

Barrier-Free Health and Medical Services in Alberta

Imagine not being able to enter your doctor's office because of stairs or being told that the x-ray equipment cannot accommodate your disability. Imagine having your disability identified as the cause of all your symptoms. These scenarios are real for many people with disabilities who try to access Alberta's health care services.

Canada's healthcare system was established on the principle of universal healthcare. Every Canadian is entitled to "reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers." Despite the existence of protective healthcare legislation, many Albertans continue to experience marginalization when accessing health and medical services. There are numerous men and women with disabilities who are unable to receive routine procedures such as prostate exams, mammograms, PAP smears, bone scans, X-rays, and CT/MRI scans because the means for them to do so are not in place in doctor's offices or diagnostic clinics.

ACCD's *Barrier-Free Health and Medical Services in Alberta* project is a research project designed to identify the barriers that Albertans with disabilities face when accessing preventive and ongoing health services. Our advisory committee is comprised of government personnel, medical professionals, disability community representatives, and various experts in the field of health and medical services delivery.

The *Barrier-Free Health and Medical Services in Alberta* project has two phases. In the first phase, we are conducting a systematic literature review to identify existing research, policies, case studies, government initiatives, legislation, and opinions on the state of access to health and medical services for people with disabilities. In order to understand personal experiences, we have developed a questionnaire to identify the needs of Albertans with disabilities when accessing health and medical services. In addition, we will be hosting focus groups at various locations throughout the province. The information collected from the literature review, the

questionnaires, and the focus groups will be used to identify issues, develop strategies, and produce recommendations for creating inclusive, accessible health and medical services for people with disabilities.

During the second phase, ACCD will develop a communications and educational media campaign for disseminating our findings and recommendations to medical professionals, the disability community, and the general public.

The importance of the *Barrier-Free Health and Medical Services in Alberta* project rests on Albertans with disabilities' entitlement to the same health and medical services as everyone else. The outcomes of this project will not only benefit Albertans with disabilities, but any Albertan who, at some point in his or her life, might acquire a short- or long-term disability, and seniors and people who have age-related disabilities. If the goal of Alberta Health Services is to shift its focus from institutional to community-based health and medical services, then the starting point should be assuring that doctor offices, medical clinics, and medical imaging technology are accessible to every Albertan regardless of ability or disability.

To fill out the project's online questionnaire, please visit www.accd.net. If you are interested in taking part in a focus group, please contact ACCD at 780-488-9088 or 1-800-387-2514 or email Melita@accd.net.



Funded by The Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund

The ACCD Annual General Meeting

May 28, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn Express & Suites

2440 Calgary Trail NW

Edmonton

Date and
Location
Change

Please join us to find out more about ACCD's projects and services. If you have any questions about the Annual General Meeting, contact ACCD at 780-488-9088 or toll free at 1-800-387-2514.



UN Convention Ratified

On March 11, 2010, Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Convention prohibits discrimination against men, women, and children with disabilities, and it outlines the many steps countries must take to create an environment in which persons with disabilities can fully participate. These steps help ensure things like accessible information and communications technology, and accessible physical environments. The Convention also declares that countries are obligated to raise awareness, promote access to justice, and ensure personal mobility. In this way, the Convention has greater depth than previous human rights treaties that sought to achieve equity in society and end discrimination.

Since the early 1980s, the international community has tried many times to protect or recognize the rights of people with disabilities. Past efforts included the drafting of principles, resolutions, declarations, and other documents. What's different about the CRPD is that it legally binds the 84 nations that have ratified it. A Convention with teeth, the CRPD is sure to impact the lives of people with disabilities world wide.

"The CRPD is more significant than any of the international community's previous efforts to recognize and protect the rights of people with disabilities," said ACCD President, Dave Storey. "According to the terms of the act, the Canadian government is required to monitor progress and make sure treaty commitments are being met." Storey also said that the Canadian Government's efforts to implement its contributions to the convention will be under

scrutiny, both at home and abroad.

ACCD applauds the Government of Canada's role in the drafting of the CRPD. Thanks to Ottawa's commitment and leadership, Canadian values of equity, non-discrimination, and the duty to accommodate are focal points of the Convention. With the ratification of the CRPD, we are us closer to realising our vision of equity and accessibility for all.

Education for Life Bursary

In honour of our 25th anniversary in 1998, the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities created the Education for Life Bursary, an award that helps students with disabilities achieve full participation in society. Each year, the Education for Life bursary helps first-time post-secondary students overcome the financial barriers of new educational challenges. Since 1998, ACCD has awarded bursaries to 76 students with disabilities at a cost of over \$34,000.

June 30, 2010, is the application deadline for ACCD's 2010-2011 Education for Life Bursary. Individuals with disabilities seeking to continue their education as first-time, post-secondary students are eligible for bursaries ranging from \$200 to \$800. Details and an application form can be found on our website at www.accd.net, or contact the ACCD office at 780-488-9088 in Edmonton or toll free at 1-800-387-2514.

It's Time to Renew Your Membership!

ACCD programs and activities are supported by our fundraising efforts, by private and corporate donations, by core and project funding dollars, and, most importantly, by members like you.

If you haven't renewed your membership, please take the time to fill out our membership renewal form and consider sending a donation. We thank you for your continued support!



Together. We Hold The Power!

Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity