Karis Disability Services
Market Research & Environmental Scan

March 2025

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Purpose of Research Report

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Current Landscape, Emerging Trends, and Challenges

The developmental services sector in Canada is undergoing rapid evolution, prompting significant transformation within various government agencies and organizations providing support and services to individuals with disabilities. The landscape is shifting toward more person-directed approaches that emphasize choice, independence, and inclusion, with a focus on helping individuals of all abilities live their best lives.

Despite these advancements, access to essential housing, education, employment, health, and social supports remains a critical challenge. This market research aims to uncover opportunities to address these ongoing challenges and assist developmental services organizations in pinpointing key areas of focus.

Objective of Report

The objective of this market research and environmental scan is to provide a detailed analysis and overview of current realities, emerging trends, and challenges and opportunities of developmental services in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia.

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Executive Summary

Developmental Services Landscape | Overview of Key Government Strategies

Modern developmental services aim to empower individuals by supporting them in achieving their personal goals and meeting their needs in ways that are truly individualized to who they are. This aim is reflected in Ontario's, Saskatchewan's, and Nova Scotia's strategic plans for the sector and the following provides an overview of each jurisdiction's most recent strategies, reforms, and visions for the improvement of developmental services:

Ontario: *Journey To Belonging*

- Prioritizes person-centered supports, flexible funding, and early intervention to help individuals with developmental disabilities (DDs) live independently and meaningfully in their communities.

- Emphasizes reducing service barriers, increasing cultural responsiveness, and supporting families and caregivers.

- Over 10 years, it aims to reform the system by making services more accessible, individualized, and proactive.

Saskatchewan: *People Before Systems*

- Focuses on shifting developmental services to prioritize individual needs, autonomy, and dignity over rigid institutional processes.

- Promotes flexible, person-directed services that empower individuals with intellectual disabilities (IDs) to make choices about their own lives.

- The plan aims to improve service accessibility, coordination, and responsiveness across the province.

Nova Scotia: *Human Rights Remedy*

- Responds to findings of systemic discrimination by outlining a five-year plan to transition away from institutional care toward fully community-based supports.

- Emphasizes individual choice, equitable access to services, and the elimination of waitlists, with independent oversight to ensure accountability.

- The plan seeks to uphold human rights by ensuring people with disabilities can live independently with the supports they need.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Overview of Current States

Each provinces' respective Ministry is responsible for developmental services policies and sector oversight. Programs and supports vary across provinces, however, each provincial Ministry facilitates eligibility determinations for services, provides individualized funding, and funds service providers to provide residential and community inclusion supports.

Ontario

Ontario's Ministry funds an array of supports and services for people with DDs through two streams: Supportive Living and Supportive Services.

- Through Supportive Living, funding supports various living arrangements.

- Through Supportive Services, funding to individuals or agencies supports community participation, caregiver respite, and more.

- Passport provides direct funding to adults to access Supportive Services.

- Nine Regional Development Service Offices (DSOs) act as the central access point for Ministry-funded supports.

Saskatchewan

The Ministry of Social Services supports people with intellectual disabilities (IDs) through its Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD) branch.

- CLSD has partnerships with and funds Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) across the province that offer supported housing options and supports for community participation.

- Each person meeting CLSD's eligibility requirements is assigned a Community Services Worker (CSW) who provides individualized supports.

- A Self-Directed Funding (SDF) option is available through CLSD, which allows people and their families to directly hire their own supports.

Nova Scotia

The Department of Opportunities and Social Development (DOSD) supports people with disabilities through its Disability Support Program (DSP).

- DSP has service agreements with and funds service providers across the province that provide various residential supports and community participation supports.

- Individualized Funding provides direct funding to people, allowing them to purchase supports they choose.

- In light of the Human Rights Remedy, many current state DSP offerings are undergoing transformation to support community-based living.

Developmental Services Landscape | Overview of Provincial Emerging Trends

While each provinces' developmental services sector has its unique trends, there are also common trends seen across each provinces' sector. The following provides an overview of province specific and shared trends across government spending, funding supports, service delivery and demand, and individualized planning:

Ontario

- The Financial Accountability Office (FAO) has estimated substantial funding shortfalls between what is required and what the province has projected for MCCSS spending growth in the developmental services sector to fund existing programs and commitments.

- 52,000+ adults waiting to access developmental services.

- Passport utilization rates among recipients varies based on one's needs complexity and administration type.

- Agencies are expanding on the host family model with new programs and are increasingly supporting aging in place.

Saskatchewan

- Through the last two provincial budgets, $20.1 M has been committed to addressing evolving services needs of adults with IDs and expanding residential and day programs.

- $9.3 M has been put towards constructing 10 new group homes, an assessment and stabilization home, and a Quality Assurance Team to enhance oversight and foster stronger relationships with agencies.

- New case management standards for agencies are planned to be standardized province-wide in 2026.

- A new Outcomes-Based Service Delivery framework is being piloted with CBOs to assess service quality.

Nova Scotia

- Budget 2024-25 added $102.3 M to support the DSP Remedy.

- The province is transitioning from institutional care to community-based supports and has ceased admission to large-scale institutions as of January 2025, with full closure of all congregated settings housing four or more people by March 2028.

- As of December 2024, 1,547 people were waiting for DSP services with an average wait time of ~6 years.

- New DSP Regional Hubs and Staff (i.e., LACs and IPSCs) across the province are guiding the shift to individualized planning and support.

Developmental Services Landscape | Overview of Provincial Challenges

While each provinces' developmental services sector has its unique challenges, there are also common challenges seen across each provinces' sector. The following provides an overview of province specific and shared challenges across service waitlists, living arrangements and accommodations, workforce challenges, and regional service inequities:

Ontario

- Supportive Living and Supportive Service waitlists have been growing over recent years for adults with DDs, delaying access to needed supports and impeding full community inclusion.

- Provincial policy is focused on group living settings, dictating that people need to move into agency-run settings to access the majority of funding for developmental services.

- The recent employment services transformation has created barriers and challenges for job seekers with DDs.

- 55% of agencies in the sector report a lack of qualified candidates for job vacancies.

Saskatchewan

- Appropriate housing options are limited for people with IDs, and often complex and difficult to navigate.

- Difficulty attracting and retaining qualified staff due to a shrinking talent pool and mismatch between applicants and sector requirements.

- Geographic disparities, lack of accessible transportation, and limited-service availability in rural areas.

- A 2024 Provincial Auditor report evaluated the Ministry's oversight of group homes and APSHs, identifying inconsistencies in person-centred plans, inspection processes, and record checks for agency staff.

Nova Scotia

- Appropriate community-based supports (i.e., community participation supports and disability-specific healthcare) for adults with DDs/IDs are lacking across the province due to its delayed shift from facility-based care.

- Due to ongoing Remedy, there are navigation challenges with the significant changes in policies, regulations, and funding models, for people and service providers.

- Long and slow-moving waitlists for developmental services exist.

- Rural communities have fewer service options compared to urban centres such as Halifax.

Developmental Services Landscape | National Trends & Challenges

Through the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB), the federal government is both supporting and potentially adding complexity to the developmental services sector. The following provides details on the CDB and illustrates the implications of CDB's introduction for the sector nation-wide:

Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)

Bill C-22, passed by parliament in 2023, includes the CDB, which will **provide federal income of up to $2,400/year to eligible low-income working-age Canadians with disabilities** without impacting people's ability to receive provincial disability benefits.

The CDB is set to take effect July 2025 and to receive the benefit applicants must:

- Be between the ages of 18 and 64
- Have a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate
- File an income tax return for the previous year

Although this benefit is meant to act as a top-up for provincial funding benefits, there is a risk that provincial governments may claw back provincial benefits for those receiving the federal CDB funding.

Developmental Service Landscapes:
Ontario, Saskatchewan, & Nova Scotia

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Developmental Services Landscape:
Ontario

Developmental Services Landscape | Journey To Belonging

Ontario's developmental service reform framework - *Journey To Belonging* – is a 10-year plan and vision for the developmental services sector and focuses on three key commitments which aim to empower people with developmental disabilities to make choices and live as independently as possible through supports that are person-directed.

Strategic Focus Areas

The plan is currently in the 'Implementation and Transition' phase (2024-2027) which involves testing new approaches, ideas, and helping people and providers transition to new ways of doing things. *Journey To Belonging* focuses on the following three key commitments:

1. **Putting People First:** Enhance planning and coordination to help individuals pursue their goals, access culturally relevant supports, and prevent crises through early intervention. Introduce a fair, needs-based funding model with more flexibility and transparency.

2. **Improving Service Experience:** Simplify applications, improve assessments, and enhance digital service options. Foster innovation and best practices to create a more person-centered, accessible system.

3. **Improving Quality and Accountability:** Establish a performance measurement approach to improve service quality, promote provider transparency, and develop a skilled workforce for long-term sustainability.

Performance & Evaluation Frameworks

As part of ongoing reforms, the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) is developing a performance measurement approach to support continuous improvement in services and a transparent quality framework to help individuals better understand and choose quality services from agencies.

Financial Investments

MCCSS spends ~2.7 B to fund services for people with developmental disabilities including: ~$1.8 B in residential supports, ~$900 M in agency-based supportive services and direct funding through Passport .

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State Overview

MCCSS funds an array of supports and services for people with developmental disabilities through two program streams: **Supportive Living** and **Supportive Services**. The following provides an overview of the province's current landscape for developmental services:

Support Streams

- Through Supportive Living, MCCSS provides **funding for various living arrangements** for individuals with developmental disabilities, including group homes, host families, supported independent living, and intensive support settings.

- Through Supportive Services, MCCSS **provides direct funding to individuals or transfer payment agencies (TPAs)** for services such as community participation, professional and specialized supports, employment supports, and caregiver respite. The **Passport Program**, a key funding stream under this category, provides direct financial support for eligible adults to access personal development, respite, and community activities.

- Regional **Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) offices**, funded by MCCSS, act as the central access point for adults with developmental disabilities, assisting with navigating resources, determining eligibility, and connecting individuals with MCCSS-funded supports.

Eligibility

- The *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act (SIPDDA, 2008)* **defines eligibility for adult developmental services** as having "significant limitations in cognitive and adaptive functioning determined by a psychologist or psychological associate." These limitations must **a)** have originated before the person reached age 18 **b)** be likely to be life-long, and **c)** affect areas of major life activity.

