

The Many Faces
of Communication
Disabilities

From Russia
to Canada to
the Dance Floor

DABC's
COVID-19
Update

transition

The Magazine of Disability Alliance BC

The Power of Communication



FALL · WINTER
2020

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editorial by rebecca pauls

Our ability to communicate affects the entire spectrum of our relationships, ranging from our intimate partners to service providers and everyone in between.

Human connection and relationships are at the heart of everything we do at Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN). We like to think that we're unique, that we approach disability advocacy a bit differently than many of the dedicated community organizations here in BC.

Since we were founded in 1989, our programs and services have been centred around the power of relationships to ensure the safety and well-being of people living with a disability. We believe that relationships not only help others to be safe, physically and financially, but to belong and flourish.

Relationships depend largely on our ability to communicate and connect with one another.

The power of communication

Communicating with one another is a cornerstone of relationship-building. Sometimes communication can be simple and other times complex. Communication styles and methods can be as unique as our eye colour or the number of freckles we have.

This is true for people whether they have a disability label or not. Some people are easier to understand in day-to-day conversation and can make their thoughts, feelings and ideas understood without much effort.

Some people need support to both understand what is being said and also to be understood in the course of conversation. Sometimes, conveying complex or nuanced ideas, our dreams for the future, our worries about the pandemic or even telling a joke can be fraught with challenges for the communicator or the person who is being communicated with.

When we endeavour to understand the person and honour their dignity through respectful interactions, our connection with one another can grow! If communication is limited or unsupported, we miss the opportunity of knowing one another more intimately and life can be experienced at a shallow or superficial level.

The truth is that human beings are social creatures and sharing our thoughts feelings and ideas with one another in relationship is a key component to a good life. Being seen and heard by one another brings joy and gives us a sense of belonging.

Our ability to communicate affects the entire spectrum of our relationships ranging from our intimate partners to service providers and everyone in between.

Indeed, when communication interferes with access to government services or programs meant to sup-

port a person with a disability, the consequences can be dire.

In the lives of people with disabilities, friends, family and advocates are often called upon to bridge gaps in communication and fulfill a significant role in the person's life as they struggle to get their needs met.

Part of the work of PLAN is to support people to create an intentional network around a person who may or may not have challenges with communication, and keep that person's dignity at the centre of all they do. People in these networks become committed to listening, helping and being part of a rich, two-way relationship.

As an organization, PLAN does our best to create spaces for these relationships to take root and grow.

Connections during COVID-19

Like every other social service organization, COVID-19 has been a great concern for us at PLAN, as well as for the families and other people we work for. The potential for isolation and weakened social connections during the pandemic has been enormous.

We wondered, "How do we not only stay connected in times like this, but how do we continue to strengthen those connections? How do we communicate in a useful, meaning-

ful way when it's a risk to physically be with friends and loved ones? How do we bring in new people at a time when we haven't met anyone new for months?"


As part of our response to these questions, we launched a five-part webinar series, along with our sister organization Plan Institute.

The webinars were conversations about how we can maintain social connections throughout this crisis. Specifically, each webinar looked at one of our **5 Ideas About Staying Socially Connected During the COVID-19 Pandemic**.

They were fun and engaging conversations, and we learned a lot about what matters and how to stay connected. We think the 5 Ideas and the webinar discussions are important for everyone, with or without a disability. You can see recordings of the webinars at <https://planinstitute.ca/staying-socially-connected-webinar>.

This Transition shares stories and resources about the power of communication and connection, some ways they can break down, and how we can help repair and heal them.

If you've been feeling out of touch with some people in your life, here are PLAN's 5 ideas. I hope they'll inspire you to strengthen connections with people you care about.

REBECCA IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLANNED LIFETIME ADVOCACY NETWORK, A VANCOUVER-BASED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE THAT PARTNERS WITH FAMILIES AND PEOPLE FACING SOCIAL ISOLATION TO SECURE THEIR FUTURE BY MOBILIZING RELATIONSHIPS AND LEVERAGING COMMUNITY ASSETS. LEARN MORE AT WWW.PLAN.CA. 

STAYING SOCIALLY *connected*

DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

First, make a list of people who you are concerned about and make a plan to stay in touch with them.

Don't wait to be asked

For a variety of reasons (pride, past hurts, fear of being turned down, loss of confidence, confusion) not everyone will ask for help—even as their situations worsen. Keep the connection alive. Be confident and cheerful. Don't give up, even if the first couple of responses are lukewarm or if you haven't been thanked.

Make it a team effort

A small group or network is the best way to share the things that need to be done, especially if the needs are great. It helps to sort out who is doing what and when. A team effort allows you to take care of your other responsibilities. A team effort allows you to spell each other off while ensuring the person who is the focus of your concern is never neglected and is taken care of in a timely way.



The latest technology helps

So does old technology like knocking on the door or picking up the phone. What's App, Slack, Next-Door, FaceTime, private Facebook

groups, email and telephone trees are simple ways to stay in touch and keep everyone up to date. You may want to invest in video conferencing platforms like Google Hangouts. Zoom is very good for people who lip read and their business version includes closed captioning and transcripts.

Little things make a big difference

It all helps. A phone call every day or so, a Netflix subscription, a bag of cookies, running an errand, paying bills online, bringing in the garbage cans, picking up prescriptions, changing a light bulb, exchanging emergency contact information, walking the dog or checking someone's internet connection.



The majority of people care and want to help

We can't emphasize this enough. Despite what you may have read or thought, caring is in Canada's DNA. Don't be afraid to ask or to accept help. You will actually be doing everyone a favour, including yourself.



How to Access DABC Services

JUSTINA LOH, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS

Our office is remaining closed for the time being. Here are the contact details for DABC's core programs. Appointments can be booked by email or phone, but email may be the most efficient way to reach us. Thank you for your patience. Stay safe, everyone!

Advocacy Access

If you require help accessing provincial disability benefits (PWD) or Canada Pension Plan-Disability Benefits (CPP-D), contact Advocacy Access:

Email advocacy@disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

Tax AID DABC

If you are a person with a disability who requires assistance filing your income taxes, contact Tax AID DABC:

Email taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org

236-477-1717 or 1-877-940-7797 (Toll-free)

Book an appointment online at <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/>

Access RDSP

If you require help accessing the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) or Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP), contact Access RDSP:

Email rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org

604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free)

<https://www.rdsp.com/supports-and-services/>

Disability Law Clinic

The brand new Disability Law Clinic can help British Columbians with disabilities with legal issues. Please see the article on page 20.

