

ACCESS TO RECOVERY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND INDEPENDENT LIVING



Quarterly Communiqué

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ACCESS TO RECOVERY



Studies have estimated that the rate of substance abuse in Canadians with disabilities is at the same level or higher than the population as a whole.¹

This rate of occurrence is not reflected in disabled person's participation in treatment programs, an explanation for which may be that as many as two-thirds of substance abuse treatment centres in Canada self-identify as not being accessible.² Those trying to recover from substance abuse issues have a much greater chance of success when supported by a treatment plan and access to resources, which makes it very important that access to such resources be without barriers.

Closing the large gaps between the supply of and demand for accessible and flexible substance abuse treatment options will require a coordinated national strategy involving stakeholders on many different levels. We are pleased to announce the Access to Recovery project, a two-year, national initiative designed and led by the Canadian Association of

Independent Living Centres (CAILC). Funded by Health Canada, CAILC will work with our network of Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRCs) and our partner,

the Canadian Abilities Foundation (CAF), to train communities, create tools and resources necessary to address this issue, and equip mainstream addiction treatment organizations with the knowledge needed to support Canadians with disabilities that face substance abuse issues.

The goal of Access to Recovery is to design and implement a substance abuse awareness and prevention strategy that is led by persons with disabilities and informed, at all stages of the process, by their stated needs and expert knowledge. CAILC will begin the process by completing a national needs assessment. Currently in progress this national needs assessment will consult with consumers (via focus groups) and the addictions field (through a survey) to

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clarify the needs of stakeholders. We will then begin the development of tools for our centres and the community to better serve the disabled population. ILRC staff will be trained at a week long train the trainer on issues specific to substance abuse and disability. It is expected that

the trainers will then use this knowledge to better the centres for their consumers and engage the community. By the end of the Access to Recovery project, there will be a self-sustaining network of supports for persons with disabilities dealing with substance abuse issues.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Special Populations Section: People with Disabilities.

² Dawn Canada (1995) Relief at What Cost.

WHAT IS CAILC?

Founded in 1986 by the Independent Living movement, the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) is the national umbrella organization, representing and coordinating the network of Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRCs) at the national level.

Run for and by persons with disabilities, CAILC is a national, bi-lingual, non-profit organization, and is governed by a Board of Directors which is comprised of a majority of people with disabilities.

One of CAILC's great strengths is in bridging the needs of the disabled community and mainstream providers, as was shown in our Crime Prevention for Independent Living project. CAILC provided leadership in coordinating ILRCs, consumers and service providers to create tools and programs for safety and crime prevention.

The Access to Recovery project will require similar partnering and CAILC's experience in this area bodes well for the success of the project.

WHAT IS INDEPENDENT LIVING?

Independent Living (IL) is a vision, a philosophy and a movement of persons with disabilities. Born on California university campuses in the 1970s, the movement spread to Canada in the 1980s, and has since reached around the globe and changed the way people view and respond to disability.

Independent Living is founded on the right of people with disabilities to:

- Live with dignity in their chosen community;
- Participate in all aspects of their life; and
- Control and make decisions about their own lives.

HEALTH CANADA PRESS RELEASE

“Substance abuse and addiction are serious issues that don’t discriminate.”

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Health Minister
Ujjal Dosanjh*

OTTAWA - Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh today announced the contribution of more than \$430,000 over the next three years to the Canadian Association for Independent Living Centres for their national project, *Responding to Substance Abuse: An Independent Living Approach*. The funding for this project is

delivered under the Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund (DSCIF). "Substance abuse and addiction are serious issues that don't discriminate," said Minister Dosanjh. "They affect

Canadians from all walks of life, including those with disabilities. This project truly reflects this reality and provides relevant information and support that will benefit disabled individuals within our society who are dealing with harmful substance use in their lives."

The goal of the project is to increase the capacity to address substance abuse among persons with disabilities in all regions of Canada. It will include a national needs assessment and survey, outreach activities and partnership building with addiction professionals, training for staff of the 26 Canadian Association for Independent Living Centres located across the country, workshops and peer support initiatives.

This project is among a number of national, regional and community projects to be considered for funding through the DSCIF, following a call

for proposals in January 2005. As other projects are approved, they will be announced in the coming months.

The funding is part of Minister Dosanjh's August 30, 2005, national announcement of the Government of Canada contributions over the next three years for national, regional and community initiatives aimed at addressing substance abuse in Canada. The total funding in that national announcement includes \$29 million under the DSCIF.

The DSCIF funding program is part of Canada's Drug Strategy. This strategy supports initiatives aimed at addressing the harms associated with alcohol, other drugs and substances using a four-pillar approach of prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction. Funding for the DSCIF was provided for in the February 2005 federal budget.

Did you know?

In a study conducted with women with disabilities, 76% stated that the reason women with disabilities might never try to stop or cut back using drugs was because of the lack of accessible help.

The study also cites high rates of physical abuse and over-prescription as causes of substance abuse, which also exist at high levels in the disabled population as a whole.¹

¹ Dawn Canada (1995) Relief at What Cost.

CANADIAN ABILITIES FOUNDATION – OUR PARTNER

The Mission of the Canadian Abilities Foundation (CAF) is to provide information, inspiration and opportunity to people with disabilities, their friends, families and the entire spectrum of professionals engaged in their service, while promoting their full integration into all aspects of community life.

