



BI-ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2011 - DECEMBER 31, 2011

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ABOUT THE ALBERTA DISABILITIES FORUM

The *Alberta Disabilities Forum* (ADF) is a partnership of 41 non-profit provincial disability organizations that have come together to share information and ideas and to speak with a unified voice on issues of importance to Albertans with disabilities.

ADF influences policies and services through a number of activities including

- Creating strategies to improve services for Albertans with disabilities
- Working with government to develop and improve policies and programs that affect people with disabilities
- Building partnerships
- Developing information packages
- Informing voters during elections
- Helping people with disabilities be heard - Nothing About Us, Without Us
- Promoting International Day of Persons with Disabilities

ADF provides services for its membership including

- Providing educational and networking opportunities
- Providing workshops on specific areas of interest
- Providing disability-related information and resources

Decisions made by ADF members reflect the needs of people with disabilities in Alberta, and, through the combined efforts of its members, ADF works to ensure these needs are met. Key issues are determined by the ADF membership, which makes its decisions by consensus.

ADF CORE BUSINESS AREAS

ADF has identified the following core business areas:

- Influencing Policies and Services
- Member Services
- Operational Excellence

INFLUENCING POLICIES & SERVICES

By *Influencing Policies & Services*, ADF creates positive change by connecting persons with disabilities to policy makers and presenting positions on issues taken by persons with disabilities and their community organizations. Public education is targeted not only towards legislators, but also towards citizens, who have the rights and responsibilities to make their voices heard.

Objectives within *Influencing Policies & Services*:

- Creating Strategies to Improve Services for Albertans with Disabilities
- Working with Government to Develop and Improve Policies and Programs that Affect Persons with Disabilities
- Building Partnerships

MEMBER SERVICES

Organizations that join the Alberta Disabilities Forum benefit from Member Services that ensure, as has regularly been recognized by our provincial government, that issues of consensus are organized, coordinated, and disseminated to key government officials and disability organizations. Community agencies often lack the capacity to collect, review, and analyze the information available. ADF provides these services to assist in raising awareness of issues facing Albertans with disabilities.

Objectives within Member Services:

- Developing Information Packages
- Informing Voters during Elections
- Helping People with Disabilities Be Heard, “Nothing About Us, Without Us!”
- Promoting International Day of Persons with Disabilities

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

ADF exists to enhance and support the capacities of disability organizations by establishing standards of Operational Excellence – opportunities through which agencies may learn and collect the tools that are required for survival in today’s voluntary sector. Collectively, and for the benefit of the sector as a whole, ADF organizes opportunities for enrichment that agencies, on their own, would have neither the time nor the resources to organize. Additionally, ADF provides opportunities to support community organizations to connect, communicate, and collaborate in an environment where this is necessary and often difficult to accomplish.

OBJECTIVE: CREATING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR ALBERTANS WITH DISABILITIES

Along with ongoing ADF activities, including responding to member requests and keeping ADF members abreast of disability-related information and events, each year ADF takes on a number of initiatives deemed important to ADF member organizations and ADF working groups. Listed below are some activities that ADF participated in from July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011.

ADF EMPLOYMENT WORKING GROUP

The ADF Employment Working Group, which has 6 members, met 3 times from July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011.

ACTIVITY COMPLETED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD:

The purpose of the *Hiring People with Disabilities* and *Accessing Employment Supports and Services* position papers is to identify and address the issues that Albertans with disabilities face when seeking and maintaining employment.

Each position paper

- Outlines barriers to employment for people with disabilities
- Recommends concrete and practical strategies for addressing these barriers.

People with disabilities want to be able to participate fully in the workforce. Employment contributes to independence, financial stability, and feelings of self-worth and accomplishment. However, as reported by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, "Without the assistance of employment supports, persons with disabilities will continue to be under-represented in the workforce, earn less income than their nondisabled peers, and require ongoing government assistance for funding basic and disability supports required for daily living."

The following barriers affect hiring practices and workplace experiences of people with disabilities and their employers (or potential employers):

- Assumptions and misconceptions
- Lack of employer awareness and education
- Navigating the system
- Inadequate and inflexible employment policies and standards
- Lower wages and fewer opportunities for advancement

Employees with disabilities encounter barriers in the following areas when accessing employment services and supports:

- Transitional planning from school to workforce
- Attitudinal barriers
- Accessibility, alternate forms of communication, and assistive technology
- Assessment and intake
- Career development
- Employment supports
- Government policies and procedures
- Ongoing and continuous support
- Information and referral

Outcome:

The working group members met with Minister Thomas Lukaszuk on March 30th, 2011. During this meeting, the Minister asked that the membership develop strategies to increase the number of people with disabilities being employed.

The working group will be requesting meetings with Minister Hancock and his team responsible for the development of effective employment strategies.

Performance Indicator for the ADF Employment Working Group during the reporting period:

Members of the Employment Working Group completed position papers that will reflect the perspectives of ADF member organizations regarding employment improvements needed in Alberta for people with disabilities.

ADF PDD WORKING GROUP

The ADF PDD Working Group, which has 17 members, met 3 times from July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011.