Contact the Clinic:

Email LawClinic@disabilityalliancebc.org

(236) 427-1108

DABC's COVID-19 Update | BY ERIN PRITCHARD

As I write this, it is discouraging to see COVID-19 cases rising again. However, we feel better prepared for a possible second wave than we did back in March.

We wanted to provide a brief update about how the pandemic has affected DABC's direct services and systemic advocacy so far, and what you can expect from us moving forward.

Our Direct Services

Unfortunately, the pandemic has meant that we have not been able to offer in-person services since March. We miss our lively office and, particularly, seeing our clients and volunteers in person, but have done our best to provide as many of our direct advocacy services as possible remotely. We know this has been a big change on all sides, and have been grateful for your patience with the inevitable tech and logistical issues as they arise. We are looking forward to welcoming everyone into our new office when we are able to safely do so.

Our Systemic Work

Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 also continues to have a major impact on our systemic advocacy efforts. Many of the issues we have been working on have at least some connection to the pandemic, and we expect that will continue for the foreseeable future.

For example, along with many other groups, we are advocating for the provincial government to transition the \$300 COVID-19 supplement for income and disability assistance recipients into a permanent rate increase. The government has extended this supplement until at least the December cheque issue, and we know this additional income has determined whether many people have been able to meet basic needs over the past several months.

We were also glad to see the government exempt federal supports like CERB, CESB and EI from clawback from income and disability assistance. We have been advocating for the new EI and recovery benefits to be similarly exempted, at least for the duration of the state of emergency.

On page 18, you can also see the questions we posed to provincial parties in advance of the October election.

In August, we were pleased to see the federal government announce a long-awaited emergency support for people with disabilities, something we had been seeking for many months. This one-time \$600 payment is not a panacea, but will be helpful to eligible recipients and we know it is desperately needed.

While space does not permit discussion of every issue we have been working on, suffice it to say that most human rights and financial issues we have seen in the past several months have been in some way related to COVID-19.

Looking Forward

We see this as an important time to reflect on the larger question of how we collectively respond to emergency situations, and what kind of supports should be available for those that need them, even in non-emergency times.

The pandemic has laid bare inequities in financial and other supports, and it's something we will continue to examine and highlight in our advocacy work.

At this point, it is difficult to predict how the evolving situation around COVID-19 will affect DABC and our work in the coming months. However, we will continue to help as many individuals as we can, and work to respond to broader policy issues as they arise. We hope you will continue to share your concerns, stories and ideas with us too.

ERIN PRITCHARD IS
DABC'S EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF POLICY
AND PROGRAMS. 



The Many Faces of Communication Disabilities

There are approximately 440,000 Canadians who have significant disabilities that affect their communication.

Having a significant communication disability can affect one or more communication areas, such as a person's ability to speak, understand what others are saying, read and/or write.

- People with speech disabilities may have slurred or unclear speech, or they may have no speech and communicate using gestures, pictures, letter boards, communication devices or assistance from a person who knows them well. They may use a voice amplifier if they have a weak voice.
- People with language disabilities may have difficulty hearing what people are saying or they may hear, but have difficulty processing or understanding what another person is saying. For example, people who have aphasia after a stroke or accident may have difficulty in understanding others, and in speaking, reading and writing.
- People who have intellectual disabilities from birth or who acquire dementia or Alzheimer's

disease may have problems remembering, understanding or problem-solving, making communication challenging.

While some communication disabilities are easily observable (like a person who cannot speak and uses a device to communicate), others may be invisible.

For example, a minor stroke or a learning disability can have a profound impact on a person's ability to comprehend spoken language or express their own messages, especially in a stressful situation or when complex language and abstract concepts are required.

A Canadian Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) suggested approximately 1.5% Canadians older than age 4 years have difficulty speaking and being understood.

In the USA, it is estimated that 1.3% of the population over 15 years of age experience difficulty having their speech understood.

In the UK, a study found that 1.4% of the population has a severe communication disability that makes it difficult for them to be understood, outside of the immediate family.

The prevalence of communication disabilities varies considerably with age. A study in Canada suggests a rate of 0.8% for the population age

Having a significant communication disability can affect one or more communication areas, such as a person's ability to speak, understand what others are saying, read and/or write.

45 to 54 years and 4.2% for people 85 years and older.

Some of these disabilities are life-long, such as cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder, Down Syndrome, a learning disability or cognitive disability. Others are acquired disabilities, such as traumatic brain injury, aphasia after a stroke, dementia, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, Parkinson's disease or Multiple Sclerosis.

Impacts and Barriers

The following two tables look at some of the most common experiences people with communication disabilities have—the impacts on human connection, delivery of services and more, as well as first-hand comments about how they have been perceived and treated by others.

Impact of Ineffective Communication

What People with Communication Disabilities Report

Social Isolation



Life without communication is like being a wall in a room full of people. Life without communication causes people to feel disconnected from others, and like an inanimate object or a piece of furniture.

Loss of autonomy

People think that because I can't speak, I can't make my own decisions.

Reduced access to services

I wanted to change my Will, but I know the lawyer won't understand me. I don't want my family members to come with me to help the lawyer understand what I am saying.

Reduced quality of services

I couldn't communicate with the nurses and doctor when I was in hospital. They took away my communication device and locked it up for safe keeping.

Increased risk for abuse, crimes and violation of human rights

I tried to tell the police about how I was abused. They told me I would not be a credible witness because I could not speak.

Discrimination

I was contacted by phone to set up a job interview. As soon as they realized I used a communication device, they told me they would get back to me. I never heard from them again.

Compromised safety

The emergency people just ignored me and asked a stranger who was standing beside me to consent to my treatment.

Loss of dignity

Every day I leave the safety of my home, and suffer pity and disgust from people. I overheard a woman in a mall talking about me, "He shouldn't be let out on his own," like I was an animal in a zoo.

Loss of Independent Living

I know people who have to live in long-term care facilities simply because they don't have an adapted telephone to call for help if they need it.

