

BACKGROUNDER

Where to Start - Actions for Saskatchewan's Disability Strategy

The following are first steps forward for the Government of Saskatchewan as it moves to implement the Disability Strategy, building on its work to date:

1. Accessible Public Transportation

Lead: Government Relations

- This initiative would focus on improving the availability and safety of accessible public transit services.
- This initiative not only supports the Disability Strategy, but will also complement poverty reduction initiatives.

2. Respite for Families with Children and Adults Experiencing Disabilities

Lead: Ministry of Social Services

- This would involve starting the developmental work for a provincial respite program that would provide in-home and out-of-home respite for children and adults experiencing disability.

3. Accessibility Legislation Review

Lead: Ministry of Social Services

- This would involve a review of existing legislation and consultation with key stakeholders from the public and private sectors on making improvements to existing legislation, or the development of new accessibility legislation.

4. Residential Services Review

Lead: Ministry of Social Services

- This would involve a review of the current array of residential services available to people experiencing disability. The purpose would be to identify issues and gaps in the range of residential options available to people experiencing disability, and recommend opportunities and solutions to address the concerns to better meet the needs and preferences of clients in a sustainable manner.
- This initiative would align with the Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan.
- The review could include the following services: family homes, alternate family support (e.g. APSH), supported independent living, personal care homes, and group homes. Long-term care facilities would be outside the scope of the review.
- The review will explore several important policy issues concerning residential services including: program eligibility, assessments for residential options, funding models and levels, requirements (standards) and expectations of service providers, legislation and regulation, human resources, supports available to the residential sector, housing infrastructure and integration and co-ordination.

5. Service Co-ordination and Navigation

Lead: Ministry of Social Services

- Issues regarding service co-ordination and navigation were identified at all the Disability Strategy consultations. There are a number of low-cost actions that can improve overall customer experience for those who use the disability service system; this would include starting activities to improve service co-ordination and navigation, and information sharing.
- Information sharing is currently a barrier to ministries and sectors to collaboratively support people experiencing disability and other common clients; the Shared Agenda has identified this as a common issue. The ultimate goal would be to achieve a streamlined process where those coming to Government for services only have to share their information once.

6. Upholding and Educating on Human Rights

Lead: Ministries of Social Services/Justice

- This would involve the development of a mechanism to address systemic issues impacting the rights of people experiencing disabilities; it could also improve awareness and understanding of the rights of people experiencing disabilities and dispelling myths about disabilities. This mechanism could also strengthen the capacity of community advocacy at the local level through training and support.
- Further discussions with the Ombudsman, Saskatchewan's Advocate for Children and Youth, and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission would be undertaken to determine options around an appropriate mechanism.
- Research and analysis will also be needed to determine the scope and responsibilities of any new mechanism with the aim of avoiding duplication and overlap with existing bodies. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission also has an important role to play in addressing systemic issues and providing education on rights – although it's primary focus is on individual complaints.

Disability Employment Action Plan

Lead: Saskatchewan Public Service Commission

- With employment identified as a key area of focus through the development of the Disability Strategy, the Public Service Commission was concurrently tasked with the development of a plan to increase participation of people with disabilities in the public service.
- The resulting four-year action plan is multi-faceted and includes a range of initiatives to fundamentally shift how we accommodate disability within the public service to help Government to become an employer of choice for those persons experiencing disability.

- Key areas of the plan include: disability education awareness and training; leadership to create a culture of opportunity for persons experiencing disability; recruitment and retention of persons experiencing disability; a Disability Management Program including a Return to Work Program; a functional self-declaration process; and human resource policies and processes that remove barriers to employment.

For more information, contact:

Leya Moore
Social Services
Regina
Phone: 306-787-3610