ACTIVITY COMPLETED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD:

The ADF PDD Working Group is developing a position paper in response to the current changes being implemented within the PDD Program to address the impact these changes will have on people with developmental disabilities.

The goals of the working group are listed below:

- To identify and articulate significant problems with the PDD program administrative review and implementation processes
- To create a strategic campaign to raise awareness with elected officials, bureaucrats, and the disability community about the PDD Working Group's articulated issues

Outcome:

Members of the working group sent a request for a meeting with Minister George VanderBurg and the PDD executive team.

Performance Indicator for the ADF Continuing Care Working Group during the reporting period:

Members of the ADF PDD Working Group are developing solutions to be implemented by the Government of Alberta addressing many of the challenges experienced by people with disabilities within the PDD Program.

ADF ALBERTA AIDS TO DAILY LIVING (AADL) WORKING GROUP

The ADF Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) Working Group, which has 12 members, met 5 times from July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011.

ACTIVITY COMPLETED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD:

The ADF AADL Working Group was established to address issues with the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program that are of concern to ADF member organizations. The purpose of the AADL Working Group is to work for streamlined access to disability-related supports under the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program that maximize health, functional capacity, and independence.

The goals of the AADL Working Group are

- To identify and articulate four to six significant issues with the AADL program
- To articulate each issue on a one-pager issue paper.
- To create a strategic campaign to raise awareness with elected officials, bureaucrats, and the disability community about the AADL Working Group's articulated issues.

Members of the ADF AADL Working Group decided to address the following issues within the AADL program:

- The Application Process
- Coordination and Communication with Clients, Vendors, and Others
- Additions, Deletions, Changes, and Paperwork to the Supplies on the Program
- The Appeal Process

The working group made up of

- ADF members
- People with disabilities
- Vendors
- Parents of children with disabilities

Working group members met with representatives from the following areas:

- Adult Rehabilitation Division, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital
- Southeast Homecare (South Palliative – Leduc/Thorsby) and CAIL Program. St. Marguerite Health Services Centre

- Adults, Prosthetics, Orthotics and Seating Department, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital
- Central Zone AADL AHS Representative
- Community Care Coordinator
- Vegreville Home Care/Mental Health/Public Health/Rehabilitation

Outcome:

Members of the working group are working on finalizing the ADF position paper.

Performance Indicator for the ADF Continuing Care Working Group during the reporting period:

Members of the AADL Working Group are developing solutions to be recommended to the Government of Alberta for many of the challenges that are experienced by people with disabilities.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE PERIOD: WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT AFFECT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

One of the main objectives of ADF is to work with different government ministries to assist with the development of policies and initiatives that affect Albertans with disabilities.

Activity completed during the reporting period:

Members of the Alberta Disabilities Forum have sent letters requesting participation in different stakeholder committees sponsored by various ministries.

Outcome:

Through ADF requests, these delegates hold/have held positions on the following Government of Alberta committees that are working to improve services for Albertans:

- Bev Matthiessen, Stakeholder Working Group, Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta, Alberta Education

Performance Indicator during the reporting period:

Ongoing invitations to participate on various government stakeholder review teams.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE PERIOD: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

ADF builds partnerships with government, community organizations, and businesses to provide information about and support inclusion of Albertans with disabilities.

During this reporting period, ADF has been establishing partnerships with Alberta Health Services, Alberta Health and Wellness, and Alberta Seniors and Community Supports. In addition, ADF has been working on establishing partnerships with Alberta Employment and Immigration.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE PERIOD: DEVELOPING INFORMATION PACKAGES

ADF creates information packages on topics important to Albertans with disabilities (e.g. AISH, healthcare homecare, employment). These packages are used by member organizations and people with disabilities to raise awareness about problems and potential solutions.

Member organizations are encouraged to promote ADF position papers and educate their Members of the Legislative Assembly about issues facing people with disabilities in their communities.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE PERIOD: INFORMING VOTERS DURING ELECTIONS

During municipal, provincial, and federal elections, ADF distributes information packages outlining key issues for persons with disabilities. By educating the public and candidates about key disability issues, people with disabilities are encouraged to get involved in the democratic process.

During this reporting period, ADF was involved in the leadership races. As an organization that promotes full participation in society for people with disabilities, ADF takes every opportunity to ensure that disability issues are heard, and political leadership races are no exception. As part of the leadership campaign, members of the ADF Steering Committee have held meetings with the following candidates:

- Gary Mar
- Alison Redford
- Doug Horner
- Doug Griffiths

In addition to PC leadership candidates, ADF met with Laurie Blakeman who was running for the Alberta Liberal Party leadership position.

The purpose of these meetings was to provide the candidates with information about ADF's work, to learn about the candidates' experiences and perspectives on disability issues, to present recommendations on how to move forward on disability issues, and to get a commitment from the candidates to take greater steps to make Alberta a more inclusive province.

To learn more about each of the candidates' perspectives on disability issues, 5 questions were asked:

- How will you commit to making Alberta the most inclusive province in Canada?
- How will you ensure equity in access to disability supports from childhood to adulthood?
- How will you ensure ease in access to disability supports for all disability types?
- What distinguishes your platform on disability issues from the other leadership candidates?
- How will you ensure the Government of Alberta works with the Alberta Disabilities Forum to achieve common goals?

Within each of these questions, members of the ADF Steering Committee discussed a number of important topic areas including a political vision for an inclusive province, AISH, health and personal care needs, affordable/accessible housing, affordable/accessible transportation, inclusive communities, access to disability supports, and the importance of the Government of Alberta working with ADF and its member organizations to move forward on these issues.

The ADF Steering Committee believed that this leadership race was a unique opportunity for people with disabilities, their families, and supporters to get involved in the political process to educate the candidates about disability issues as they formulate future plans for our province.

OBJECTIVE FOR THE PERIOD: HELPING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BE HEARD, “NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US!”

ADF members believe strongly that to ensure the best possible outcomes for people with disabilities, people with disabilities must be involved in the development of policies, supports, and services that affect their lives. ADF finds opportunities for and supports Albertans with disabilities to speak out and become involved with issues of concern to them.

During this reporting period, ADF has been monitoring the PDD program review.

OBJECTIVE: PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL, NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

ADF PRESENTATIONS

The ACCD executive director and the ADF provincial coordinator conducted these presentations upon request:

- Alberta Health and Wellness
- Alberta Health Services
- Alberta Housing and Municipal Affairs

ADF GENERAL FORUM MEETINGS

ADF members hold three business meetings per year. These meetings are an opportunity for our members to share information and ideas, and to provide direction on ADF activities.

Activity completed during the reporting period:

General forum meetings are also an opportunity for ADF members to learn from guest speakers about various initiatives and projects that are currently taking place. During the reporting period, ADF hosted two general forum meetings during July 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011.

Outcome:

Members of ADF had the opportunity to be informed about different ministerial initiatives and policies. Here is a list of the guest speakers during the general forum meetings for the reporting period:

- **Dr. Corrine Truman**, Manager, Continuing Care Strategic Policy, Seniors Health Unit, Alberta Health and Wellness
- **MLA Janice Sarich**, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education
- **Dale Beesley**, Executive Director, AISH Program Delivery
- **Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**
- **Heather Lissel**, Manager, Alberta SCI Action Strategy
- **Jean Dalton**, Director, Neighborhood Health and Personal Well-Being, United Way of the Alberta Capital Region

ADF WORKSHOP

In September 2011, ADF hosted a Legal Aid Alberta Workshop. This workshop benefited individuals and organizations that assist clients who have legal costs that they cannot afford.

The workshop was a great success and attended by more than twenty-five individuals that took advantage of the information provided.

ADF STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

On November 30, 2011, the ADF Steering Committee members conducted a strategic planning session, and the following items were discussed:

- Overview of the strategic planning process – profile the components of a plan
- Mission statement development – what is the purpose or mandate of our organization
- Values review – what are the fundamental beliefs that guide us
- Reflection exercise – the accomplishments and challenges of our organization
- Goal development – what needs to be done to move forward
- Next steps – where do we go from here

A community development officer from the Ministry of Culture and Community Services facilitated this session.

Once the report is completed, it will be shared with the ADF membership for input.

OBJECTIVE: PROVIDING DISABILITY RELATED INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

ADF WEB SITE

Activity completed during the reporting period:

In 2007, ADF purchased the Adobe DreamWeaver Program in order for the ADF Coordinator to do web updates. In this way, ADF can save money because it no longer has to contract services for web maintenance. The web site is accessible to those with a variety of disabilities and is much more current with ADF news and publications. ADF's staff member updates the web site and maintains current information.

Outcome:

Currently, visitors to the web site are able to access findings of the Respite Care Community Consultations and additional information about the ADF Respite Care Demonstration Project. In addition, individuals are able to access the various position papers completed by ADF.

Performance Indicator during the reporting period:

ADF purchased urchin services for the www.adforum.ca web site in September 2009. From January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011, there have been 40,607 hits on the ADF web site.

ADF MAILING LIST

ADF members and friends are sent regular, relevant e-mails that include print media, research articles, workshops, current news, upcoming events, government reviews, policy and/or program changes, job postings, and other disability-related information.

Currently there are 153 individuals/organizations that subscribe to the ADF mailing list.

ADF IN THE UPCOMING PERIOD

ADF is already planning an ambitious schedule for 2012. The next General Forum meeting is scheduled for March 22, 2012, and we are working on inviting speakers. Because of the increased number of members attending the general forum meetings, ADF applied for and was successful in receiving a grant from Lundbeck Canada Inc. to support our expenses for meeting rooms, refreshments, and interpreters.

ADF continues to look at increasing participation of ADF members at ADF general forum meetings, whose offices are outside of Edmonton. We have been considering videoconferencing as a possible solution; however, the cost for setting up videoconferencing locations has acted as a deterrent.

The current ADF membership stands at forty-one member organizations.

ADF has achieved remarkable success in bringing together a large and diverse group of disability organizations for more than a decade to speak on issues of united importance. The one core value that holds our members together is the belief that Albertans with disabilities can, should, and will be fully participating members of their communities and all of Albertan society.