Mental health issues

When a child can't communicate and is on waiting lists for services, frustration develops and the child's actions are seen as "behaviour" when they may be the child's only way of communicating.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

COMMUNICATION DISABILITIES, CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Disrespectful Attitudes		
Barrier	Description	What People with Communication Disabilities Report
Assumption of incompetence	Ignoring the person with a communication disability, deferring questions to an accompanying person, speaking in way that implies the person is incapable, has reduced cognitive abilities and is unable to make their own decisions.	 <p>My husband has aphasia because of his stroke. Unfortunately, his difficulty in communicating is perceived as an intellectual issue.</p>
Generalization of disabilities	Speaking loudly, slowly and in a childish manner to a person with a communication disability.	I find people are usually very respectful, however, because our son is non-verbal, they assume he is deaf. We explain our son can hear, though he uses a computer/phone to speak.
Unfamiliarity	Avoiding interactions with the person for fear they may not understand.	Many assumptions stem from a lack of education and exposure to communication disabilities. Often when people think they are being helpful (e.g., speaking louder, speaking in simple sentences to an adult) they are well-intentioned, but their efforts come across as patronizing and belittling.
Ignorance	Not knowing the nature of communication disabilities and how it impacts people in different ways, including one or more aspects of speech, understanding, reading and writing.	<p>People often talk about the person with communication disabilities in front of them as if they cannot understand.</p> <p>My husband has recently been diagnosed with ALS and his speech has been severely compromised. He has been accused of drinking. People get frustrated with him and roll their eyes.</p> 

Excerpts used with permission. Communication Disabilities Access Canada. www.cdacanada.com

Dementia and Communication

To communicate effectively with a person living with dementia, we need to be authentic and mean what we say. People with dementia have strong intuition.

People with dementia can communicate at every stage of their disease.

Dementia is more than a neurobiological disease—it has social and interactional elements which mean that a person’s competence and quality of life are influenced by the environment and by how others interact with them.

To communicate effectively with a person living with dementia, we need to be authentic and mean what we say. People with dementia have strong intuition. Even if we try to hide it, they are likely to recognize when we are frustrated or tired or just don’t want to listen.

Communication is strengthened and enriched by:

- Believing communication is possible
- Focusing on the person’s abilities and skills
- Reassuring and being positive
- Meeting the person where they are and accepting their reality

Take a Caring Approach


People with dementia are very sensitive to how we look, act, the tone of our voice and our body position. How you present yourself will affect your relationship and communication with the person.

- Using a friendly, calm, relaxed approach will put the individual at ease, even if they do not understand what you are saying.
- Address the person by their preferred name which may not necessarily be the name you have always called him/her, for example, a childhood nickname.
- Be flexible.
- Do not use a controlling manner or an authoritarian tone. Do not argue.
- Listen carefully and do not interrupt.
- Make communication a two-way street.
- Encourage humour and laughter, and respect sadness.
- Give enough time for the person with dementia to process information (10-20 seconds minimum).
- Speak slowly and clearly—gauge your pace by the reaction of the person with dementia.
- Use words that the person with dementia understands, knows or is familiar with.
- Never speak “over” the person.
- Do not speak to the person with your back turned or from a different room.

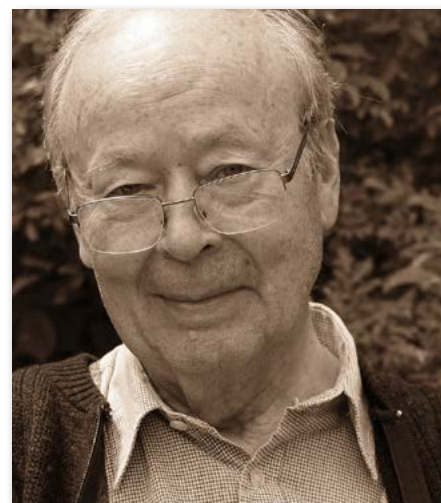
Communication is not so much about what you say, but how you say it.

This article is excerpted from a caregivers’ guide, written by Lori Amdam RN, MSN and Sandie Somers Clinical Nurse Specialist, 2018.

It is also a resource for anyone who wishes to communicate in effective and caring ways with a person with dementia. See the full Island Health guide at <https://tinyurl.com/y459sezq>.

You can also see the Understanding Dementia Video Series at <https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/seniors/dementia-video-series> and a video specifically about Communication and Dementia at <https://vimeo.com/305561357>. 

Communication is not so much about what you say, but how you say it.



DTC RESOURCES FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Access RDSP has created two new booklets to help health professionals support clients with Disability Tax Credit applications:

- **A Nurse Practitioner's Guide to the Disability Tax Credit**
- **A Guide to the Disability Tax Credit for Occupational Therapists**

The Disability Tax Credit (DTC) offers significant benefits for people with disabilities who qualify.

With these guides, we explain the different sections of the form and offer suggestions for supporting patients' applications.

For more information, please contact the Access RDSP Outreach Coordinator at DABC at 604-872-1278 or rdsp@disabilityalliancebc.org.



Access RDSP
Change your tomorrow today



vancouver
foundation

BCNPA
British Columbia Nurse Practitioner Association



ACCESS RDSP IS A PARTNERSHIP OF BC ABORIGINAL NETWORK ON DISABILITY SOCIETY, DISABILITY ALLIANCE BC AND PLAN INSTITUTE, MADE POSSIBLE WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE VANCOUVER FOUNDATION.

THANK YOU TO THE BC NURSE PRACTITIONERS ASSOCIATION FOR THEIR COLLABORATION ON THIS RESOURCE.

Pandemic Spurs Development of Assistive Technology | by Lynda Bennett

The COVID-19 pandemic is behind a lot of technological innovation, including many to help us communicate and connect during this time of social distancing.

The Neil Squire Society newsletter is a great place to learn about emerging technologies for people with disabilities.

Here are two tech reviews from a recent edition.

How Assistive Listening Tech is Helping to Bridge Social Distance.

This article looks at how assisted listening technology, initially developed for people with physical hearing impairments and others

working in noisy work environments, is changing to adapt to the “new normal.”

The article reviews several new products such as Listen Technologies’ ListenTALK. This mobile, two-way communication system, includes a lightweight transceiver on a lanyard worn by frontline team members to maintain a safe distance, communicate clearly with each other and leave their hands free to perform tasks.