Trends & Challenges

- While Ministry funding for Supportive Living and Supportive Services has increased in recent years and is projected to increase, the system faces ongoing challenges, including long waitlists, workforce shortages, funding constraints, and regional service inequities.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services (1/3)

Funding Supports

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

Developmental services in Ontario are shaped by the aim to create a more person-centered and community-based system as individuals with developmental disabilities are supported through community Supportive Services and Supportive Living to enhance their independence and participation in everyday life.

Nine regional DSO offices across the province act as the central access point, eligibility assessor, and navigation support based on an individual's needs for the following MCCSS-funded services and supports:

Supportive Services

- **Community Participation Services and Supports:** provided by TPAs and includes supports and activities for personal development, promotion of life-skills and community participation for individuals no longer in school, and the development of a personal Individual Support Plan (ISP).

- **Professional and Specialized Services:** support individuals with DDs and those with a dual diagnosis to get psychological assessments to confirm eligibility for adult developmental services if a diagnosis is missing or unclear. Additional supports include clinical behavioral treatment plans, behavior support plans, psychological and psychiatric interventions, crisis stabilization, speech therapy, communication training, and counseling for individuals and caregivers.

- **Caregiver Respite:** TPAs provide temporary relief to primary caregivers of adults or children with DDs.

- **Community Networks of Specialized Care (CNSC):** facilitate collaboration among specialized services and professionals across sectors – developmental services, health, education, and justice – to improve service navigation, access and quality for adults with DDs and complex care needs.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services (2/3)

Funding Supports

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

Supportive Living

- **Supported Independent Living:** a setting in which one or more individuals reside alone or with others but independently of family members or of a caregiver and receive less than 24/7 supports from a service agency.

- **Host Family Settings:** offers a family-based living arrangement where an individual lives with a host family who provides a supportive and inclusive home environment.

- **Supported Group Living Setting:** staff-supported setting operated by a service agency, in which three or more individuals reside and receive supports from the agency.

- **Intensive Support Settings:** staff-supported setting where one or two individuals reside and receive intensive support (i.e., provision of all food and other supportive living supports like personal care items and supports for activities of daily living).

- **Specialized Accommodation:** staff-supported setting with either permanent spaces for adults with persistent high-risk behaviour requiring ongoing specialized support, or temporary transitional spaces to provide crisis and specialized respite services for adults whose needs exceed their caregivers' ability to keep them safe from self-harm and/or harm to others. Typically supports individuals with dual diagnosis and/or challenging behaviours.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services (3/3)

Funding Supports

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

Youth to Adult Transition Supports

When youth with DDs turn 18 years old, services such as Special Services at Home, Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD), and services through the Ontario Autism program end. As a result, people must apply to their regional DSO to find out if they are eligible to receive adult MCCSS-funded supports.

The following highlights some of the transition supports available for youth with DDs:

- **Student Links:** facilitated by TPAs and provides transition supports for high-school students between the ages of 14 to 21 with a DD to explore post-school opportunities by connecting students with adult mentors who offer career shadowing, volunteer experiences, community-based learning, and skill development that is aligned with students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and goals.

- **Youth to Adult Care Toolkit resource**: The Complex Care for Kids Ontario (CCKO) program is led by the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH), which aims to improve care continuity and service delivery for youth with medical complexity. CCKO has developed a Transition Resource Guide which details what families, and their children, can do to ensure a smoother transition to adult services.
    - Topics in the resource include the DSO application, the ODSP application, Home and Community Care Support Services, Substitute Decision-Maker, Respite Services, and more.

- **Early DSO Applications:** To avoid service delays, families and youth are encouraged to begin the DSO application process when the youth is 15 years old and to apply once the youth turns 16. Youth can be confirmed eligible for adult developmental services at age 16 but services will not start until they are 18.

- **Early ODSP Applications:** Families and youth are encouraged to begin the ODSP application process six months before the youth is 18 years old as ACSD payments stop at age 18.

Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services

Funding Supports (1/3)

Employment Land[...]

Workforce Develo[...] & Training

MCCSS provides funding to adults with developmental disabilities and funds TPAs to deliver supports and services to individuals, administer funding programs, and ensure service quality.

Funding Supports for Individuals

The **Passport program** operates as a reimbursement funding program and provides funding to eligible adults with developmental disabilities for supportive services (i.e., community participation supports, support worker hours, employment supports, technology, transportation, etc.). All individuals eligible for supportive services can receive $5,500/year and some may be eligible to receive funding up to a maximum of $44,275 based on their assessed need, priority, and available funding. While Passport is funded by MCCSS, local DSO offices manage the application process and local Passport Agencies work with individuals to administer the program.

Once funding is approved for an individual a Person Managing Funds (PMF) must be designated and this can be the individual themselves, a family member, or friend. Individuals have three services options to administer their Passport funding:

1. **Self-Administer** → an individual manages their own funding and/or with their PMF, developing their own support arranges and hiring their own support workers and services providers.

2. **Transfer Payment Recipient (TPR)** → an individual chooses to receive direct supports from a ministry funded TPR that they select and that TPR delivers supports directly to the individual, submitting invoices and receiving payments on the individual's behalf.

3. **Broker** → an individual can choose a person, agency, or organization to manage their Passport funding, which can help with budgeting, submitting invoices, recruiting and scheduling workers.

Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services

Funding Supports (2/3)

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

Funding Supports for Individuals (*continued*)

People receiving Passport funding can also qualify for **Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Income Support** if they meet income and asset eligibility criteria. Passport funding is *not* considered income for ODSP eligibility purposes, meaning it does not affect ODSP payments or eligibility.

- **ODSP Income Support:** Adults (18+) with substantial physical and/or cognitive disabilities lasting a year or more can receive up to $1,368/month, with adjustments based on living situation. In 2023, ODSP rates were tied to inflation with the first inflation-based increase of 4.5% in 2024.

People who have a disability requiring equipment or supplies for 6 months or longer can receive funding through the **Assistive Devices Program (ADP)** to pay for customized equipment and specialized supplies.

- **ADP Support:** People with long-term physical disabilities can get 75% of the cost for most eligible equipment and supplies covered by the ADP. Eligible equipment and specialized supply types include mobility aids, hearing aids, communication aids, visual aids, diabetic equipment and supplies, home oxygen therapy, and more.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services

Funding Supports (3/3)

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

Funding for Service Providers

- **Passport Program Administration:** MCCSS funds 11 Passport agencies across the province to assist recipients in accessing admissible services, determine funding allocations, and support individuals and families in managing their funding. Claims processing and reimbursements are managed separately by the Consolidated Payment Agency (PassportONE - Family Services Toronto).

- Supportive Living: MCCSS funds a variety of living arrangements through service agencies, which served approximately 18,000 individuals in 2023-24, with the majority of these individuals living in group homes.

- **Supportive Services:** MCCSS funds service agencies to deliver services with the largest category being community participation supports, representing ~43% of agency-delivered services spending in 2023-24.

- ODSP Expenditure-Based Funding: MCCSS funds service providers to sustain employment-related services under ODSP's employment assistance program.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

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Workforce Develo & Training

Government Funded-Programs & Supports

Agency Funded Employment Supports: Service agencies are funded by MCCSS to provide employment supports to adults with developmental disabilities.

ODSP Employment Supports: Individuals eligible to receive developmental services automatically meet the disability requirement for ODSP and its employment supports in which individuals work with a community-based service provider to receive available supports such as help preparing for work, helping find a job that is right for them, help keeping a job, job coaching and more.

Community-Based Organization Supports

Organizations such as Community Living Toronto, March of Dimes Canada, L'Arche Canada and more, provide employment supports to individuals with developmental disabilities.

- Specific services vary between agencies but may include some of the following: supports to prepare individuals for employment, transitioning individuals to competitive employment support programs, job training and coaching, interventions with employers for individuals to maintain employment.

Employment Rates

While recent and specific Ontario employment data for individuals with developmental disabilities is limited, broader Canadian statistics provide insight into employment rates for individuals with developmental disabilities:

- Employment rates for individuals with developmental disabilities hover around 25% (2016), compared to about half among people with other disabilities.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

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Workforce Development & Training

The developmental services sector in Ontario relies on roles such as Personal Support Workers (PSWs), Developmental Support Workers (DSWs), and Adult Protective Service Workers (APSWs), to provide essential care and support to individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Provincial Network on Developmental Services and MCCSS formed the **Developmental Services Workforce Initiative** with the focus of working collaboratively with the broader sector to support a skilled, diverse and professional workforce that will help people participate meaningfully in their communities and live good lives.

Training Programs
- **Diploma Programs:** Ontario colleges offer two-year DSW diploma programs which train students to support individuals with developmental disabilities. Curriculums generally include courses on crisis intervention, education support processes, influential social factors, pharmacology, counselling and interview skills, while also providing practical experience through field placements in group homes and community programs.

- **DSW Apprenticeship Program:** Alternatively, aspiring DSWs can pursue an apprenticeship program that is ~2.5 years combining on-the-job experience and in-school training for a total of 4,500 hours.

Government Supports for Support Workers
- **Permanent Compensation Enhancement Program (2022):** provided an additional $3/hour permanent compensation increase for PSWs and DSWs working for MCSSS-funded agencies or individuals.

Qualifications and/or Certifications
- **DSWs**: diploma or certificate of apprenticeship | **PSWs**: PSW certificate | **APSWs**: DSW diploma/Social Work/Other

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Developmental Services Landscape | Emerging Trends

Trends in Funding Supports & Government Expenditures

Based on the Financial Accountability Office's (FAO) June 2024 Spending Plan Review, the FAO has estimated substantial funding shortfalls between what is required and what the province has projected for spending growth in the developmental services sector. The FAO has estimated that the province has allocated $3.7 B less than required to fund all existing MCCSS programs and announced commitments from 2024-25 to 2026-27.

