

## **A Path Forward to Ensure the Long-Term Sustainability and Quality of Services for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities**

**Final version November 26, 2014**



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## Introduction

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This is Abilities Manitoba's proposed action plan to address the five (5) priorities arising from the Spring Stakeholder Engagement Process, an inclusive planning process informed by over 750 people. The Spring Stakeholder Engagement Report clearly outlines what needs to change **to strengthen services funded through Community Living disAbility Services and to ensure the sustainability of the overall service system.**

Abilities Manitoba has called upon the Minister of Manitoba Family Services to “commit to act now to ensure the long-term sustainability of services upon which so many depend. The implementation of an action plan that includes change outcomes, adequately resourced strategies to achieve the outcomes, and clearly identified and time-bound deliverables, is necessary” (from September 25 press release). Abilities Manitoba is committed to working in partnership with the Province in the implementation of the action plan.

The action plan has been approved by the Abilities Manitoba Executive and validated by the Abilities Manitoba Membership.

The action plan includes planning principles and, for each of the five (5) priorities:

- the **rationale**;
- the desired and measurable **long-term outcomes** (changes that will occur as a result of strategy implementation in the next 3-5 years), and;
- the **strategies** that are required **over the next 18 months** to make significant progress toward achieving the outcomes.

Securing commitment to the action plan also means coming to an agreement about accountability measures (**indicators**) and having adequate **financial and human resources** for the action plan to be implemented.

## Planning Principles

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Planning principles that guide policy, program and service options are consistent with Manitoba's Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act and are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

***Person-focused*** — *Individuals and their families are treated with dignity and respect. Services and supports are responsive to the unique needs, life circumstances and stated goals and preferences of the individuals and their families.*

***Ability-focused*** — *Services and supports are designed to promote and enhance the individual's abilities towards self-determination, independence and community inclusion.*

***Independence-focused*** — *Individuals have the right to maximize self-reliance, including the attainment of gainful employment to help forge meaningful roles in their communities and society. Supports and services respect self-determination and the direction of one's own affairs without interference.*

***Home and Community Oriented*** — *Individuals have community based services and supports that enable them to remain living in their homes and communities rather than in long-term or institutional based facilities.*

***Accessible*** — *All people regardless of age, social, cultural or economic circumstances will have access to services and supports.*

***Responsive*** — *An individual's changing needs or circumstances are met by a flexible and responsive system of services and supports.*

***Sustainable*** — *Resources are invested strategically to ensure quality services and improved outcomes across the lifespan.*

***Accountable*** — *Services and supports provided encompass the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for results and program outcomes.*

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the Principles for Funding Model Outcomes adopted by the Re-Development Advisory Community Committee in its Terms of Reference, with excerpts taken from Nova Scotia's Putting People First.

***Socially Inclusive*** — *The diversity of all Manitobans is recognized and respected. Services and supports promote social, economic and labour market inclusion and stronger communities.*

***Equitable*** — *Content of funding guidelines is accessible and implemented fairly across the province.*

***Comprehensive*** — *A range of service models/options consistent with the principles outlined above is in place to meet the varied and changing needs of individuals receiving services.*

## Priority 1: Professionalize the wages of Direct Support Workers who support adults with intellectual disabilities.

**Rationale:** This priority is the foundation to any significant improvements of services upon which thousands of adults with intellectual disabilities in Manitoba and their families depend on for their safety, well-being and quality of life. Low staff wages mean high turnover, staff shortages and difficulty recruiting workers with relevant knowledge and skills – all to the detriment of the most vulnerable people in Manitoba.

The expectations of Direct Support Workers are very high and broad, including but not limited to: ensuring personal safety, providing personal care and medical care, meal preparation, housekeeping, yard work, recreational activities, conflict resolution, financial management and facilitating friendships, community connections and involvement, employment facilitation and support of inclusive volunteerism. Currently the average provincial funding for wages for staff providing direct support in community settings is \$12.06/hour. It's not a living wage and it's not a professional wage that recognizes the level of responsibility and the complexity of the job and that is comparable to other people doing the same work in other sectors. Direct Support Workers are one of the lowest paid human services workforces. It is estimated there are at least 3,200 Direct Support Workers working in 100 community-based agencies across Manitoba.