Live transcribe Zoom meetings with Otter.ai. We’re often holding meetings by Zoom these days. Some-

times it’s a struggle to participate and make notes at the same time. This article reviews the features of Otter Live Notes, an app that Zoom hosts install to provide live transcriptions of conversations.

This can be used by meeting participants for meeting minutes and other reports.

To subscribe to the Neil Squire Society newsletter or read the most recent articles, go to [https://paper.li/NeilSquireSoc/1448776875#/.](https://paper.li/NeilSquireSoc/1448776875#/)

LYNDA BENNETT IS ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AT TRANSITION MAGAZINE. 



A free online program for people with disabilities to improve their digital literacy

Work one-on-one with an instructor in a virtual classroom from the comfort of your home. Cover topics based on your needs. Resources are available for basic digital literacy hardware and software.

Contact us today!

T 604 473 9363 E gordonw@neilsquire.ca

www.neilsquire.ca/digitaljumpstart



Savings on Internet Services

by TELUS

Internet for Good™ is a program offered in BC and Alberta to eligible Canadians with disabilities and their families.

Program highlights include:

- Internet connectivity for \$9.95/month (plus applicable taxes) for 24 months; regular pricing thereafter
- Speeds of up to 25 megabits per second (where available) and up to 300 gigabytes of data per month
- Option to purchase a low cost refurbished computer through BC Technology for Learning
- No contract or cancellation fees
- Digital literacy support available at any of our TELUS Learning Centres
- Access to free TELUS Wise® training and tools to participate safely in our digital world

Eligibility for people with disabilities

Internet for Good™ is available in BC to people who receive the BC Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit or the Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit (CPPD).

Documentation needed

Approved documentation identifying you as a current recipient of the PWD benefit includes:

- CRA Statement of Canada Pension Plan Benefit T4A(P)
- BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Confirmation of Assistance statement

Program in Schools

We have empowered Schools across Alberta and BC to extend our Internet for Good™ offer directly to families in need.

If you have school-aged children and are in need of Internet access,


please discuss your situation with your child's teacher or Principal. The Principal will request codes from TELUS on behalf of families in need. Once families receive a code from their Principal, they can call TELUS at 1-866-835-8744 to redeem the offer.

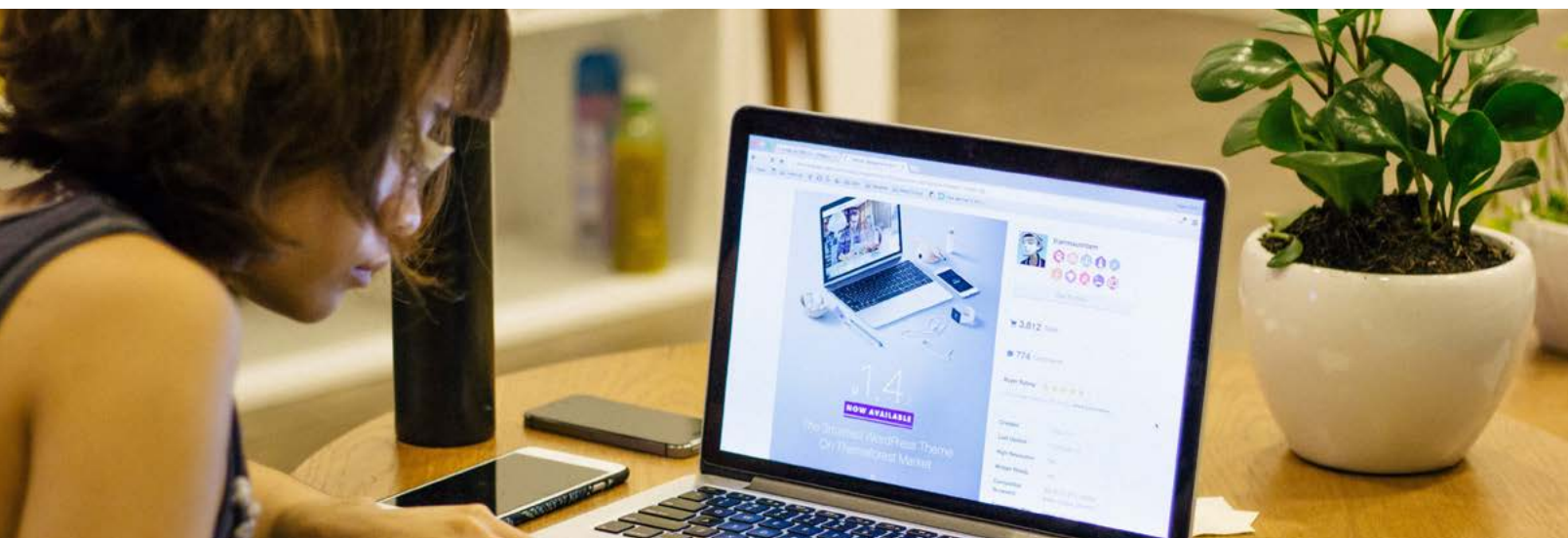
Eligibility for low-income Canadian families

The program supports low-income Canadian families in BC who have children under the age of majority and are currently receiving the maximum Canada Child Benefit.

Documentation needed

A Canada Child Benefit (CCB) statement showing your family net income of less than or equal to \$31,120.

See full details, eligibility requirements and how to apply at <https://tinyurl.com/yes7z9mb> or contact Telus at internetforgood@telus.com. 





DON'T BE SAD

SUPPORT OUR VISIONARY CIRCLE

Sometimes it's hard to know what you can do to help.

When you join DABC's Visionaries Circle with monthly giving, you'll be providing the best support possible. Even a small amount goes a long way and provides a stable Funding base for planning our programs and services.

Joining is easy.

- You can set up monthly donations in seconds at www.CanadaHelps.org by searching for "Disability Alliance BC."
- Or, set up a monthly credit card donation by calling Terry at 604-875-0188.

Thank you for your support!

COMMUNICATION, CONNECTION AND AUTISM

LIFE ON THE SPECTRUM: THE AUTISM FAMILY PODCAST

This is a brand-new podcast for families living with Autism, hosted by broadcaster and special education assistant Katie Bennison, who has a teenage daughter on the spectrum.