The following illustrates what the FAO projects is required for Supportive Living and Supportive Services from 2023-24 to 2028-29, and does not represent MCCSS's planned or committed growth rates:

Supportive Living spending is projected to grow at 4.4% annually, from $2.26 B (2023-24) to $2.80 B (2028-29):
- Growth projection is driven by increases in spending per supportive living placement due to inflation and rising placement costs for new intakes
- However, the FAO projects that the number of clients served will remain constant over this period, which continues to be the trend observed since 2017-18
- Between 2017-18 to 2022-23 the number of people served remained relatively constant (ranging between 19,328 and 18,266)
- The lack of growth in the number of people served has contributed to a growing waitlist for supportive living

Supportive Services spending is projected to grow at 2% annually, from $1.1 B (2023-24) to $1.2 B (2028-29):
- This increase is driven by growth in the number of Passport funding recipients which is projected to grow from 65,146 (2023-24) to 80,087 (2028-29)[1]
- However, aligned with recent historical trends, the FAO assumes most new Passport recipients will *not* receive their full funding allocation based on their assessed need
- Approximately 75% of Passport funding is used by people and families to pay for support workers and staffed day programs
- Funding for agency-delivered services is expected to remain constant at the 2024-25 level of $527 M until 2028-29

1. Represents an estimate of the number of people with developmental disabilities in Ontario who will seek supportive services.

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Trends in Funding Supports & Government Expenditures

Within the Passport program, recent utilization[1] trends among different recipient segments were shared with Davis Pier and Karis by Family Services Toronto (through their role as the Consolidated Payments Agency for the Passport program) and the following captures these key insights:

People who receive the minimum amount of $5,500 and 'Self-Administer' their funding are the lowest utilization group:
- People who Self-Administer their funding and receive the minimum of $5,500/year have a utilization rate of 31%, which means that these recipients are only using roughly 1/3rd of the money they have been approved for.

- Additionally, people who are their own PMF tend to be higher functioning individuals who would focus their funding on community participation activities.

People who receive the minimum amount of $5,500 and have administration by Family PMF have slightly higher utilization:
- People who self-administer their funding through a family member as their PMF and receive the minimum of $5,500/year have a utilization rate of 47%, which means that these recipients are still only using just under half of the money they have been approved for.

- Additionally, of all the funding used by this category of recipients 62% is spent on respite (i.e., hiring support workers).

People with complex needs tend to receive higher allocations of Passport and have much higher utilization of allocated funds:
- People with complex needs tend to not self-administer their funding and designate a PMF to manage their funding, which has been equated with much higher levels of utilization (well over 80%).

1. Utilization rate refers to the percentage of approved or available funding that is actually used by a person.

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Trends in Waitlists & People Requesting Services

Across the 11 distinct adult developmental service waitlists that exist across the two streams of services in the province, there are more than 52,000 adults waiting to access developmental services. The following highlights the wait that people requesting services have experienced in recent years and are currently experiencing:

Supportive Living
A 2024 FAO report showed that the Supportive Living Services system is serving fewer people than it did in 2018 while the waitlist for accommodations has grown by 55%.
- **Group Homes:** 15,000+ people are waiting for group home placements
- **Supported Independent Living (SIL):** 16,000+ people are waiting for SIL accommodations
- **Host Families:** Waitlist for Host Family settings has increased by more than 200% between 2014 and 2023

Supportive Services
Community Participation Supports currently has the largest waitlist followed by Caregiver Respite and Employment Supports.
- **Passport funding:** As of June 2024, 30,000+ people were waiting to receive their full allocation of funding and the number of people waiting to receive their full allocation between 2018-19 and 2023-24 grew by 105%.
- **Caregiver Respite:** 22,000+ people waiting to receive caregiver respite support which contributes to financial hardship for people who support a loved one with a disability
- **Adult Protective Service Workers (APSWs):** Waitlist for APSWs almost doubled between 2019 and 2022 which is thought to be linked to the rapid increase of young people entering developmental services from the child welfare system
- **Community Participation Supports:** 33,000+ people are waiting for community participation supports
- **Employment Supports:** 14,000+ people waiting for employment supports amid the province's transformation of employment services

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Trends in Service Delivery & Service Demand

The following highlights key trends in the delivery and demand of developmental services in the province:

Service Delivery

- 'Friendly Neighbours' and 'Supportive Roommates' programs: Agencies have expanded on the host family model by introducing programs where current or prospective members of an individual's informal social network receive compensation to be available as needed to offer a range of support (i.e., grocery shopping, cleaning, cooking, and interacting with service providers). An example of one such program is South East Grey Support Services (SEGGS) 'A Good Neighbour' model.

- Supporting Aging in Place: Many agencies have made changes to support people to age in place such as building modifications, staff training, and the introduction of nursing and hospice supports.

- **Individualized Supports:** There is a growing focus on individuals making important decisions for themselves about their supports and activities (person-directed) and that government and agency supports are designed to focus on meeting people's needs and preferences (person-centred).

Service Demand

- **Outside Paid Resources:** When MCCSS service agencies reach capacity limits to provide residential placement or care for individuals with a DD, there is increasing use of for-profit care providers (known as 'Outside Paid Resources') by agencies via contracts, individuals, and families.

- **Aging Caregivers:** Many adults with disabilities rely on aging parents which increases the urgency for housing options and care solutions.

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Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Waitlists for Developmental Services
Two reports released in 2024 – *Ending the Wait* and the *FAO's MCCSS Spending Plan Review* – highlight the magnitude and implications of the waitlists.

Supportive Living and Supportive Service waitlists have been growing over recent years for adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

This delays access to needed housing accommodations, full allocations of individualized funding through the Passport program, caregiver respite, and ultimately hinders individuals' ability to fully participate and engage in community.

Notably, there is an ongoing certified class action legal case against the Government of Ontario led by individuals who were on a waitlist for supportive living services, caregiver respite services, or Passport funding between July 2011 and December 2018.

Current Emphasis on Group Living
Provincial policy focuses on group living settings and dictates that individuals need to move into agency-run settings to access funding for developmental services supportive living.

Opportunities

There are several actions that service agencies, advocacy groups, and the province can take on to continuing to work towards reducing the waitlist problem in Ontario.

The following illustrate some of the opportunities that have been highlighted by organizations in the sector:

- Increase capacity in Supported Independent Living and shift provincial policy away from group living; moving away from group housing has also allowed some agencies to sell capital assets, reduce costs, and use funds to support people in individualized settings

- MCCSS should provide more funds to people to stay in their family home for those that want to and are able to do so as funding should not be contingent on where a person lives - this may take pressure off of the Supportive Living waitlist

- Expand on 'family neighbours' and 'supportive roommates' programs which increase the likelihood of success in independent settings (Ex. SEGSS 'good neighbour' program)

Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Employment Supports

The province's decision to shift employment service responsibilities to Service System Managers (SSMs) has created barriers and challenges for job seekers with developmental disabilities as the transformation has constrained employment service agencies serving individuals with developmental disabilities. Notably:

- Access to employment services has become more difficult, especially for those requiring individualized support

- Agencies receive no financial incentive for job seekers who work fewer than 20 hours per week (i.e., the "20 Hour Rule") which is seen as discriminatory since many individuals with developmental disabilities may only be able to work part-time

- Agencies report that people with intellectual/developmental disabilities are being left behind with these changes and are not receiving the assistance they need to find and keep jobs

"People with disabilities and especially intellectual disabilities were not getting the greatest employment supports to begin with under ODSP-ES… But now they are being completely abandoned by these changes" – employment agency staff

Opportunities

While service agencies and advocacy groups in the developmental services sector are limited in what control they have over Ontario's current employment transformation, it is important for organizations to understand what they can advocate for.

The following are recommendations that Community Living Ontario (CLO) has put forth to remedy the current challenges seen:

- **Revise the '20-Hour Rule':** Replace the rule with incentives that acknowledge part-time work.

- **Changes to funding and incentives:** Operational funding and performance-based incentives should be modified to allow for the time and support needed by job seekers to succeed.

- **Involve Service Providers:** Employment service providers should be engaged by the Ministry of Labour to understand where the new system can be improved to support job seekers with disabilities.

Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Workforce Challenges

Service agencies in Ontario rely on a workforce of DSWs, APSWs, and PSWs. For several years the developmental services sector has faced a skills and labour shortage. The sector has also historically struggled to compete with compensation offered in the health care and long-term care sectors.

A December 2024 CLO and Oasis paper indicates that:

- 55% of agencies in the sector report a lack of qualified candidates.

- 30% of agencies in the sector report being unable to fill job vacancies because they are unable to find qualified staff.

Opportunities

The following are opportunities that service agencies can pursue to strengthen the province's developmental services workforce:

- Engage with educational institutions to align curricula with sector needs and facilitate student work placements.

- Encourage individuals to pursue the DSW apprenticeship pathway to address workforce shortages, as it allows individuals to earn while they learn.

- Offer flexible learning options, such as online courses or micro-credential, to allow current staff to further their education without disrupting work schedules.

- Offer mentorship or peer-to-peer learning programs for staff to help them feel supported and valued in their roles and encourage knowledge sharing and professional growth.

Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Regional Service Inequities

A 2020 Auditor General of Ontario *Value-for-Money Audit* illustrated the significant regional disparities in how much funding is allocated per person and the level of services provided in different parts of the province. The 2022 follow-up report deemed that MCCSS made 'little or no progress' addressing equitable support levels across the province.

The report found significant differences in wait times for needs assessments in 2019-20 among regional DSOs with some people waiting four times longer for an assessment than others.

Additionally, significant differences in Supportive Services that individuals received from agencies were found as well:

- Community Participation Supports → Toronto region individuals received an average of 179 support days per year, while East region individuals received 94

- Caregiver Respite Services → West region individuals received 360 hours per individual per year, while Central received 140

- Employment Supports → Toronto region individuals received 143 days per year, while West received 55

Opportunities

To provide equitable levels of supports across the province, several opportunities have been identified by the Auditor General which MCCSS had made little or no progress on as of 2022.

Opportunities to reduce regional service inequities initial focus on collecting more information across regions but they also include:

- Organizations can work with local DSOs to better understand specific needs and gaps in each region. This will allow them to tailor their support services and create more equitable distribution of services like employment supports, caregiver respite, and community participation.

- Identify key regions (e.g., East, West, or Central) that experience lower funding levels or service delivery. Organizations like Karis can partner with local businesses, community groups, or community-based organizations to boost resources where they are most needed.

Developmental Services Landscape | Key Actors

ON

Ministry of Children, Community, & Social Services

MCCSS is the provincial government ministry responsible for developmental services policy, legislation, funding, and oversight of the sector in Ontario.

Developmental Services Office (DSO)

9 Regional DSOs act as the central access point to services, assisting individuals/families with navigating resources, determining eligibility, and connecting individuals with MCCSS-funded supports.

