

For January 15, 2019

ADWA Activities Update

After a flurry of E-Bulletins this fall related to the PDD Review, we have been catching our breath in terms of reports to members, but we have not been idle. We have continued to pursue opportunities to get our messages out about disability worker needs and roles in helping individuals with disabilities have better lives. Here is what we've been up to in late 2018 and what's on the horizon in early 2019.

PDD Review. ADWA board and staff were engaged and active participants in the PDD review process. To ensure that your key messages and needs were shared, ADWA board and staff completed the online survey, as well as attended the community discussions in or near surrounding areas. During the community discussions, ADWA board and staff spoke directly with panel members and added lots of post-it notes to the discussion boards. ADWA was also invited as one of the selected organizations to make a formal presentation which focused on the key messages of compensation, competence and certification. Finally, we sent in four written submissions: the presentation PowerPoint, the report from our PDD Review survey, a shorter version of that report organized around the PDD Review questions, and the "High Cost of Low Wages" report. The three reports can be found at <https://www.adwa.ca/career-resources/publications.html>. The feedback we have received from panel members has been very positive and we feel that they heard our message. Thank you to all of our members who also took the time to participate in the review.

Education Opportunities. On December 4, members of our board and staff met with Minister of Advanced Education Marlin Schmidt and his Chief of Staff to talk about the educational needs of our sector. We were pleased to be able to include members of the Disability Studies program from Bow Valley College in this meeting. Our research tells us that simply increasing the number of educational programs or spaces in our field will not work unless wages in our sector increase enough for people to afford an education. However, we need to start now to plan the rebuilding of a disability education system for that future. This will require ministries to work together on this plan.

Work with ACDS. In addition to partnering with educators to meet our member needs, we continue to partner with the Alberta Council of Disability Services on advocacy and safety-related projects. On November 29, we sent a joint letter to Minister of Community and Social Services Irfan Sabir congratulating the government for indexing AISH to the cost of living as a poverty reduction measure. We also reminded him that the individuals who support AISH recipients are at equal risk of poverty and need compensation levels that are fair given the high level of skill required by the work. This fall, we also partnered with ACDS on a project proposal to Occupational Health and Safety to help build an effective safety culture in our sector.

Election Preparation. This year will see elections at both the provincial and federal level. The Alberta Disabilities Forum has invited member organizations (including ADWA) to work together on materials that would help people with disabilities and their supporters to raise awareness and influence party platforms on issues of poverty and accessibility. ADWA will share these materials and related resources as they are developed.

Disability Advocate. The new Disability Advocate, Tony Flores, was appointed in November. ADWA staff was present at the opening of the Disability Advocate's office on November 21. We followed up with a summary of the role and needs of the disability workers who support individuals with disabilities to have fulfilling lives to the Disability Advocate. We will meet with Tony Flores on January 17.

Certification Pilot. We are continuing to accept anyone who is interested in participating in the pilot to apply. Many candidates faced the challenge of a busy life, personally and professionally. The one piece of advice that those who are further along give is to “*just get started.*” We are starting to set up observation visits for those who have completed the assessments and whose supervisor has provided their input. If you are interested in participating in the pilot and have not yet signed up, there is still a bit of time. Sign up on the [Certification Portal](#) and complete the requirements. Your involvement in this process is crucial to ensure that any process that is designed has been informed by those in the disability workforce.

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Connect

E-Mail: disabilityworkers@gmail.com
Phone: 587-288-0909 Fax: 780-645-1885
4637- 45 Ave., St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A3
www.ADWA.ca