

ACDS: Supporting vaccinations in community disability services

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The Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) supports vaccines for all eligible Albertans as a safe and effective way to protect against COVID-19 infection and severe outcomes. As a member organization supporting most community disability service providers for the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program in Alberta, we have advocated on vaccine eligibility for disability workers, and have supported our member organizations to implement vaccination programs and policies throughout the pandemic.

In the spring, we held a series of education sessions for organizations and frontline staff, providing access to credible information about vaccine safety and efficacy, and have continued to share related resources through our website and other communications vehicles. In addition, we held information sessions for organizations facilitated by human resource and legal professionals regarding mandatory and other vaccine policies and will hold two additional sessions next week.

Many of our member service providers have implemented mandatory vaccine policies related to vaccination and disclosure of vaccine status, while others are currently considering these. Throughout the pandemic, community disability service providers have implemented safety protocols and procedures and followed all mandated public health requirements. Moreover, while many services fall outside of the licensed continuing care settings regulated by public health orders, most of these service providers implemented relevant directives and operational guidelines out of an abundance of caution, facilitating increased safety for individuals with disabilities and the staff that support them.

This has all occurred against a backdrop of workforce challenges including, staffing shortages due to isolation and quarantine requirements; implementation of single site staffing to prevent outbreaks; staff attrition due to burnout; funding limitations; and wage enhancements in other care settings. Community disability service providers continue to adopt many mechanisms to ensure the safety of individuals and staff— including vaccination policies, use of PPE, rapid testing and other measures—while managing the enormous staffing pressures they are facing.

ACDS will continue to support organizations in these efforts, including promoting vaccination of all staff and individuals accessing services.

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