Passport Agencies

11 Passport agencies across Ontario are MCCSS-funded to assist recipients in accessing admissible services, determining funding allocations, and supporting individuals/families manage their funding.

PassportONE (Family Services Toronto)

PassportONE, operated by Family Services Toronto, is the Consolidated Payment Agency for the Passport program, processing and reimbursing claims made by Passport recipients.

Developmental Service Agencies

Service agencies, such as York Support Services Network, Surrey Place, and March of Dimes, operate and provide Supportive Living and Supportive Services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Advocacy Groups & Associations

Advocacy groups and associations, such as Community Living Ontario and Oasis, help advocate for policy changes in the sector to better support individuals with developmental disabilities and service agencies in the sector.

Developmental Services Landscape:
Saskatchewan

Developmental Services Landscape | People Before Systems

Saskatchewan's 10-year strategy – *People Before Systems* – focuses on transforming the experience of people with disabilities in the province with an emphasis on person-centred services, human rights, and accessibility. The strategy is supported by four drivers of transformation and several recommendations to enhance inclusion and service delivery.

Strategic Focus Areas	*People Before Systems* is supported by the following four drivers of transformation: 1. **Person-Centred Services:** Shifting to a flexible, responsive system that prioritizes individuals over structures and is accountable for helping people achieve their goals 2. **Impact of Disability:** Moving beyond a diagnosis-based model, this approach recognizes that disability is shaped by its impact. While many conditions are permanent, reducing societal barriers fosters full inclusion. 3. **Promoting and Protecting Human Rights:** People with disabilities face ongoing struggles for fair treatment. First Nations individuals experience added barriers. This strategy aligns with UN commitments to uphold their rights. 4. **Accessibility and Inclusion Benefit Us All:** Instead of designing for the "normal" range of abilities, this approach creates inclusive environments that reduce the need for adaptations, improving experiences for everyone.
Performance & Evaluation Frameworks	The Ministry of Social Services has developed an Outcomes-Based Service Delivery (OBSD) Framework to act as a basis to monitor and evaluate services community-based organizations (CBOs) provide to people with intellectual disabilities. Designed and piloted with CBOs, it includes six person-centered domains and three supporting outcome domains.
Financial Investments	*People Before Systems* does not mention dollar amounts for investments but it does mention improving financial incentives for family caregivers, expanding flexible respite benefits for families caring for children, and expanding supportive housing.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State Overview

Saskatchewan's Ministry of Social Services supports people with intellectual disabilities through its Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD) branch which helps people access supported housing options and supports for community participation. The following provides an overview of the province's current landscape for developmental services:

Support Streams

- Each person meeting CLSD's eligibility requirements is **assigned a Community Services Worker (CSW)** who provides individualized support, counselling, co-ordination of services with individuals/families and community agencies, and more.

- CLSD has partnerships with and funds CBOs across the province which offer **supported housing options** (Approved Private Service Homes [APSHs], Group Homes, Group Living Homes, and Supported Living Programs) and **supports for community participation** (day programs and community inclusion programs).

- CLSD also offers a Self-Directed Funding program, allowing people and their families to directly hire their own supports, rather than relying on traditional funding to service providers like group homes or day programs.

- Specialized services like **Cognitive Disability Consultants** and **Crisis Intervention** further enhance the ability to meet complex needs, while programs like the Family Respite Benefit and Home Accessibility Program ensure that families and caregivers also receive support.

Eligibility

- CLSD offers programs and supports to **children and adults with a diagnosis of intellectual disability** with an onset before age 18. Eligibility is based on assessment documentation and requires an assessment report from a medical practitioner/qualified professional that substantiates the diagnosis.

Trends & Challenges

- While Ministry funding for supported housing options and community participation supports continues to increase, the province's developmental services sector struggles with appropriate housing capacity, workforce challenges, regional inequities, and oversight of service providers to ensure standards compliance.

SK

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SK

Programs & Services (1/3)

Funding Supports

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

A significant part of Saskatchewan's developmental services landscape is based on community integration. People with DDs/IDs are encouraged to live in their communities with access to services that help them participate in life activities. CLSD supports eligible people through funding and partnerships with CBOs that deliver Supports for Community Participation and Supported Living options:

Supports for Community Participation
- **Day Programs:** Supports individuals in participating in work, leisure, and life skills development activities, including job training, supported employment, and socialization.

- **Community Inclusion:** Programs help individuals engage with the community, access leisure activities, and participate in daily life.

Supported Living
- **Approved Private Service Homes (APSH):** Family-like environments where residents with intellectual disabilities develop social and life skills. About 500 individuals benefit from this program.

- **Group Homes:** Provide personal care, supervision, and support in residential neighborhoods for adults with intellectual disabilities. These homes are staffed 24/7.

- **Group Living Homes:** Residents share a home and manage basic shelter costs. Support staff is provided as needed.

- **Supported Living Programs:** Adults live in their own homes with limited support to foster independence.

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Programs & Services (2/3)

Funding Supports

Employment Landscape

Workforce Develo & Training

Youth to Adult Transition Supports

Through MSS caseworkers, transition services are available for youth moving from care or school settings to the adult development services system. This is guided by the Ministry's *Policy for Transition Planning for Youth* which Child and Family Programs (CFP) and CLSD caseworkers follow and collaborate on when planning for youth/young adults transitioning to CLSD services as they enter adulthood.

Notably, once a youth is 13 years old, the CFP caseworker will begin to explore their eligibility for CLSD and transition supports will then begin with the following:

- Case management and coordinated planning with CLSD
- Development of transition plans based on the youth's needs, strengths, and goals
- Support for accessing funding, securing housing, and employment options

The CFP caseworker is responsible for leading and coordinating the youth's transition out of care, while the CLSD caseworker takes over primary case management once the youth enters the adult services system.

Supports for Medical Needs

Home Care Program: Available for individuals needing acute, palliative, or long-term care to stay independent at home. Home care services are managed by the Saskatchewan Health Authority based on individual need and include the following services:

- Personal care
- Home management assistance
- Supportive care to allow individuals to remain independent at home.

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Programs & Services (3/3)

Funding Supports

Employment Landscape

Workforce Develo & Training

CLSD Clinical Services

Through two services operated by CLSD, crisis response and clinical prevention teams provide services to CBO staff, individuals, families, and/or caregivers. The following describes these two services in more detail:

- **Clinical Crisis Services:** A rapid-response, short-term intervention program designed to stabilize individuals in crisis. Services are provided in-home and in stabilization homes, supporting individuals through crisis de-escalation, behavioral intervention, and mental health support.

  - Serves adults (and sometimes children and youth) who display dangerous or harmful behaviour to self or others, that may cause loss of one's home, school or vocational supports.

  - More specific services/supports include: short-term crisis intervention strategies, de-escalation, behavioural stabilization, outreach mentoring to support staff helping improve intervention strategies, and more

- **Clinical Prevention Services:** A proactive, early intervention and capacity-building program aimed at reducing crisis situations through education, training, and long-term behavioral support. Prevention services focus on helping individuals, families, and community organizations develop sustainable strategies to support individuals with complex support needs.

  - Serves adults who have IDs and who experience complex behavioural and/or physical challenges that impact their ability to live and/or participate safely in their homes/communities.

  - More specific services/supports include: early intervention strategies to prevent crisis situations, behavioural consultation and psychosocial support, capacity-building for CBOs, and more.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services

Funding Supports (1/3)

Employment Landscape

Workforce Develo[pment] & Training

The Ministry of Social Services and CLSD provide funding to adults DDs/IDs and CBOs to deliver supports and services to adults supported by CLSD.

Funding Supports for Individuals

Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) is a financial support program for individuals with disabilities, including those with DDs.

Benefits include:

- **The Living Income Benefit:** A fixed amount of monthly income that varies based on where the recipient resides within the province. For a single adult, this amount ranges between $991 and $1,129.
- **The Disability Income Benefit:** Benefits to provide support for costs related to an individuals' disability ($70 per month).
- **The Exceptional Need Income Benefit:** Provides support to individuals for specific needs. For example, additional income can be provided to cover specific clothing items, special food items, and home care, among others.

Program recipients can earn up to a certain amount per year through employment without their SAID benefits being reduced. As of May 1, 2024, this amount is $6,500 for single individuals, $7,700 for couples and $8,500 for families. Other financial benefits, such as the Northern Living Supplement, Household Task Benefit, and Activity Benefit, among others, are also provided to eligible individuals through this program.

Cognitive Disability Benefit: An income-tested financial benefit for individuals with unmet needs related to cognitive disabilities. This funding is available to cover costs that are not already addressed by other funding sources.

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SK

Programs & Services

Funding Supports (2/3)

Employment Landscape

Workforce Develo & Training

Funding Supports for Individuals (*continued*)

The Self-Directed Funding (SDF) option is offered by CLSD (to those meeting CLSD eligibility requirements) and provides funding directly to an individual and their representative (i.e., family member, friend, neighbour, or co-worker) to directly hire their own supports, rather than relying on traditional funding to service providers like group homes or day programs.

SDF can be used for the following two types of support:

1. **Residential Supports** → support staff hired to assist a person in their home environment.

2. **Community Inclusion Supports/Day Programming** → support staff hired to help a person access and participate in the community.

The amount a person receives for these supports is determined by CLSD's completion or review of that person's daily living support assessments (DLSA) and day program support assessments (DPSA). While DLSA scores determine the funding level for residential supports, DPSA scores determine the funding level for community inclusion and day program supports.

SDF is directed and managed by the individual and their supports, including their representative who is the person the funding recipient chooses to help them manage the responsibilities of an SDF contract. Representatives assist with the following:
- Communicating the individual's needs, goals, and desires
- Developing a plan that describes how the individual's support needs and life goals can be met
- Hiring, managing, and being responsible for staff who will be providing support services
- Administering the SDF contract, including financial and reporting requirements

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SK

Programs & Services

Funding Supports (3/3)

Employment Land[...]

Workforce Develo[...] & Training

Funding for Service Providers:
CLSD has partnerships with and funds CBOs, and individual operators in the case of the APSH program, across the province which offer:

- **Supported Housing Options:** APSHs, Group Homes, Group Living Homes, and Supported Living Programs

- **Supports for Community Participation:** day programs and community inclusion programs

Funding for Medical Needs:
Individualized Funding for Home Care: Allows individuals (or their guardians) to manage their own home care services based on assessed needs. This includes services like personal care and home management but excludes professional health services like nursing or therapy.

