

Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Program

Summary of the 2008 PDD Program Stakeholder Discussions

February, 2009

“What We Heard”



Introduction

The Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Program provides supports and services for approximately 9,100 adults with a developmental disability. The supports and services include residential or home-living supports, community access, and supports to participate in employment and training opportunities.

In June 2008, the Honourable Mary Anne Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, asked the PDD Community Boards to discuss with key stakeholders issues and opportunities related to the ongoing challenges faced by community agencies in recruiting and retaining staff to support PDD clients. Stakeholders were asked to identify new and innovative practices or strategies that could be undertaken to ensure quality services can continue to be provided within the context of the current and future labour markets.

This summary outlines the stakeholder engagement process and summarizes the issues and ideas presented by participants in the 16 sessions held. A more detailed report will be available on the Seniors and Community Supports and Community Board websites.

The Minister of Seniors and Community Supports appreciates the contributions made by all individuals involved in these sessions.

“What We Heard”

Stakeholder Engagement Process

More than 200 individuals and organizations participated in a total of 16 stakeholder discussion sessions. Participants represented four stakeholder groups: adults with developmental disabilities; family members and guardians; service agencies (board members and staff); and provincial/ community organizations. The following questions were asked at each session:

1. What are some new and innovative practices or strategies that PDD and its partners could adopt that would enable us to continue to provide quality services with the same number or fewer staff?
2. For each innovative idea:
 - Are there barriers to successful implementation of the strategy and, if so, what steps could be taken to remove the barrier?
 - Which strategies could be accomplished in the short-term (within six months) and which would require a longer-term (one or two years) for implementation?
 - What partnerships would be required to implement the strategy?

Innovative Practice Suggestions

Participants’ suggestions for innovative practices can be grouped into the following general categories:

A. Strengthen Community Capacity Through Partnerships

Under the *Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Governance Act*, the PDD Community Boards are responsible to, among other things:

- (1) provide services;
- (2) determine community priorities in the provision of services, and allocate funding accordingly;
- (3) assess on an ongoing basis the needs of the region for services for adults with developmental disabilities;
- (4) and coordinate, with other Community Boards and public and private bodies, the provision of services to adults with developmental disabilities.

Participants in the sessions reinforced the need to partner with municipalities, business organizations, and volunteer sector organizations in key areas to avoid duplication (e.g., employment, education and housing). They also noted the need to increase community awareness and enhance the individual’s connections to existing community supports. Participants also suggested encouraging partnerships with other government programs and ministries to coordinate supports; noting, as an example the coordination needed to effectively support people who have complex needs.

B. Flexible Funding and Supports for Families and Community Service Agencies

Most PDD-funded services are provided by community service agencies that are contracted by the PDD Community Boards to provide supports to adults with developmental disabilities. However, a growing number of families choose PDD's Family-Managed Supports option, which enables families to hire and manage staff themselves.

Participants proposed ways to increase the flexibility of this funding, while maintaining or improving core accountability requirements. The proposed ideas would enable innovation and efficiencies in service delivery.

For Family-Managed Supports funding this included:

1. Encouraging more families to use this funding option and hire staff from outside of the service agency sector (e.g., friends and neighbours), thereby taking some of the pressure off the sector's workforce;
2. Hiring family members;
3. Establishing family resource centres as a way to support families who are managing staff supports and promote sharing of ideas and resources;
4. Development of family and individual leadership; and
5. Training to family members to hire and manage staff.

For PDD-funded services provided by community service agencies, participants proposed the creation of new ways to provide funding that supports creativity and efficiency in service delivery.

C. Workforce Development: Education, Recruitment and Retention

Alberta's strong economy has made it extremely challenging for agencies to recruit and retain the staff they need. A number of participants observed that attracting and retaining staff requires more than money. Participants identified a number of possible innovations, including:

1. Establishing more formalized credentials and professional associations;
2. Providing more flexible working conditions;
3. Enhanced training and educational opportunities;
4. Creating "Centres of Excellence" that would support agencies to develop and share resources (such as staff) among agencies funded by other government programs and continuing care centers;
5. Developing an apprenticeship program for the disability services sector; and
6. Encouraging new people to enter the field by targeting specific demographic groups.

D. Use of Technology

Participants suggested increasing the use of technology to reduce the reliance on paid staff and increase independent living (e.g., on-call systems and support teams, automated medication reminders, 24 hour phone-line). It was also suggested that technology could be used to offer virtual training opportunities for staff, or to provide families (especially those in remote regions) with information, as well as the means to connect with other families to share information and provide support to one another.

E. Clear Roles and Mandate of the PDD Program

There was substantial agreement among the participants that successfully responding to current service challenges requires a clear understanding of the PDD Program's mandate, along with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for stakeholders and partners. This included:

1. Defining what services the PDD program funds, while also considering the mandates and eligibility criteria of other government programs;
2. Ensuring that funded services focus on creating genuine opportunities for community inclusion, rather than providing staff for household tasks or paid companionship;
3. Encouraging the use of unpaid or natural supports, including family members, neighbours, volunteers, and colleagues at work; and,
4. Considering the establishment of a single program that would provide funding for both children and adults with developmental disabilities.

F. Accountability

Participants noted the need to have effective tools for measuring outcomes for individuals being supported by the PDD Program. For some stakeholders, measuring outcomes achieved as a result of services delivered was a key aspect of assuring accountability. Specific examples included ensuring that agencies are funded based on clearly defined performance outcomes, and piloting outcome-based funding and contracts with selected service providers. Participants also highlighted the need for monitoring and accountability systems that reward service providers who find efficient and cost-effective ways to deliver services while continuing to achieve quality outcomes for individuals being served.

G. General Comments from the Sessions

Participants provided general comments about the stakeholder engagement process, with different stakeholder groups emphasizing different challenges and opportunities:

- Service agencies focused on the business relationship with the Community Boards (funding levels, contracting and accountability requirements), as well as innovative service and staffing models.
- Families emphasized the need for flexible staffing and additional support in managing services for their adult family member.
- Self-advocates emphasized the partnerships needed to maximize the use of generic community supports, staff recruitment and retention challenges, and innovative ways to deliver services. They also emphasized that good communication is required to understand their needs.

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