The Province's recent announcement on the Wage Enhancement Fund is a first step, but it is not nearly enough to resolve this crisis. The Province's Staffing Stabilization Initiative, developed and introduced over a decade ago in recognition of the issue, has not been completed.

| <i>Desired and measurable long-term outcomes (3-5 years)</i>  | <i>Strategies to make significant progress on achieving the outcomes in the next 18 months</i>  |
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| <p>Participants and families affirm they are receiving more stable and higher quality services.</p> <p>Direct Support Worker turnover is reduced.</p> <p>Direct Support Worker vacancies are reduced.</p> <p>Skilled Direct Support Workers are attracted and retained.</p> <p>There is a reduced number of Direct Support Workers who hold down more than one job.</p> | 1.1 Implement a starting living wage <sup>2</sup> of \$ 14/hour for all Direct Support Workers in Community Living disAbility Services-funded agencies. |
|   | 1.2 Address compression issues and mandatory costs related to increasing Direct Support Workers' wages.   |
|   | 1.3 Develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure Direct Support Workers earn professional wages.  |

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<sup>2</sup> The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba (2013) defines a living wage as “...not the same as the minimum wage [which is] the legal minimum that all employers must pay. The living wage sets a higher standard – it reflects what earners in a family need to bring home, based on the actual costs of living in a specific community. The living wage is a call to private and public sector employers to pay wages [...] sufficient to provide the basics to families with children” (p. 3). Retrieved October 10, 2014 at <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/family-living-wage-manitoba>.

Priority 2: Professionalize the community living services sector.

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| <p><b>Rationale:</b> This priority is closely tied to the professionalization of wages. Standardized, mandatory training is required for all Direct Support Workers. This training needs to be more than just technical; it also needs to teach about the value of relationships and how to support people without making all of the decisions for them and taking away their own personal will.</p> <p>It is also recognized that people who work as managers and leaders in the community living services sector require minimum levels of training. Management and leadership competence impacts the retention of Direct Support Workers.</p> <p>The Province’s Staffing Stabilization Initiative, developed and introduced by the Province over a decade ago in recognition of the issue, has not been completed.</p> |  |
| <p><b><i>Desired and measurable long-term outcomes (3-5 years)</i></b></p>  | <p><b><i>Strategies to make significant progress on achieving the outcomes in the next 18 months</i></b></p>   |
| <p>All Direct Support Workers in the community living services sector have the same core training based on the same core competencies (3 levels).</p> <p>All management and leadership in the community living services sector have established minimum levels of training based on position and responsibilities.</p> <p>Sector training (base and ongoing professional development) is required and accessible across the province.</p>   | <p>2.1 Hire the required expertise to conduct an inventory of existing options for base and ongoing training (e.g., Foundations, Red River College, University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, agency in-house, Open Futures).</p> <p>2.2 Confirm core and job-specific competencies based on previous work completed by the Hay Group.</p> <p>2.3 Conduct a qualifications survey of the existing workforce, building on the last one completed in 2009.</p> <p>2.4 Ensure the first two levels of base training are available online.</p> <p>2.5 Develop and implement criteria for meeting ongoing professional development requirements, and identify training that meets those requirements.</p> |



Priority 3: Improve Government resources and overall system coordination of services for adults with intellectual disabilities.