Housing and Accessibility Grants:
Home Accessibility Program: Saskatchewan offers a forgivable loan program for homeowners or rental property owners to make their homes accessible to people with disabilities. The loan amount can be up to $23,000.
Social Housing Program: Provides housing and subsidizes the cost of rent for individuals based on their level of financial need. Priority is given to seniors (55 years of age and older), families with children or dependents, and individuals with disabilities who are in greatest housing need.

Funding for Children and Youth:
Family Respite Benefit: This is an income-tested monthly benefit designed to help parents or guardians of children with intellectual disabilities. It provides funding to access alternative or additional care for short-term respite.

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Programs & Services

Funding Supports

Employment Landscape (1/2)

Workforce Develo & Training

Government Programs

Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities (EAPD)
This program offers funding to help residents overcome educational and employment barriers resulting from disabilities. Supports may include specialized training, adaptive technologies, and other resources to facilitate participation in the workforce.

Education and Training Incentive (ETI)
ETI provides financial assistance to adult learners with low incomes who are enrolled in adult basic education, workforce development programs, or skills training. This support aims to improve employment prospects for individuals with disabilities.

Community-Based Organizations Supports

Inclusion Saskatchewan: Contracted by the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training, this organization offers employment and transition services specifically for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Their programs focus on personalized support to achieve employment goals.

Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC): SARC provides supported employment services, assisting individuals with disabilities in finding and retaining community-based employment. Their approach is person-centered, emphasizing individualized support.

Cosmo Learning Centre Regina: This non-profit organization offers supported employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities, focusing on community-based placements with guidance from employment support workers.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services

Funding Supports

Employment Landscape (2/2)

Workforce Develo & Training

Employment Rates

While specific data for Saskatchewan is limited, broader Canadian statistics provide insight into employment trends for individuals with disabilities:

- According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, the employment rate for persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 was 62%, up from 59% in 2017. In contrast, the employment rate for those without disabilities was 78% in 2022 and 80% in 2017.

- In Saskatchewan, employment rates for men with disabilities surpass 60%, indicating a relatively high level of workforce participation among this group.

Recent Initiatives

The Saskatchewan government has recognized the importance of enhancing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities:

- **Provincial Disability Strategy:** Aimed at improving education and employment prospects, this strategy promotes economic and social inclusion for people with disabilities.

- **Accessible Saskatchewan Act:** This legislation focuses on preventing and removing accessibility barriers, raising awareness about how such barriers hinder full participation, and promoting accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

Programs & Services

Funding Supports

Employment Land

Workforce Developn & Training

The developmental services sector in Saskatchewan relies on roles such as Community Services Workers (CSWs), Disability Support Professionals (DSPs), and Personal Support Workers (PSWs).

- CSWs are case workers employed by CLSD and provide a broad range of supports to eligible individuals such as individualized support, counselling, assessment of individual/family needs, co-ordination of services with individuals/families and community agencies, and more.

Training Programs
- DSP Certificate Program: Saskatchewan Polytechnic offers a 1-year certificate program to become a DSP and the curriculum involves two practicums with residential, vocational, or community-based agencies for practical experience and learning. Additionally, the curriculum focuses on skill development in basic care skills, behavioural support and crisis prevention, disability support services, person-centred planning, and more.
- **On-the-job-training:** There is a reported heavy reliance on on-the-job-training after the point of hire.

Government Supports for Support Workers
- The 2024-25 provincial budget provided additional investment towards sector employee compensation, however SARC has stated this increase still falls short of compensation of similar roles.

Qualifications and/or Certifications:
- **DSPs:** DSP Certification allowing individuals to work as DSPs, supportive living workers, educational assistants, vocational training workers or community residential workers.
- **CSWs:** Typical educational background includes DSP Certification, Psychology, and/or Social Work

Trends in Personalized & Individualized Planning

Aligned with leading practices seen in other jurisdictions, Saskatchewan's approach to developmental services has been evolving to shift toward personalized and individualized planning. This shift involves more individualized and flexible care planning, with input from the individual receiving services, their family, caregivers and other support professionals as appropriate.

- **Comprehensive Personal Planning and Support Policy (CPP&SP):** The CPP&SP establishes province-wide policies which guide CLSD staff, CBO staff, APSH Proprietors, and individual service providers in providing effective and ethical supports to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

  - All providers contracted, licensed, or certified by CLSD are required to follow the Policy as it provides direction on areas related to supporting people including the rights of individuals being supported, supported decision-making, person-centred planning, responsibilities of people supporting individuals and appropriately supporting challenging behaviours.

- **Case Management Standards:** The Provincial Auditor's Report on *Monitoring of Quality Care (2024)* revealed that inconsistencies were found in the development and review of individualized plans for group home and APSH residents. As a result, the Ministry of Social Services drafted new case management standards and with a planned pilot of them occurring in 2024-25 before finalizing the standards province-wide in 2026.

  - The draft standards establish three case management tiers to help the Ministry determine the frequency and level of client support it provides, including the expectation for Ministry case managers to review clients' person-centred plans every two years.

SK

Trends in Funding Increased & New Investment

Saskatchewan has continuously increased investment in the developmental services sector over the years, highlighting the rising demand for supportive housing options and capacity, and the province's goal of increasing day program participation. The following highlights funding increases recently seen through the Ministry of Social Services Business Plans and provincial budgets:

2024-25 Funding & Investments:
- $10.4 M was allocated to support adults with intellectual disabilities, focusing on addressing the evolving service needs of current clients and expanding residential and day programs for new individuals. An additional $9.7 M was committed to this in the 2025-26 budget.

- $7.6 M was put towards constructing 10 new group homes, one assessment and stabilization home, and the establishment of a new Quality Assurance Team to enhance oversight and foster stronger relationships with homes supporting adults with intellectual disabilities. An additional $1.7 M was recently committed to these new homes in the 2025-26 budget.

2025-26 Funding & Investments:
- People supported by SAID will receive an additional of 2% in their monthly income assistance benefit starting in May 2025 while earned income exemptions will also rise by $1,000.

- Announced that planning will begin for a new group home for individuals requiring complex health supports.

- A $200,000 investment to expand capacity and improve infrastructure at summer respite camps.

- Disability programs and services makes up 22% of the Ministry's total budget for 2025-26, totaling $364 M.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Emerging Trends

Trends in Service Delivery & Service Demand

In recent years the Ministry of Social Services has increased investment in group homes and private service homes, while also introducing new case management standards, an Outcomes-Based Service Delivery framework, and a Quality Assurance Team.

The following highlights key trends in the service delivery and demand of developmental services in the province:

- **Group Homes:** Recent investments have been made to construct new homes to better meet the needs of individuals. Between 2021 and 2024, 29 additional homes were licensed (totaling 282 provincially). These investments have increased total supportive living spaces for individuals with intellectual disabilities from 1,600 to 1,739.

- **Private Service Homes (APSHs):** Between 2021 and 2024, 25 fewer APSHs were in operation (totaling 181 provincially).

- **Quality Assurance:** Introduction of a Quality Assurance Team to enhance oversight and foster stronger relationships with homes supporting adults with intellectual disabilities.

- **Day Programs:** Increased focus on expanding access to community-based day programs, with a target of 70% of CLSD clients participating in such programs by March 2026.

- **Outcomes-Based Service Delivery (OBSD) Framework:** Designed and piloted with CBOs as a basis to assess the ability of CBOs to deliver quality services to individuals with intellectual disabilities and meet quality of life improving outcomes. The Ministry has developed a Community of Practice with CBOs participating in the piloting of the Framework and they meet monthly to provide feedback and discuss areas of concerns encountered while piloting the Framework.

Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Appropriate Housing Options

Increasingly, individuals reaching out to Inclusion Saskatchewan (INSK) have highlighted housing as a major area of concern, with 15% of intake calls focused on difficulties accessing suitable housing.

In Saskatchewan, affordable and accessible housing options are limited, and those available to people with intellectual disabilities are often complex and difficult to navigate. As a result, more individuals are facing unstable housing situations.

Key issues identified by INSK's Self-Advocate Housing Committee include:
- ✓ Unaffordable rent for those reliant on social assistance,
- ✓ A lack of housing designed for individuals who require mobility aids, and
- ✓ The challenge of finding a balance between receiving necessary support while maintaining independence and privacy.

Saskatchewan Waitlist

While specific waitlist numbers are not publicly available, there are existing service waitlists.

Opportunities

In recent years, the number of APSH operators has decreased but the APSH program presents an opportunity to expand inclusive, community-based residential services, which currently benefits approximately 500 individuals with IDs across the province.

With its strong emphasis on family-oriented settings and a focus on community inclusion, there is potential to further enhance the program's reach and impact, fostering greater independence and integration for individuals within their communities.

CBOs in the sector can play a role in encouraging APSH program uptake in terms of operators and better supporting current operators so that remain in the program. This could include:

- Communicating and raising awareness of the benefits of becoming an APSH operator

- Developing an understanding of the challenges APSH operators are facing to better support them

Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Regional Service Inequities
An identified challenge is the geographic disparities, lack of accessible transportation, and limited-service availability in rural areas.

Workforce Challenges
While there has been increased funding for sector employee compensation, salaries still fall short of comparable positions in other sectors.

Saskatchewan's Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC) has recently noted that there is difficulty attracting and retaining qualified staff due to a shrinking talent pool and mismatch between applicants and sector requirements. Efforts to address recruitment and retention challenges are ongoing.

Talent pools are yielding fewer qualified candidates and the volume of applicants that are seeking jobs with no relevant interest in the sector, or only as a stepping stone, has increased in recent years.

Opportunities

Regional Service Inequities
- An opportunity exists for CBOs in the province to engage with people they support to understand how their organization can better support those facing service access challenges based on their location.

- In rural areas, there is an opportunity for CBOs to support in providing accessible transportation services to facilitate community inclusion.

- Additionally, some supports and services from CBOs can potentially be delivered virtually.

Workforce Challenges
- CBOs in the sector can continue to advocate for more appropriate compensation for sector employee's that brings their salaries more in line with positions in adjacent sectors.

- CBOs should continue to look for ways to better support their front-line staff and ensure on-the-job training (heavily relied on after hiring) for new employees is well supported.

- CBOs could consider offering flexible learning options, such as online courses or micro-credential, to allow current staff to further their education without disrupting work schedules.

Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Oversight of Group Homes & APSHs

A 2024 Provincial Auditor report evaluated the Ministry's oversight of group homes and APSHs. The report identified areas needing improvement, including:

- **Inspection Processes:** Annual Ministry inspections of groups homes were not consistently conducted to ensure standards compliance.

- **Criminal Record Checks:** A lack of verification for periodic criminal record checks for staff caring for adults with ID was found.

- **Person-Centred Plans:** Inconsistencies were found in the development and review of individualized care plans for residents

Opportunities

The Ministry of Social Services is responding to these challenges in the ways highlighted below, which focus on strengthening service quality and relationships with service providers:

- The Ministry new Quality Assurance Team aims to enhance oversight and foster stronger relationships with homes supporting adults with intellectual disabilities.

- The Ministry has since drafted new case management standards and is piloting the new standards for person-centered case management, with plans for broader standardized implementation in 2026. Until implementation of the new standards, the Ministry expects group home and APSH staff to develop person-centred plans with their clients and review them at least every two years.

- Through the OBSD Framework pilot project, the Ministry has developed a "Community of Practice" with participating CBOs to share best practices and create new knowledge around supporting people with intellectual disabilities.

Developmental Services Landscape | Key Actors

Ministry of Social Services

The Ministry of Social Services is the provincial government ministry responsible for developmental services policy, legislation, funding, and sector oversight in Saskatchewan.

Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD)

CLSD is a branch within Social Services providing support to individuals with intellectual disabilities and working alongside service providers to deliver a range of residential, community inclusion, and personal development supports.

Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD) Staff

Each person meeting CLSD's eligibility requirements is assigned a Community Services Worker (CSW) who provides individualized support, counselling, co-ordination of services with individuals/families and community agencies, and more.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

The Ministry of Social Services and CLSD funds and has partnerships with CBOs across the province to provide an array of residential services and community participation supports/programs. L'Arche Saskatoon and SaskAbilities are examples of CBOs serving people with disabilities.

Advocacy Groups

Advocacy groups such as Saskatchewan Disability Services, People First Saskatchewan, and Inclusion Saskatchewan support and promote the rights of people with intellectual disabilities in the province.

Association Groups

Associations such as Saskatchewan Approved Private Homes Inc. (SAPH Inc.) and Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres (SARC) provide supports to their members while also advocating to government on behalf of their members and the sector.

Developmental Services Landscape:
Nova Scotia

Developmental Services Landscape | Human Rights Remedy

Nova Scotia's *Human Rights Remedy* is a 5-year plan focused on addressing systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities by improving quality of life and access to community-based services. The Department of Opportunities and Social Development (DOSD) is responsible for overseeing and implementing the Remedy's six key directions.

Strategic Focus Areas	The *Human Rights Remedy* is supported by the following six key directions: 1. **Individualized Planning and Support Coordination:** A new system to drive more person directed and local community-based supports. 2. **Closure of Institutions:** Phasing out large institutional facilities and facilitating transitions to community living. 3. **Development of Community-Based Supports:** Focuses on a home and life in the local community by building a broader system of community-based supports and services 4. **Multidisciplinary Support Programs:** Establishing province wide multidisciplinary support program with Regional Hubs including other clinical supports to local support options. 5. **Individualized Funding:** Empowering individuals with control over their support funding to make decisions that best suit their needs. 6. **System Capacity Building:** Implementing systemic changes to strengthen the whole disability system capacity to enable transformation to a human rights-based approach.
Performance & Evaluation Frameworks	The quantitative evaluation of the remedy tracks data on institutional population reductions, waitlist reductions, community-based services, and complex care support, while the qualitative evaluation assesses individual outcomes through surveys, interviews, and document reviews. The report specifies quarterly progress updates that are publicly available, along with a full evaluation of progress toward the targets by a third-party organization.
Financial Investments	The province's 2025-26, allocated an additional $19.4 M increase, for a total of $121.4 M, to support the continued transformation of the disability support system as part of the Remedy. Additionally, significant investments have been allocated to transition people with disabilities from large institutions into the community of their choice.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Overview

DOSD, primarily through the Disability Support Program (DSP), offers and funds a range of supportive living and community participation supports and programs to support persons with disabilities. The following provides an overview of the province's current landscape for developmental services:

Support Streams	• DSP has partnerships with and funds service providers across the province which offer supportive living options such as Independent Living Support (ILS), community-based homes, and Homeshare , as well as supports for community participation such as Day Programs by Adult Service centres and children's programs such as Direct Family Support for Children (DFSC) and Enhanced Family Support for Children (EFSC) programs. • In light of the Remedy, several new DSP programs and services are becoming available, such as Individualized Funding and individual planning support via Regional Hubs. o Individualized Funding (IF) empowers DSP participants to manage their own support services, offering flexibility and control over how their care is delivered, and promoting independent living and community inclusion. o The Regional Hub model includes Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and Intensive Planning and Support Coordinators (IPSCs), helping individuals develop personalized plans, and access community supports.
Eligibility	• To be eligible for DSP, applicants must have a confirmed intellectual, physical, or long-term mental disability or an acquired brain injury that significantly impacts daily functioning. They must be 19 years or older (with some exceptions for ages 16-19), and meet diagnostic, functional, and financial assessment requirements.
Trends & Challenges	• The province is shifting from institutional care to community-based living, modernizing workforce practices, increased collaboration among service providers, and introducing innovative funding. Challenges persist in addressing systemic discrimination, ensuring adequate resources for complex cases, and managing the financial and logistical aspects of facility closures.

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Programs & Services (1/7)

Funding Supports

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

Nova Scotia offers a range of support options to promote independence, community integration, and personalized care for individuals with disabilities. **Existing programs** include:

Supports for Community Participation

Adult Service Centres: Provide day programming for adults with a range of disabilities in their communities.

Day programs are delivered by non-profit organizations across Nova Scotia and are designed to meet the diverse needs of participants. Types of day programs and their components that may be available include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Skill Development & Training:** Focuses on helping individuals develop skills that are important for daily living and potential employment.

- **Supported Employment:** Offers work opportunities and support in the community, helping individuals gain independence in the workplace.

- **Social Enterprise Businesses:** Some programs provide opportunities for participants to engage in business ventures, developing on-the-job skills.

- **Social & Recreational Activities**: Activities that foster social interaction, community participation, and enjoyment.

- **Retirement Programs (55+ years):** Specialized programs catering to older individuals, offering engagement suited to their needs and interests.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Current State – Existing Programs

Programs & Services (2/7)

Funding Supports

Employment Land

Workforce Develo & Training

Supportive Living

Independent Living Support (ILS): The ILS program provides community-based support for individuals who are semi-independent but require assistance with daily living activities such as household management, laundry, and transportation. The program aims to promote independence, self-reliance, and social inclusion by offering flexible support services tailored to the participant's needs. The goal is to help individuals build connections with their communities, maintain health and wellness, and delay the need for more intensive care by preventing or delaying admission to institutionalized settings.

Alternative Family Support (AFS) Program *(Discontinued)***:** This program supports individuals with disabilities by placing them in an approved private family home. It allows up to two individuals, unrelated to the AFS provider, to live in a family-like setting where they receive support and supervision. AFS is ideal for those who prefer living with a family and benefit from the extra care and support a family environment offers.

Small Option Homes (SOHs): SOHs are community-based homes that provide support for three to four persons with disabilities. Residents are supported by qualified staff through a combination of live-in and shift models. These homes are designed to offer personalized support within a small, residential setting, ensuring that individuals can engage in everyday activities and maintain relationships with their peers.

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Residential Options

For individuals requiring more intensive support, the province has traditionally offered the below residential options, which provide structured, supervised environments where individuals receive around-the-clock care.

- **Adult Residential Centres (ARCs):** These facilities offer a higher level of support for adults with complex needs, providing 24/7 care in a residential setting. They are designed to support individuals who require constant supervision and assistance with daily activities.

- **Residential Rehabilitation Centres (RRCs):** Provide specialized care and rehabilitation services for individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities. These centers focus on therapy, rehabilitation, and recovery, helping individuals regain independence and reintegrate into their communities.

- **Residential Care Facilities (RCFs):** RCFs are facilities that offer 24-hour care and support to individuals who need assistance with daily living tasks due to physical or cognitive disabilities. These facilities provide a more institutionalized environment, focusing on personal care and safety for individuals with higher needs.

- **Developmental Residences (DRs)/Group Homes:** Provide a continuum of developmental rehabilitation programs for people with disabilities within a four-to-12-person residential setting. These settings emphasize the development of inter-personal, community-oriented skills, and activities of daily living.
  - Group homes typically serve younger persons with one or more of the following disabilities: ID, long-term mental illness, or physical disability
  - DRs typically serve younger adults with an ID or dual diagnosis

- **Temporary Shelter Arrangements (TSA):** TFAs are ad hoc arrangements provided in emergency situations, often when an individual has complex support needs that could not be met in an existing DSP option. It is will remodelled into an Innovations Program for solutions to be created within a sustainable framework.

Programs & Services (4/7)

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Medical Supports

Continuing Care: Nova Scotia Health provides support to individuals that need care outside of a hospital setting in their homes or in their community on a short-term or long-term basis. Many different supports are provided through this program, two of which provide support specifically to individuals with disabilities and their families:

- **Caregiver Benefit**, which provides financial support ($400 to month) to individuals caring for an adult over the age of 18 years assessed as having a high level of impairment or disability that requires significant care over time and as having an income under a certain level.
- **Self-Managed Care**, which provides funding to individuals with physical disabilities for a care provider, who can provide support with activities of daily living.

Family and Youth Supports

The **Direct Family Support for Children (DFSC)** and **Enhanced Family Support for Children (EFSC)** programs in Nova Scotia provide vital funding to support families in caring for children with disabilities at home.

- These programs aim to reduce the burden on families by offering financial assistance for services and resources that meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. The DFSC program helps families access supports like respite care, therapies, and specialized equipment, while the EFSC program offers enhanced support for children with more complex needs.

SchoolsPlus: A collaborative interagency approach supporting the whole child and their family with the school as the center of service delivery. The services provided at each SchoolsPlus site respect and address the unique needs of the community. All children and youth can receive support through this program, particularly those with additional needs.

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Programs & Services (5/7)

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New Service Delivery Model

The province is enhancing DSP service delivery with Regional Hubs across the province with the aim of providing community-based services tailored to local needs.

