

Arthritis Society –
Saskatchewan Division

Autism Resource Centre

Autism Services

Canadian Association for
Williams Syndrome

Canadian Deafblind
Association –
Saskatchewan Chapter
Inc. (CDBA)

Canadian Mental Health
Association
(Saskatchewan Division)
Inc.

Canadian Parapelegic
Association
(Saskatchewan) Inc.

CNIB

DAWN Saskatoon

Epilepsy Saskatoon

Equal Justice for All-
Saskatoon

FASD Support Network
of Saskatchewan Inc.

Federation of
Saskatchewan Indian
Nations (FSIN) Disability
Working Group

Gary Tinker Federation
for the Disabled Inc.

Grassroots Alliance

IDEA Regina

Metis Family and
Community Justice
Services of Saskatchewan

Metis Nation-
Saskatchewan

MS Society of Canada
Saskatchewan Division

Muscular Dystrophy
Canada (SK)

What is DISC?

The Saskatchewan **Disability Income Support Coalition (DISC)** was formed by a large cross section of disability advocates, consumers and organizations from across Saskatchewan who are committed to advocating for a respectful, dignified and adequate income support system. As partners in a non-partisan coalition, DISC members have joined together to speak as one voice, working towards a distinct (or separate) income system for people with disabilities that is built on our common vision and principles.

Our Vision

Our primary vision is to see an income system that offers both *an adequate baseline income for people with disabilities and a user-friendly mechanism to address individual financial needs based on the impact of disability.*

We believe that developing a distinct income program for people with disabilities must be a truly **joint venture** between all stakeholders, each contributing equally to the process. Together with the Government of Saskatchewan, we bring our rich experience and contribute our expertise to the development of a new income policy for people with disabilities.

As members of DISC we have laid out *key principles for an improved system:*

- **Adequacy-** People with disabilities should have an adequate income that truly meets their needs without the indignity of having to justify their needs. Lifelong disability and subsequent economic insecurity needs to be a consideration. What does DISC consider adequate? A disability income should be enough financial support to meet individual needs, not just basic needs. Our primary aim is to see an income system that offers both *an adequate baseline income for people with disabilities and a user-friendly mechanism to address individual financial needs based on the impact of disability.*
- **Hope and Security-** People with disabilities must have financial accommodations so that they can live their lives with hope, respect and dignity instead of a system of disincentives.
- **Person-Centered and User Friendly-** People with disabilities should be able to expect a dignified service that focuses on their individual financial needs as its reason for being. Financial accommodation should be easily accessible with consistent, respectful income workers who have the mandate and power to respond quickly to individual discretionary needs.
- **Higher Income Exemptions-** People with disabilities must be adequately accommodated as they move into training or employment. Income exemptions need to be increased to eliminate disincentives to employment and independence. Rapid reinstatement needs to be a working principle that allows people with disabilities to feel secure as they move in and out of employment opportunities.

Disability Income Support Coalition (DISC)

Neil Squire Society

North Saskatchewan
Independent Living
Centre (NSILC)

People First of
Saskatchewan

People with disabilities

Phoenix Residential
Society

Regina Anti-Poverty
Ministry (RAPM)

Saskatchewan Association
for Community Living
(SACL)

Saskatchewan Association
of Rehabilitation Centres
(SARC)

Saskatchewan Brain
Injury Association (SBIA)

Saskatchewan Cerebral
Palsy Association

Saskatchewan Down
Syndrome Society

Saskatchewan Deaf and
Hard of Hearing Services

Saskatchewan Families
for Effective Autism
Treatment
(SASKFEAT)

Saskatchewan Voice of
People with Disabilities

Saskatoon Anti-Poverty
Coalition

Saskatoon Housing
Coalition

Schizophrenia Society of
Saskatchewan

South Saskatchewan
Independent Living
Centres (SSILC)

Spina Bifida &
Hydrocephalus Assoc of
Saskatchewan North
(SBHASN)

over.....

- **Consistent Implementation-** People with disabilities should be able to expect a portable and flexible income system that meets their individual needs no matter where they choose to live in the province.

These principles describe a respectful system that truly accommodates disability. It moves away from a welfare-based system that is insufficient, disrespectful and degrading and was never meant to meet the needs of people who may rely on it long-term. Living with a disability should not guarantee a life of financial, emotional or spiritual poverty.

What Progress Has Been Achieved?

- ✚ October 2008 – the Government of Saskatchewan announced that they would create a separate, dignified program for people with disabilities: ‘SAID’ (*Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability*)
- ✚ December 2008 – DISC joined the joint Government – Community Task Team to develop recommended design options for the new income program.
- ✚ May 2009 – *the Government accepted all 50 recommendations of the Task Team and announced that the new income program will be launched on December 1, 2009* with an estimated initial enrollment of up to 3000 individuals. Ultimately, the Government anticipates that between 8,000 and 10,000 individuals will be enrolled on the new income program.
- ✚ December 2009 – a limited number of individuals, living in residential care, were enrolled at the launch of the new program.
- ✚ December 2010 – the earnings exemption for SAID (and people with disabilities on SAP) was increased. A \$100,000 inheritance exemption for SAID was implemented.
- ✚ March 2011 – the budget included funding to develop the assessment tool for SAID, to begin assessing individuals for the next phase of SAID enrollment, as well as a \$50/month increase to SAID clients in residential care settings beginning in January 2012.
- ✚ May 2011 – the first SAID office is opened in Saskatoon.

More work is needed before SAID is fully operational. DISC continues to have a role on the Program Implementation Advisory Team (PIAT) and will continue to work towards an adequate income and fair assessment process.

To show your support for DISC sign up as a friend on our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/saskdisc> and be sure to follow us on twitter for all the latest updates. Just search @DISCsk

For more information go to <http://www.saskdisc.ca/>

Contact:

Judy Hannah, Chair
(306) 955-3344
3031 Louise St, Saskatoon, SK S7J 3L1
judy.hannah@sacl.org

Dave Nelson
(306) 525-5601
daven@cmhask.com