The podcast features the voices of parents, educators, doctors, therapists, and most of all, people with Autism. Through shared stories and expertise, families stay informed, empowered and connected. Autism is so much more than a diagnosis. It's a community.

This podcast is a powerful touchstone for those connected to life on the spectrum.

<https://www.autismbc.ca/programs/podcast/>

LOVE ON THE SPECTRUM

This short documentary series about people on the Autism spectrum looking for love has been an unexpected hit. It follows several young adults with Autism and their families, who are funny, fascinating and sometimes heart-breaking, while they look for their ideal mate.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kX-QbcXyZug>

From Russia to Canada to the Dance Floor

by Olesia Kornienko

My name is Olesia and I have a speech impairment. I was born in Russia, lived in Poland for 17 years and have been in Canada since June 2011.

As a child in Russia, I didn't have an opportunity to be educated because of my speech impediment. The school board said that children like me should be isolated from "normal" children.

Later, I studied journalism at the University of Warsaw in Poland. I enjoy writing poetry and prose.

My speech is very hard to understand because I have Cerebral Palsy. Before I got a speech-generating device, the biggest challenge for me was face-to-face conversation. I often had to repeat myself many times which would make me very tired. My mom and close friends would talk on my behalf.

Let me tell you what it's like not to be understood.

Just imagine you know many things, and you want to share your thoughts and ideas with other people, but you speak an unknown language. You are like an alien who just landed on earth. You want so much to talk and express yourself, but all people can see are your strange movements and grimaces on your face.

Then come the dreaded words, "I'm sorry, I don't understand" and the



Just imagine you know many things, and you want to share your thoughts and ideas with other people, but you speak an unknown language. You are like an alien who just landed on earth.

person walks away. You feel upset, disappointed and ignored. You feel as if you don't exist.

Everything changed for me when the Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults (CAYA) provided me with an iPad and the TouchChat communication app in 2014.

With the iPad, people started to understand me! I could share my thoughts and even my dreams. I could make a friend.

I could collaborate with co-workers and volunteers on the organization of the annual Miss Wheelchair Canada events.

I'm more confident now when I talk to people in my community. When I ask people on the street for directions, for example, they listen and assist me. It's nice to have small conversations with neighbours! With the app, it is much easier for me to talk.

Since I founded the Wheelchair Dance Sport Association Canada, I have come in contact with many new people and was even able to do interviews for radio and newspapers. I use the iPad to give speeches on fundraising events for the association.

With the iPad, people started to understand me! I could share my thoughts and even my dreams. I could make a friend.

The iPad has really helped with learning English, too. It helps me participate in classes and prepare my homework. I would love to continue with my education and writing.

The speech-generating app also helps me talk about my poetry and art. This gives me so much independence.

I have come to see that people who really want to understand me will try harder. There are so many ways of communicating, like yes-no questions, an image alphabet, sign language or to listen for key words. For example, if you understand the first word I say, and the last word, you can sometimes figure out the middle one.

To make communication work, the most important thing is patience.

The person with the speech impediment needs patience. And if you are someone who wants to understand those of us with speech impediments, you need to forget for a moment about your everyday rushing and just listen to us.

Another very important thing people who do not have a disability can do is to understand that a


speech impediment does not mean someone has a mental deficit of some kind. I wish people would treat people with disabilities just like anyone else.

Communicating with other people is so important. It is one of the basic needs we have and people with speech impairments are no exception.

We want to share our emotions and opinions about our needs, life, politics and everything! I'm so glad I can communicate with more people now—in my work, at school and with anyone I meet.

Find out more about Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults at <https://cayabc.net/caya-services>.

See a video of Olesia dancing at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzOyThP0jtK2nkELq5_M8Wdqlv6VOc49I.

Read Olesia's biography at <https://olesyahope77.wixsite.com/olesyakornienko/olesyakornienko-story>. 

THE ALIEN

I Fell to earth From another planet.

Am I From Venus?

Or maybe From an undiscovered star?

There, where I come From.

On earth, I live in the cocoon that hampers existence.

I speak an unknown language.

Just some few understand my dialect.

The head is Full of mists,

But my thoughts overtake the wind.

And passion Flows in my veins.

Where else will you Find someone like me?

Suspended between the impossible and the reality

OLESIA HORNIENHO

BC ELECTION 2020

DABC Questions to Provincial Parties

The following are questions we put to provincial candidates prior to the October election. Use these questions to discuss key disability issues with your MLA following the election.

Income and Disability Assistance Rates

In April 2020, the provincial government introduced a \$300 COVID-19 supplement for income assistance and disability assistance recipients; this was initially set for a three-month period, and has been extended through December 2020.

We would like to see this \$300 increase made permanent for both income and disability assistance, and rates further indexed to inflation.

Despite increases in recent years, we know that income and disability assistance are below the poverty line and are woefully inadequate to meet even basic needs. The \$300 supplement has meant that in the context of a pandemic, some income assistance and disability assistance recipients have finally been able to meet basic needs, and are not making impossible decisions between essentials like food, medication, rent, and utilities.

This should not be reserved for extraordinary times.

If elected, would your government make the \$300 increase permanent for both income and disability assistance, and index rates to inflation?

Comprehensive Program for Assistive Devices and Equipment

BC is in dire need of a comprehensive program for assistive devices and medical equipment for people with disabilities. An assistive device is a technology that helps promote independence and safety (e.g. equipment and devices that aid in areas such as mobility, vision, hearing, communication, breathing, and self care).

Other provinces and territories in Canada have programs ensuring broad access to these devices. In its

report following the 2021 Budget consultation, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recommended that the government invest in a comprehensive program for assistive devices and medical equipment for people with disabilities.

If elected, would your government invest in a comprehensive program for assistive devices and medical equipment for people with disabilities?

Community Care

We have a crisis in our care system for people with disabilities.

Far too often, people with disabilities who live in their own homes are struggling to find care workers, particularly during this pandemic, putting their health at risk as they try to manage with less support than they need.

Working-aged adults with disabilities who have no other care option than to live in long-term care facilities are faced with care that is designed for seniors, and simply does not meet their needs.

As the province looks to “build back better,” the voices and needs of these people with disabilities must be considered.