These hubs are staffed by a multidisciplinary team, which includes Local Area Coordinators (LACs), Intensive Planning and Support Coordinators (IPSCs), Community Living Facilitators, DSP Connectors, Eligibility, Funding, and Assessment Coordinators (EFACs), and an outreach team for allied health supports (*not yet available*).

- **Disability Support Program Connectors (DSP Connectors):** DSP Connectors serve as primary contacts for individuals with disabilities and their support networks. They assist in navigating DSP services, facilitate person-directed planning, and connect individuals to appropriate resources.

- **Local Area Coordinators (LACs):** Serve as primary points of contact, helping individuals plan their lives and connect with local resources.

- **Intensive Planning and Support Coordinators (IPSCs):** Provide intensive support for individuals with complex needs, particularly those transitioning from institutional settings.

- **Community Living Facilitators:** Advocate for accessible housing and inclusive community environments.

- **Eligibility, Funding, and Assessment Coordinators (EFACs):** Handle assessments and funding coordination, ensuring individuals receive appropriate resources and supports.

- **Facility Closure Specialists:** Support individuals transitioning from institutional to community-based living.

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Funding Supports

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The following are new supports that have recently been introduced or will be soon introduced:

First Voice Councils

Regional Advisory Councils are being established to ensure that local perspectives and solutions play a central role in the program's development and implementation. These councils will serve as the first voice in decision-making, directly responding to the Human Rights Remedy. Their goal is to enhance community inclusion and provide stronger support for individuals with disabilities, ensuring that local needs and insights are at the heart of the program's approach.

Supportive Living

- The **Homeshare Program** *(replacing AFS)* is an initiative that allows individuals with disabilities to live with host families who provide a supportive and family-like environment. This model offers a more personalized and socially integrated living experience, where individuals receive day-to-day assistance, companionship, and support tailored to their needs. The program is set to expand with 60 new placement*, offering a viable alternative to institutional care.

- The **Shared Services Program** is a collaborative initiative between the DSP and Continuing Care services aimed at providing **comprehensive community-based support for individuals with complex needs**. This program is specifically designed for individuals who require high levels of personal care and nursing support but want to remain in community settings rather than being placed in long-term care facilities. Currently supporting four individuals, the program is set to expand by 200 spaces over the next four years, offering a more flexible, person-centered option.

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Programs & Services (7/7)

Funding Supports

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Youth to Adult Transition Supports

The **School Leavers Program** is an emerging program that will support the transition of children and youth from children's programs to adulthood by connecting students with an LAC who supports them in creating a plan for adulthood. Program design work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) will be completed in early 2025.

- **100 new school leavers will be funded each year** to ensure youth with disabilities can transition smoothly into independent living, employment, or education.

Other Supports

Let's Get You Home (Discharge Hubs)
- A new initiative that is a collaboration between Nova Scotia Health (NSH), Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), Seniors and Long-Term Care (SLTC), and DOSD.

- The initiative aims to explore the creation and amendment of clear pathways and supports to help patients return to their homes as efficiently as possible.

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Funding Supports (1/7)

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Funding Supports for Individuals

Individualized Funding (New, effective 2025) gives participants the flexibility to purchase services and supports to live in their communities. They can either self-manage their funds or have a DSP provider manage them. The funding can cover daily living assistance, employment support, social activities, and medical needs.

Management of Funding Options Participants will be able to choose from the following funding management options:
1. **Self-Managed Funding:**
   - The participant assumes full responsibility for arranging and managing their own supports and services.
   - They are responsible for administering and accounting for the funding received from DSP.
   - If hiring support workers, the participant must comply with applicable policy, legislative, and regulatory requirements.
   - Reasonable costs typical for the industry or service must be adhered to.
   - Eligible participants receive up to $210 per month for administrative supports such as bookkeeping.
2. **DSP Provider-Managed Funding:**
   - A participant may allocate part or all of their funding to a DSP-approved service provider that meets contractual and policy requirements.
3. **Combination Approach:**
   - Participants may choose to manage a portion of their funding independently while delegating the rest to a DSP Provider.

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Individualized Funding (*continued*)

Allowable Usage of Individualized Funding: Participants may use IF for various supports and services, including:

- Costs related to activities of daily living (e.g., personal care, housekeeping, meal preparation, budgeting, medication management).
- Community participation supports (e.g., day programs, memberships, recreational activities, educational workshops, and counseling).
- Employment and education-related costs for both participants and their support staff (e.g., first aid certification, training, behavioral support training).
- Administration and management costs for those self-managing their funds (e.g., bookkeeping, tax preparation, bank fees).
- Medical supports for participants with approved needs (e.g., nursing support for injections).
- Other reasonable disability-related expenses that align with the participant's Support Plan.

Restrictions on Individualized Funding Usage IF may **not** be used for:

- Items covered under Basic and Special Needs funding or the Standard Household Rate (e.g., rent, household bills, clothing, groceries).
- Items or services funded through the DSP Special Needs policy, unless included in the participant's approved Support Plan.
- Services falling under the jurisdiction of other government departments (e.g., private medical procedures).
- Gambling, recreational substances, charitable donations, or illegal activities.
- Debt repayment, increasing personal income, or asset purchases.

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Funding Supports (3/7)

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Individualized Funding (*continued*)

Eligibility Criteria : To qualify for Individualized Funding, a DSP participant must:
- Meet the general DSP eligibility requirements.
- Complete a functional assessment.
- Be assigned a funded Support Level.
- Develop a Support Plan.
- Submit a funding proposal for approval by the Eligibility and Funding Assessment Committee (EFAC).
- Enter into a funding agreement with DSP.

Funding Structure: Participants are eligible to receive:
- Funding for disability-related supports and services under this policy.
- The Standard Household Rate as per the DSP Basic and Special Needs Policy.
- Additional funding for Basic and Special Needs as outlined in DSP policies.

Annual Funding Amounts by Support Level:

Support Level	Maximum Annual Funding
P	$0
A	$45,000
B	$55,000
C	$75,000
D	$120,000
E	N/A

Additional Funding for Specialized Needs:

Category	Maximum Additional Funding
Behavioural	$40,000
Medical	$20,000

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Programs & Services

Funding Supports (4/7)

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Funding Supports for Individuals

Community Participation Funding : Under the Remedy, funding is allocated to support individuals' participation in community activities, including day programs, volunteering, and employment. This funding model emphasizes choice and control, enabling individuals to select activities that enhance their quality of life.

Inclusion Benefit is additional funding that supports participation in the community, helping individuals access social, recreational, or employment-related activities that promote independence and inclusion.

Standard Household Rate (SHR) is a monthly amount provided to individuals in the DSP program to cover basic living expenses, such as food, shelter, and personal necessities. This rate is determined based on household composition and individual needs.

Special Needs Funding provides financial support for things that support an individual's health, safety, and work or training. The amount received is based on each individual's personal situation.
Examples of special needs that can be covered include the following: ambulance costs, child care, furniture, hearing aids, guide or service dogs, medical equipment, prescription drug coverage, and respite, among many others.

Income Assistance Disability Supplement: Provides an additional $300 per month to people on income assistance who are not currently accessing the Disability Support Program and who cannot work.

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Funding Supports (5/7)

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Funding Supports for Individuals *(Continued)*

DSP is currently offering Flex, ILS, and ILS+, and they will likely be replaced by IF over time.

The **Flex Program** offers funding for individuals living with family or independently, allowing them to purchase services that promote independence and community inclusion. **Flex Living with Family** helps families manage disability-related needs, while **Flex Independent** provides funding for individuals living on their own with personal support networks. Participants are responsible for managing the funding, and eligibility requires an assessment of their support needs.

Independent Living Support (ILS) offers funding for up to 31 hours per week of support services from approved providers, assisting semi-independent individuals with daily living activities to help them live on their own.

ILS Plus (ILS+) provides enhanced funding for up to 84 hours per week of support services, aimed at helping individuals live independently or semi-independently in the community. This program is designed for individuals with significant support needs, such as expanded daytime activity support or overnight assistance for health and safety. The program offers a more affordable alternative to other DSP options. Participants must meet specific criteria, including being able to manage safety, medication, and participate in support planning. ILS+ was launched in May 2024 and currently supports 10 individuals.

Income Assistance Disability Supplement: Provides an additional $300 per month to people on income assistance who are not currently accessing the Disability Support Program and who cannot work.

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Programs & Services

Funding Supports (6/7)

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Funding Supports for Families

The **Direct Family Support for Children (DFSC)** and **Enhanced Family Support for Children (EFSC)** programs provide funding to help families care for children with disabilities at home.

- DFSC offers up to $2,400/month for respite services, while EFSC can provide up to $4,000/month for children with more complex needs.

- Eligibility criteria includes a disability diagnosis and meeting income guidelines. These programs aim to support families, prevent out-of-home placements, and enhance community participation.

Funding for Service Providers

The **Service Evolution Fund** is a funding initiative by the Government of Nova Scotia aimed at assisting disability support service providers in transitioning from institutional-based services to community-based supports for individuals with disabilities.

Service Providers Funded by DSP

DSP funds 144 service providers across Nova Scotia through service agreements. These service providers play a critical role in delivering a variety of supports and services tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The funding is provided via service agreements, which outline the terms, expectations, and compliance requirements for each provider. These agreements ensure that service providers meet the standards of quality and accountability required by DSP.

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Funding for Home Modifications

The **Disabled Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program** offers financial support to make homes more accessible. Landlords can receive up to $24,000 in forgivable loans (depending on rental type) for accessibility modifications for low-income tenants. Homeowners can receive up to $16,000 in forgivable loans. Additionally, wheelchair users can access a non-repayable grant of up to $7,000 through the Access-A-Home Program to make their homes wheelchair accessible.

Other Grants

The **Community ACCESS-Ability Program** offers grants to eligible organizations for accessibility-related improvements, covering two-thirds of the cost (up to $50,000). Eligible projects can include improvements to the built environment, transportation, assistive devices, and more. This grant is available to registered non-profits, municipalities, First Nations communities, and public institutions like schools and libraries. The applying organization must contribute the remaining funding.

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Workforce Develo & Training

Employment Rates and Participation

The following figures based on the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, underscore the need for targeted strategies to address employment barriers and promote inclusive workplaces in Nova Scotia.