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| <p><b>Rationale:</b> Measures are required to shift away from a system that is reactionary and crisis-driven to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide services earlier (e.g. childhood assessment and intervention);</li> <li>• Ensure Manitoba Family Services improves its capacity to help participants and their families make informed decisions about their futures;</li> <li>• Enhance Manitoba Family Services’ capacity to provide timely and equitable access to services (e.g. respite, housing options);</li> <li>• Ensure smooth transitions through all life stages through better and more effective planning and coordination (e.g. transition from home to community living, from youth to adult life and to support aging in place; stronger relationship with other provincial Departments);</li> <li>• Have community-based agencies, service systems and government departments develop better strategies to maximize the effectiveness and responsiveness of resources.</li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b><i>Desired and measurable long-term outcomes (3-5 years)</i></b></p>   | <p><b><i>Strategies to make significant progress on achieving the outcomes in the next 18 months</i></b></p>   |
| <p>Adults with intellectual disabilities and their families have timely access to the programs and services they need.</p>   | <p>3.1 Define the scope of Community Service Workers and define who takes on other associated responsibilities including case management, funding, investigations, licensing, transition planning, advocacy and system navigation.</p> |
|  | <p>3.2 Support the work currently underway to address aging in place for seniors with intellectual disabilities.</p>   |
|  | <p>3.2 Explore the feasibility of creating a clearinghouse that provides information to families on available programs and services.</p>   |

Priority 4: Develop and implement new quality assurance measures for services provided to adults with intellectual disabilities.

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| <p><b>Rationale:</b> Quality assurance measures are required to promote the delivery of consistently high quality services among Community Living disAbility Services-funded agencies.</p> <p>Supports that respond to the values and choices of adults living with intellectual disabilities and their families are essential to a good quality of life. We need to know that the sector is providing services that are responsive to the needs and desires of adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. There are currently no universal quality measures in place. Better means of accountability are required.</p> |   |
| <p><i>Desired and measurable long-term outcomes (3-5 years)</i></p>  | <p><i>Strategies to make significant progress on achieving the outcomes in the next 18 months</i></p>   |
| <p>Provincial minimum standards for quality of service have been established for organizations and individuals providing community living services.</p>  | <p>4.1 Conduct a scan of existing tools/frameworks for minimum quality assurance standards and indicators and certification processes across the lifespan for residential and day services (e.g. The Council on Quality and Leadership – Personal Outcome Measures, British Columbia, Alberta).</p> |
|  | <p>4.2 Hold consultations with stakeholders including people with intellectual disabilities and their families about what they want in terms of minimum quality standards across the lifespan.</p>  |
|  | <p>4.3 Develop the framework of quality standards and certification process based on what people with intellectual disabilities and their families want and documented best practices.</p>  |
|  | <p>4.4 Implement a capacity-building plan for roll-out of the quality standards and certification process.</p>  |

Priority 5: Remove barriers that prevent adults with intellectual disabilities from fully participating in society.

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| <p><b>Rationale:</b> It is necessary to remove policy, legislative and community barriers that prevent Manitobans with intellectual disabilities from participating fully in society. Barriers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdated provincial regulations and by-laws that discriminate based on disability particularly for housing options;</li> <li>• Lack of accessibility and choice in areas such as employment (need to significantly expand available employment opportunities) and programming/service options (enhancements are needed in areas such as one-to-one care, life skills training, access to various health disciplines, tailored day programs, recreational/physical activity programs, and community participation funding);</li> <li>• Government policies in terms of eligibility criteria, per diems, individualized funding and service flexibility. Innovation is required to create more person-centred services.</li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b>Desired and measurable long-term outcomes (3-5 years)</b></p>   | <p><b>Strategies to make significant progress on achieving the outcomes in the next 18 months</b></p>  |
| <p>Adults with intellectual disabilities live where they want and with whom they want.</p>  | <p>5.1 Revise regulations that impact the requirement for an occupancy permit for residential care facilities.</p>   |
| <p>Adults with intellectual disabilities have more inclusive employment and programming/service options.</p>  | <p>5.2 Allow agencies to offer a self-directed service delivery model to participants.</p>   |
| <p>Adults with intellectual disabilities have access to more person-centred and more flexible services.</p>   | <p>5.3 Revise service eligibility criteria so that they consider functional/adaptation needs.</p>  |
|   | <p>5.4 Support the development of inclusive employment and valued social roles options by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.4.1 Providing support and expertise to develop and offer a range of inclusive employment models;</li> <li>5.4.2 Providing agencies with expert counsel regarding social enterprises development;</li> <li>5.4.3 Working with agencies that have sheltered work environments to explore ways to support transition from in-house to community-based options.</li> </ul> |