If elected, would your government commit to improving the delivery of community care by including the voices of people with lived experience of these situations to ensure that they have the supports they need to live with dignity and independence?

Accessibility Legislation

British Columbians with disabilities routinely experience barriers to accessing housing, employment, transportation, and other services.

The Canadian government recently introduced accessibility legislation which govern areas under federal jurisdiction.

Prior to the pandemic, the provincial government had committed to provincial accessibility legislation, and conducted consultations for feedback on new laws, standards and policies to better support people with disabilities to live with dignity and to meaningfully participate in their communities.

If elected, would your government commit to completing and enacting accessibility legislation for BC with enforceable standards and regulations for areas under provincial jurisdiction?

Affordable and Accessible Housing

As you know, housing affordability continues to be one of the biggest challenges for people and families across the province. This is a particular challenge for people with disabilities given the dearth of accessible housing.

While the dire need for affordable and accessible housing is not new, the pandemic has added a new dimension to the issue.

With public health directives from all levels of government encouraging us to stay home to stop the spread of COVID-19, many without homes were left without safe spaces to self-isolate.

If elected, would your government make major new investments in affordable and accessible housing?

Independent Mental Health Advocacy Services for Mental Health Detainees

In March 2019 the BC Ombudsperson recommended that the province create a legal aid service to provide independent legal advice and advocacy to people when they are detained under the Mental Health Act.¹ The BC Attorney General accepted this recommendation and committed to seeking the appropriate funds to establish it; however, the service has not yet been created.

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (“IMHA”) services are person-centered advocacy models designed to promote self-determination and recovery for people subject to mental health detention and other coercive interventions.

An IMHA service has the potential to profoundly improve access to justice for a marginalized population. Ensuring that everyone has access to legal advice and assistance to exercise their legal rights is a therapeutic exercise that can promote well being and improve access to quality care in BC’s mental health and addictions system.

If elected, would your government create a legal aid service to provide independent legal advice and advocacy to people when they are detained under the Mental Health Act?

¹ BC Ombudsperson’s Special Report No. 42, Committed to Change: Protecting the Rights of Involuntary Patients under the Mental Health Act, March 2019. 

Disability Law Clinic News



Salina Dewar is the new, full-time Disability Law Clinic Assistant. Salina has been an advocate at Disability Alliance BC since 2016. She will be responsible for much of the Clinic's work, including intake of new clients.

The Disability Law Clinic (DLC) is excited to announce that Salina Dewar is the new, full-time Clinic Assistant. Salina has been an advocate at Disability Alliance BC since 2016.

Some of our readers may recognize her from our Tax AID and Access RDSP Programs. She is excited to work with DLC's staff lawyer, Andrew Robb, to assist our DLC client.

Salina will be responsible for much of the Clinic's work, including intake of new clients. She is not a practicing lawyer, so she will refer you to Andrew for legal advice when that is appropriate. However, Salina does have a legal education, identifies as a person with disabilities, and has a passion for social justice.

What Does the DLC Do?

The Disability Law Clinic provides legal advice and assistance to people with disabilities in disability-related areas of law, including:

- Accommodation in the workplace
- Access to transportation
- Access to education
- Accessible housing

- Access to supports, including service animals and assistive devices
- Accommodations related to the COVID-19 virus and social distancing

In some cases, the Clinic may be able to assist people with:

- Disability-related human rights cases at the BC Human Rights Tribunal, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and the Canadian Transportation Agency
- Disputes with disability-related service providers
- Decision-making rights and supported decision-making in cases involving court-appointed guardians and trustees, or the Public Guardian and Trustee
- Long-term disability insurance benefits

Are there areas the DLC cannot help with?

We know that no matter what area of law they are dealing with, many people who have disabilities and chronic health conditions have challenges accessing the legal system and legal advice when they need it.

Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to cover every area of law. Some of the areas we cannot assist with are:

- Wills and estate planning
- Family law matters
- Criminal matters
- Housing matters unrelated to accessibility or disability-related discrimination.

If you are not sure whether we can help you, please feel free to contact us. When we cannot provide direct assistance, we will do our best to refer you to useful resources.

How Does the Intake Process Work?

- If you need help, call or email our clinic.
- Salina will respond and ask you some questions to determine if we can help.
- If we cannot help, Salina will suggest other resources that may help.
- If we may be able to help you, Salina will ask you to provide copies of your ID, relevant documents, and book a time for Andrew to call you for a consultation.
- Andrew will provide advice and information, let you know if we can help in other ways or if he thinks other resources may also be helpful.


- As with all of DABC’s advocacy programs, our assistance is free of charge.

What’s Next for the Clinic?

We want people with disabilities to know their legal rights and we plan to provide more public legal education. We have already delivered presentations on topics including:

- The rights of people with disabilities to have their support persons with them in hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.
- Individual education plans (IEPs) and the rights of students with disabilities to be accommodated in the public school system.

If you would like to learn more about a disability law topic, please let us know which topics you are interested in.

While we know life is easier when you don’t have a legal problem, if you have one, and you think we may be able to help, please do not hesitate to contact us at (236) 427-1108 or email LawClinic@disability-alliancebc.org. 



New DTC App

Access RDSP is excited to announce that our new Disability Tax Credit (DTC) online app is now live!