CAF has been successfully pursuing this mission since 1986, and as such produces Abilities – Canada's Lifestyle Magazine for People with Disabilities. Abilities Magazine is the longest-standing publication of its type in Canada. The publication is distributed at virtually every conference and workshop pertaining to disability in this country; it is sent directly to the homes and offices of thousands of individuals with disabilities (direct mail approaches 10,000 copies); it is sent to a mailing list of five-thousand disability-related organizations; it is received by several thousand businesses and corporations, and individual copies are delivered directly to each member of government, federally, provincially and in the territories. The publication is printed four times a year, with a print run of 45,000 copies each issue. A conservative estimate pegs the readership at 135,000 individuals.

CAF has enjoyed a lengthy and effective partnership with CAILC, and includes information on independent living in each issue of Abilities Magazine.

One of the individuals who spearheaded the partnership was Canadian Abilities Foundation president, Ray Cohen. Prior to working in the area of disability, Ray served for many years in the field of substance abuse. He is the founding director of the Alternatives Program for Alcohol and Drug Dependencies, and established the program in both Montreal, Quebec and Vancouver, British Columbia. Based on the success of the program in BC, Ray was hired as a consultant by the provincial Alcohol and Drug Commission. He was eventually brought on as the Provincial Director of Treatment. In total, Ray Cohen has spent 15 years in developing programs concerned with treatment, education and prevention of substance abuse. Ray's expertise in the addictions field and the resources that can be provided by the CAF in terms of branding and marketing the project are going to play integral roles in making the Access to Recovery project a success.

CAILC'S ROLE

CAILC supports the IL movement and strengthens the ILRCs by undertaking the following activities:

- **Policy Articulation** – develops policies to strengthen and support the core programs offered at the ILRCs.
- **Guidance & Support** – offers guidance and support to ILRCs in day-to-day operations and delivery of programs and services.
- **Training & Resources** – develops training and resources to help ILRCs.
- **Networking** – provides a link for the exchange of information, ideas and resources among ILRCs.
- **Partnerships** – develops and maintains working relationships between government, the non-profit sector, and the private sector
- **Information Services** – provides information on Independent Living to ILRCs, the general public, community agencies, governments and the media.
- **Promotion & Awareness** – promotes and builds awareness of the Independent Living philosophy throughout Canada.

PROJECT DEFINITIONS

Access

The term “Access” in the “Access to Recovery” project refers to any policy or strategy that leads substance abuse resources and treatment to be more accessible to persons with disabilities. Access to resources can be achieved through the building of tools for centers and the community that can be used to provide knowledge and expertise to those seeking help. Access to treatment may include physical access (ramps, automatic doors, etc.), information in alternative formats (Braille, plain language), accessible treatment options (harm reduction, attendant services for residential programs) or any other adjustment that is needed to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to this essential health service.

Recovery

For the Access to Recovery project, “recovery” is defined as the personal wellness goals that the individual wishes to strive for. The focus is not that the person gives up use altogether but rather an empowering process whose end goal is made by the individual him/herself.

Tools

One of the goals of the project is to develop resources that will be accessible to centers and the community. These resources will include information on substance abuse, disability, accessibility, promising and best practices and links to other available resources. These “tools” will be available to each centre in the form of a binder and on-line.

Substances

Anything that; when taken internally, alters a persons mood or psychological state. The list of substances Includes but is not exclusive to alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco and prescribed medications.

Cross-Disability

The scope of this project is inclusive to all disabilities. (Physical, Intellectual, Psychological; Visible or Invisible)

Disability Related Websites

Abilities Online
www.enablelink.org

CAMH's People with Disabilities Section
sano.camh.net/resource/pdis.htm

Dawn Canada – Relief at What Cost? WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND SUBSTANCE USE/MISUSE: www.dawncanada.net/relief/

Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres
www.cailc.ca

Substance Abuse Resources and Disability Issues (American)
www.med.wright.edu/citar/sardi/

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

National Needs Assessment

To determine the needs of the disabled community and assess the current capacity of service providers to meet those needs. We have conducted 5 focus groups across the country (St. John's, Trios Pistol, Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Vernon) with consumers cross-disability, who may or may not have had a history of substance abuse issues. The goal of the focus groups was to achieve a greater understanding of opinions on substance abuse in the disabled community, what needs are or are not being met and how services should be delivered.

Currently we are undertaking a national survey of addictions organizations and treatment centers to assess their level of accessibility. The intention is that the Needs Assessment will provide vital

information that can be communicated to our network and service providers and also inform the project moving forward.

Train the Trainer

In the Fall we will be bringing a representative from each of our centers to Ottawa to participate in a 5-day train the trainer conference. The main goal of this training will be to provide these staff with skills they need to go back to their communities and train their center's staff on substance abuse and persons with disability. It is also expected that "trainer" will allow begin outreach into the community and engage in dialogue with service providers that will result in an increased ability to serve disabled persons with substance abuse issues.

For more information about this project, please visit the CAILC website at www.cailc.ca.

Questions and/or comments can be addressed to substanceabuse@cailc.ca.

To receive future editions of the Access to Recovery Communiqué please email substanceabuse@cailc.ca and ask to be added to our substance abuse distribution list!

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Please watch for more communications and updates from the Access to Recovery Project!!

Read the Spring Issue of Abilities magazine for the first in a series of articles we are developing to relay all of the important information we are collecting. Look for a second article in the Summer Issue due out in June!