competitive employment.

Additionally, much like the Canada Pension Plan (CCP), the Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) has a disability component. To access it, applicants must have

contributed to the QPP enough, earn less than \$20,746 before taxes per year, be under the age of 65 years, and prove they have a disability or limitation making it impossible to work. The QPP is administered by Retraite Quebec.



Did you know?

Individuals with disabilities can access is the Companion Leisure Card (CAL) (“Carte accompagnement loisir”). This card “grants free admission to the accompanying party of a disabled person and is recognized by leisure, cultural and tourist organizations.” In September 2023, about 450 organizations participated in this program. Individuals can apply for a Companion Leisure Card directly at <https://www.carteloisir.ca/en/>.

Education

With respect to education, individuals with disabilities are able to access the Allowance for Special Needs Program – Adults and Allowance for Special Needs Program – Youth. The adult version of this program provides support for specialized services (readers, note-takers, transcribers, etc.), paratransit services, housing expenses, and material resources (adaptive equipment and devices) necessary for pursuing studies in secondary school, college, or university. The youth version of this program provides an allowance so families can purchase equipment and devices for their child to be able to pursue studies in preschool, elementary school or secondary school. Resources purchased through this program must be recommended by a health care professional.

Aids and Devices

The Programme ministériel des aides techniques à la communication (PMATCOM) is a program of the Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services that lends equipment and technical aids to persons with disabilities. Equipment provided by this program is divided into five categories: speech aids, augmentative and alternative communication aids, adapted telephones, computer access devices, and environmental control systems.

The Régie de l’assurance maladie also provides visual devices and funding for guide dogs through the Visual Devices Program, hearing aids and assistive listening devices through the Hearing Devices Program, and funding to cover the cost of purchase, replacement and repair of certain technical aids for individuals with a physical disability, including wheelchairs through the devices that compensate for a physical deficiency program.

Housing and Transportation

Individuals with disabilities that need to make modifications to their vehicle can receive support through the Programme d’adaptation de véhicule pour les personnes handicapées (PAV). This program is administered by the Société de

de l'assurance automobile du Quebec and funded by the Ministère des Transports, and provides financial assistance for vehicle modification and training so the individuals can drive the modified vehicle.

Individuals with disabilities that need to make adaptation modifications to their homes can receive financial assistance through the Residential Adaptation Assistance Program (RAAP). This program is provided by the Société d'Habitation du Quebec and the goal of the program is to ensure individuals with disabilities can modify their homes to ensure they can enter and leave their home, access the essential rooms of their home, and perform activities of everyday life, safely.



Did you know?

Persons with disabilities can apply for a free Accompanying Card, which grants free passage to anyone accompanying them throughout the intercity bus system in Quebec. This program is administered by the La Bus Carriers Federation, in collaboration with the Office des personnes handicapées du Quebec and the Ministère des Transports du Quebec.

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:

- Technical Walking Aid Program. Provides a loaner walker to adults with physical impairments or a severe respiratory or cardiovascular impairment. This program can be accessed through a CISSS or CIUSSS.
- Mobility scooter program. Provides a loaner scooter to individuals with motor or a severe respiratory or cardiovascular impairment living at home or in a family-type residential setting. This program can be accessed through a CISSS or CIUSSS.
- Long-Term Care Centre. The long-term care centre (CHSLD) is a residential service offered to adults (including those with severe physical or cognitive limitations) and to seniors who, due to a severe loss of autonomy, can no longer remain in their natural living environment, despite the support of services in the community and those around them.
- Accessible Parking Permit. The program provides parking permits to individuals to allow them to park in designated parking stalls. To be entitled to an accessible parking permit, a person must have a disability resulting in a loss of independence or risk to health and safety with respect to travelling short distances that do not require the use of a vehicle.



Support for Individuals and Families

L'accompagnateur platform provides information about resources that are available in Quebec for children, youth and young adults with disabilities in Quebec.

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

- The C.A.R.E. Centre
- Action main d'oeuvre inc
- Association québécoise pour le loisir des personnes handicapées (AQLPH)
- Quebec Intellectual Disability Society
- L'Appui pour les proches aidants