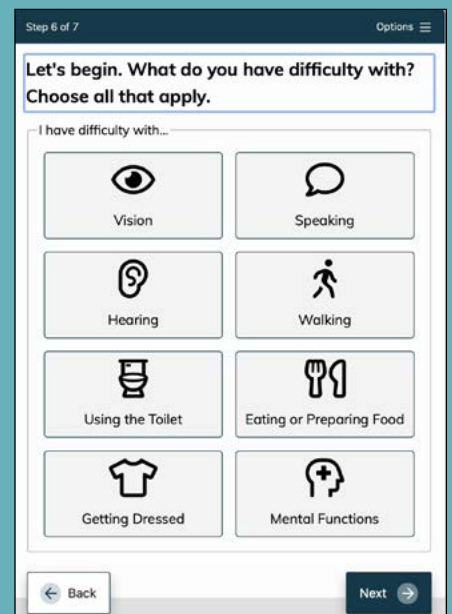
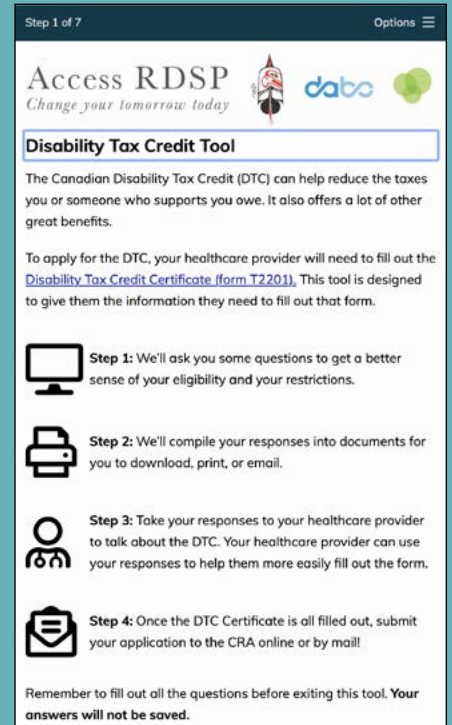
The app is a self-help tool designed to give your healthcare provider the information they need to fill out your DTC Certificate application form.

Here’s how it works:

- The app takes you through some basic questions to get some sense of your restrictions and your eligibility for the DTC.
- We compile your responses in documents you can download and print.
- You take your responses to your healthcare provider when you discuss the DTC.
- Your healthcare provider can use your responses to help them fill out the form.

To access the new DTC Online app, go to: <https://disability-alliancebc.org/dtc-app>.

To learn more about how Access RDSP can help you apply for the RDSP and the DTC, please contact us at rdsp@disability-alliancebc.org, 604-872-1278 or 1-800-663-1278 (Toll-free).





From all of us at DABC, we wish you a safe, warm and happy holidays.

A photograph of a man and a young girl looking at a tablet together. The man is on the left, leaning over the girl on the right. They are both looking at the screen. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with mountains.

Planned Giving

You've always been there for others. It's part of who you are. Now, you can continue to give beyond your lifetime.

Planned Giving is the opportunity to think ahead about causes or organizations that you may want to financially support beyond your lifetime.

By planning ahead, you can research charities or have someone research charities for you that fit your values.

Why Consider a Planned Gift?

There are many benefits to Planned Giving. By writing down your wishes, you will have increased peace of mind and control over your finances.

You can also provide a significant future donation without reducing your income today.

A gift in your Will to DABC will help us to be here in the future for those who need us.

Tax Savings

You can realize significant tax savings with Planned Giving. For example, stocks, bonds

and mutual funds that you may have in a Trust can be transferred in your will to a charity and a tax receipt will be issued.

To Learn More

Our donors are important to us and we'll work with you to be recognized in the way that you'd prefer.

If you would like more information about Planned Giving, please contact Justina at DABC at jloh@disabilityalliancebc.org or 604-875-0188. She will send you DABC's Planned Giving information to review with your financial planner or lawyer, family and friends.

You can also download our Planned Giving Brochure (<https://tinyurl.com/yxbmn3b2>) and Information Sheet (<https://tinyurl.com/yxn-hgs5f>).

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Please make cheques payable to Disability Alliance BC and send to Transition, c/o DABC, 1450- 605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3.

THANK YOU!

Challenges Open New Doors

BY MYUNG LEE

Tax season, the busiest time in the year, has passed and our Tax AID DABC team survived along with our clients!

When DABC decided to close our office in March due to the pandemic, we started virtual tax meetings with our clients. We really wanted to provide the same level of services as last year, so we decided on four ways to deliver our services: virtual meetings, email services, text services and mail services.

Virtual Meetings

DABC offers virtual meetings, using Zoho and Zoom digital meeting platforms, for people who are concerned about their privacy. With these services, a client can show their photo ID and documents on their computer screen. The format is the same as in-person meetings.

These digital meeting platforms were used for more than 30% of our services, and more than 70% during peak weeks.

The biggest challenge with these platforms is clients' gaps in understanding the technology. Our clients have various levels of technology literacy—some have never used virtual meetings at all, while some are very comfortable with the platforms and their tools, like screen sharing. The requirements of the platforms, such as a webcam (or built-in camera), good internet speed, and an audio system are all necessary assets, as well.



Many people learned this new virtual skill and completed their taxes, so that is very satisfying for us and our clients! And many told us they like the convenience of virtual services, to be able to get the help they need without travelling to our office.

For clients from rural areas, these virtual meetings are great news!

Email Services

Before COVID-19, we didn't actively offer services through email. Since the pandemic started, we have provided services by email that allow clients to send their photo ID and tax slips via email, as well as our electronic intake and waiver forms. A Tax Advocate then sends the client a tax summary for them to review and give us written consent before we submit to the CRA.

This service is targeted to people who have fewer concerns about their security and/or do not want to set up a virtual meeting. This model is similar to our drop-off services.

Email services are quite popular, as they were used more than 50% of the time throughout the tax season.

Text Services

Since Tax AID introduced a direct phone line last year, we are able to answer calls from our homes. We have also noticed we tend to get more responses from clients to text messages. So, we now conduct services with some clients by text messaging.

Mail Services

These services are for those who don't have an email address or a computer in their home or for people who just like the old way of doing things! We realize the importance of mail services, as some clients can only receive help this way.

Regardless of new technology that may come out, mail-out service is essential for some people—about 5% of our clients.

Since our office is still closed to the public, we have set up a post office box in Surrey near my home. I now can pick-up the mail in a timely manner. It's actually a pleasure to see the various sizes of envelopes with diverse handwriting!



Even though the extended deadline (June 1) for tax filing has passed, we still have quite a long waiting list for our services. Due to COVID-19, we have also found that clients have been and still are facing higher levels of stress because there is no in-person contact.

We all understand the challenges caused by COVID-19. But, as new challenges are solved, we learn many things in the process. What I love to see is clients giving their best efforts to help us help them. It's very rewarding for me.

The pandemic has motivated us to create more innovative services, flexible program management, communication tools, verified services and cybersecurity. These are all important improvements we will carry forward with or without COVID-19.

If you haven't done your taxes, or you need consultation on a tax matter, please visit this page for more information and to book your appointment <https://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/>.

You can also reach us at:
taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org
 236-477-1717
 Toll-free 1-877-940-7797

All individuals deserve respect, it's our program goal.

MYUNG LEE IS THE TAX AID DABC PROGRAM MANAGER 

ABOUT TRANSITION

Editorial Statement

The views and opinions expressed within the pages of TRANSITION are not necessarily those held by the total membership or Board of Directors. The material presented is meant to be thought-provoking and to promote dialogue.

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Connect with DABC

ABOUT US

Our mission is to support people, with all disabilities, to live with dignity, independence and as equal and full participants in the community. We champion issues impacting the lives of people with disabilities through our direct services, community partnerships, advocacy, research and publications.

FRONTLINE SERVICES

Our Advocacy Access Program provides one-on-one assistance with provincial and federal (Canada Pension Plan Disability) income supports and other benefits. Our Tax AID DABC program helps PWD and PPMB recipients to file their income taxes year-round. Access RDSP helps people with the Disability Tax Credit and with opening a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

Our projects respond to community need and increase people's ability to participate and contribute.

GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

We stay connected with a large network of community organizations across BC and regularly provide them with updates about issues of importance to the disability community.

FREE PUBLICATIONS

We publish a range of capacity-building, self-help guides and advocate resources, in reader-friendly language. Resources are provided free of charge, either by mail or from our website.



DONATION DRIVE!

Our rent for the new DABC offices has increased by 100%.

If you support DABC's work, please consider a one-time contribution or become a monthly donor. Our monthly donors help us to create a funding base we can count on.

Please visit our Support page at <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/support-us> for ways you can give.

Thank you for helping us continue our work on behalf of people with disabilities.



Icons designed by EpicCoders from Flaticon

BECOME A DABC MEMBER

Numbers matter. The more members we have, the stronger our voice in the community.

Please become a Disability Alliance BC (DABC) member today. You can be a voting member or a non-voting member, and we welcome both individuals and groups.

I accept your invitation to join the DABC and enclose my membership fee of \$15 (individuals) and \$25 (groups).

I am also including a tax-deductible donation of \$_____. (Donations over \$10 are tax deductible).

You can also become a member or donate online at: <http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/about-dabc/become-a-member>.

Please return your payment/donation with this form to: DABC, 1450- 605 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Please check the applicable boxes:

- New membership or Renewal
- Voting Member or Non-voting Member

Voting members are people with disabilities and self-help groups where at least 50% of members have a disability.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City/Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____



Contact Tax AID DABC Today for Free Income Tax Assistance

• SPECIALIZING IN MULTIPLE YEARS OF RETURNS •

Program Manager
Disability Alliance BC
taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org
<https://taxaiddabc.org>

Appointments During COVID-19

You can book your remote appointment with DABC online at <http://disabilityalliancebc.org/direct-service/file-income-taxes/tax-appointment/>. We also offer our services by email and mail. Please send your tax slips and photo ID to taxaid@disabilityalliancebc.org. We will contact you for follow-up.



Tax AID DABC helps people in BC receiving PWD (Persons with Disabilities) or PPMB (Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to Employment) benefits to file their income taxes.



CONTACT THE TAX AID DABC REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- METRO VANCOUVER & FRASER VALLEY | VANCOUVER | DABC | 236-477-1717 | Toll Free 1-877-940-7797
- INTERIOR | KELOWNA | Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society | 250-763-4905 ext. 215

Yes, our income tax services are free.

Am I eligible for Tax AID DABC services?

We help people who are receiving:

- Persons with Disabilities (PWD) or
- Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers (PPMB) to Employment benefits.

What if I Haven't Filed Taxes for Years?

We help prepare simple income tax returns for the most recent tax year, as well as for previous years. One of our specialties is to help people who have multiple years of taxes to file.

What if I Don't Have All My Tax Documents (T5007, T4s)?

Don't worry! We'll contact government agencies to help you find them.

My Income is Low. Why Should I File Taxes?

There are many advantages to filing your income taxes! Our clients usually receive \$400 to \$600 in income tax credits for each year they file. People eligible for an income tax refund, and those with dependent children, often receive much more.

If you haven't filed your taxes for multiple years, your refunds may grow dramatically.

Other benefits you may be eligible for include:

- GST Credits
- BC Sales Tax and Climate Action Tax Credits
- Canada Workers Benefit
- Child Tax Benefits
- Registered Disability Savings Plan Grants and Bonds

Income tax filing can also help you qualify for MSP Premium Assistance coverage, subsidized housing, and other income-tested benefits.

What Should I do Next?

Contact Disability Alliance BC or one of our Regional Partners. We'll set up an appointment to meet with you. Call us today! We're here to help.

CONTACT THE TAX AID DABC REGIONAL PARTNER NEAREST YOU

- VANCOUVER ISLAND | VICTORIA | Together Against Poverty Society | 250-361-3521
- NORTHERN | PRINCE GEORGE | Active Support Against Poverty Society | Toll-Free 1-877-563-6112

Download DABC's Free Self-help Resources

Did you know DABC has a library of help sheets, self-help guides and resources for individuals, organizations and community planners? Here are some of the free resources you can read and download from our website.

BC Disability Benefits

We have over 15 Disability Benefits Help Sheets that are our most popular downloads. You'll learn about applications and appeals for the PWD and PPMB benefits; health benefits and nutritional supplements; filing income taxes for people receiving PWD and PPMB; PWD applications for people with disabilities living on reserve, and more.

Canada Pension Plan Disability

In the CPP-D section, you'll find our application and appeal guides for CPP-D, as well as a benefits checklist.

Registered Disability Savings Plan and Disability Tax Credit

We've created guides and help sheets on these key financial tools for people with disabilities and for health professionals who want to help their clients access these tools.

Other

- Anti-violence resources to help people with disabilities understand the steps they will go through if they have been a victim of a crime. We have also created resources for front line anti-violence workers.
- Emergency Preparedness guides on inclusive emergency planning for community partners.



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1 column	\$340	\$280	\$245
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	1	2	3
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Outside back cover			
Front inside cover	\$900	\$765	\$635
Back inside cover	\$750	\$635	\$495
INSIDE PAGES			
Full page	\$710	\$600	\$485
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2 column small	\$240	\$190	\$170
1 column	\$265	\$225	\$185
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we are all
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