- **Employment Rates**: Only 55.5% of working-age adults (25-64) with disabilities were employed, compared to 76% of those without disabilities in Nova Scotia.
- **Unemployment Rates**: The unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities was slightly higher than those without disabilities (9.2% compared to 7.5%).
- **Labour Force Participation**: Approximately 35.3% of persons with disabilities were not in the labour force, compared to 16.5% of individuals without disabilities.

Guidance and Planning

- The **Accessibility Advisory Board** (within the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate) released its recommendations in 2024 to address barriers in areas of recruitment, retention, advancement, workplace accommodations and emergency preparedness. Their recommendations are:
  - A workplace accessibility policy that removes barriers in the recruitment process.
  - Emergency response plans that prioritize the safety of employees with disabilities.
  - Reasonable workplace adjustments to support all employees in performing their roles effectively.
- Programs like **Access by Design 2030** focus on eliminating **physical, technological, and systemic barriers** in workplaces, ensuring businesses implement inclusive hiring practices and provide necessary accommodations. The accessibility standard for employment is one of six accessibility standards being developed as a part of the Access by Design 2030 strategy.

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Funding Supports

Employment Landscape (2/2)

Workforce Development & Training

Government Supports and Programs

- **Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)** offers employment services to individuals who are ready for employment with job search and employability supports.
- **Workplace Support Program:** Funded by the provincial government, this program aims to improve employment outcomes by providing workplace attendant support and access to technical aids and assistive devices.
- The **Post-School Options Program** to be created as per the Remedy for all school leavers that disrupts crisis and out of community placement and creates new local community pathways.
- **Adult Service Centres** offer skill-building programs across the province, focusing on vocational training and personal development.
- **DSP** also provides various community-based services, including day programs, to support individuals with disabilities in achieving meaningful employment and community participation.

Other Supports and Programs

- **Ready, Willing & Able:** An initiative by Inclusion Nova Scotia that connects employers with individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder, promoting inclusive hiring practices.

- **EmploymentWorks** by Autism Nova Scotia provides pre-employment skills, helping bridge the gap between school and work.

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Workforce Developm & Training (1/2)

Nova Scotia is actively enhancing workforce development and training in the developmental services sector to meet the growing demand for skilled professionals.

The **Nova Scotia Disability Support Workforce Strategy** guides and provides a blueprint for building a strong disability support workforce. Currently, DSP supports the sector's workforce in the following ways:

- Provides funding to service providers for training initiatives (e.g., First Aid/CPR, crisis intervention).
- Supports recruitment through partnerships (e.g., Health Association of NS, newcomer programs).
- Funds 144 service providers, covering 6,616 full-time equivalent positions and 8,601 workers across roles like Residential Rehabilitation Workers (RRWs), Residential Care Workers (RCWs), and allied health/support.
- Planned initiatives include:
  - Career advisor training and micro-credentials in human rights-based approaches.
  - A hybrid certificate program with NSCC.
  - Marketing campaigns to attract candidates to disability support roles.

Training Programs
Disability Support Professional Program (NSCC):
- A one-year program offering theoretical and hands-on learning in personal care, crisis intervention, and recreational/social support.
- Supported by a bursary covering tuition and fees; graduates must work in the sector for one year.
- Graduates earn a Diploma in Disability Support, qualifying them for roles in healthcare, residential care, and education.

Developmental Services Landscape | Current State

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Workforce Developm... & Training (2/2)

Training Programs (*continued*)

Disability Support Worker Program (Immigrant Services Association of NS):
- Designed for newcomers (permanent residents or citizens) with CLB 4+.
- Offers hybrid training in caregiving, person-centered care, safety, and First Aid/CPR.
- Post-secondary institutions (e.g., NSCC) are developing programs emphasizing human rights-based training to reflect evolving sector needs.

Qualifications/Certifications Required
- No formal regulatory post-secondary credential has been specified as a requirement to work in Nova Scotia's disability support sector as a support worker. However, employers often prefer diplomas in related fields (e.g., disability services, social services).
- Core competencies for RRWs and RCWs include:
  - Fire/life safety
  - Health/personal care
  - Medication awareness
  - First Aid/CPR
  - Crisis intervention
  - Behavioral supports
  - Individualized planning.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Emerging Trends

Trends in Waitlists and People Requesting Services

DSP services and supports offered through service providers have high-demand as seen through the volume of people waiting for supports via the province's **Service Request List (SRL)** figures.

The SRL is the province's centralized waitlist for people who are eligible for services through DSP but are not yet receiving services or are receiving some services but have requested additional or different supports (e.g., residential placement elsewhere, new and more intensive supports, etc.). The following shows recent trends in the SRL:

- As of December 2024, there were 1,547 people on the SRL, which is a 2% decrease compared to December 2023.

  - The average length of time on the SRL was 2,257 days (or ~6-years), which is a 7% increase compared to December 2023

The SRL has been gradually declining since January 2023, when there was 1,834 DSP eligible participants on the SRL. However, the average length of time on the SRL has gradually increased over this same time period.

As per the Remedy, by the year 2028, the province aims discontinue the SRL by ensuring that all new applicants receive immediate access to individualized planning, supports, and coordination.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Emerging Trends

Trends in Service Delivery and Service Demand

Nova Scotia has been undergoing significant transformations in its service delivery for individuals with DDs/IDs, aiming to enhance community integration and support.

Service Delivery Initiatives:

- **Transition to Community-Based Supports:** The province is actively moving away from institutional care towards community-based services. This shift is supported by the **Service Evolution Fund**, introduced in October 2024, which assists disability support providers in adapting their services to community settings. The fund supports staff training, service delivery adaptations, and community awareness projects.

- **Closure of Institutional Facilities:** As part of the transformation, Nova Scotia has initiated the closure of large institutional facilities.
  - Admissions to RCFs, ARCs, RRCs, Group Homes, and Developmental Residences ended (Jan 2025). All congregated settings (housing 4+ individuals) to close by **2028**.
  - Emphasis on community-based living and personalized services like SOH, ILS+, and the new Homeshare.
  - As of December 2024, a total of 122 DSP participants have transitioned from institutional settings (including 112 who have moved from settings such as ARC, RRC, RCF, and GH/DR, 9 have moved from hospitals and 1 from forensics)

- **Program Enhancements**
  - **ILS+ rolled out** (May 2024): offers additional hours, overnight support (10 participants so far).
  - Development of new service models (e.g., Peer Support Planning, School Leavers).

- **Workforce Development:** Recognizing the need for a skilled workforce to support these changes, the province released a workforce strategy in January 2025. The strategy focuses on recruitment, training, health and safety, and job stability.

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Trends in Service Delivery and Service Demand

Service Demand Trends

As people continue to transition into less congregated residential options such as SOH, AFS/Homeshare, or back with family or on their own with ILS/ILS+, the following trends in service demand have been observed:

From 2023 to 2024:
- Total number of DSP participants increased by 4%, from 5,328 (Dec 2023) to 5,557 (Dec 2024)
- Participants living in SOH increased by 5% (858)
- Participants using ILS increased by 35% (924)
- Participants receiving Individualized Funding increased by 7% (3,373)
- Participants in TSA increased by 57% (140)

- Participants in ARCs decreased by 10% (243 remaining)
- Participants in RRCs decreased by 1% (154 remaining)
- Participants in RCFs decreased by 12% (305 remaining)
- Participants in GH/DR decreased by 8% (468 remaining)

With the placements in institutional settings decreasing and set to further decrease over the next three years, there is need for more community-based supports as DSP participants (and those with the highest complex needs) will be less congregated and more spread out in community with supports for living a good life needing to be place.

Trends in Individualized Planning Support

DSP's new Regional Hub model aims to provide more localized and personalized support through new roles with new approaches and more manageable staff to participant ratios compared to traditional care coordination.

Individual Planning and Support Coordination
- The new provincial system of individual planning and support coordination aims to drive more person directed and local community-based supports and services through a **Local Area Coordination approach**, which has been adopted as the community-based platform for supporting individual planning, coordination, and self-management, anchoring supports for individuals in their community instead of a disconnected centralized approach.

Shifting from Care Coordination to Regional Hub Model
- The Remedy has guided the transfer of DSP care coordination functions to LACs and IPSCs. This shift in individualized planning and support model began in early 2025 and has involved transferring responsibilities from existing DSP Care Coordinators to the newly established LAC and IPSC roles.

- As of early 2025, significant progress has been made in implementing the Regional Hub model:
  - To ensure consistent and effective servicey delivery policy and practice frameworks have been established, including fidelity criteria and job specifications for the new roles
  - Regional leadership teams were recruited and trained in August 2024
  - Hiring and training of LACs, IPSCs, and EFACs, occurred in late 2024 and early 2025

Improved Staffing Ratios
- To make meaningful individualized support more conducive, benchmark staff to participant ratios have been set and are as follows: 1:50 for LACs and 1:20 for IPSCs (compared to previous Care Coordinator ratios of ~1:80-100+ participants)

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Trends in Workforce Training

Investment in Training and Recruitment:
Significant investments are being made to address priority training and recruitment needs within the sector:

- **Bursary Programs:**
    - Up to **100 students** enrolling in a disability support services diploma at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) or eligible private colleges (Island Career Academy and CBBC) are eligible for education bursaries.
    - **15 staff members** from the disability sector will be supported to enroll in the NSCC Behavior Intervention Program (offered part-time starting September 2024), and **10 new students** will be supported to enroll in the full-time program.

- **Micro-Credentials:**
    - **20 people** working in the disability support sector will participate in two new **micro-credentials** created by NSCC:
        - Intro to a Human Rights-Based Approach
        - Applying a Human Rights-Based Approach in Community
        - Sector-Specific Employment Preparation for Newcomers

- **ISANS Bridge to Work Program**
    - To help immigrants gain local work experience and understand the Canadian work environment.
    - Focuses on development of entry-level job skills, employment readiness, safety training, and English vocabulary for safety training.
    - **20 newcomers** will participate in the program, preparing them for employment in the disability support sector, helping to diversify and expand the workforce.

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Developmental Services Landscape | Emerging Trends

Trends in Workforce Training

Training for Career Development Professionals:

- A specialized training program has been created by the Nova Scotia Career Development Association for career development advisors and practitioners to better understand and support the disability support sector workforce.

- In fall 2024, Nova Scotia Works Career Development Practitioners and other career professionals, including school counselors, will have access to an online training module focused on the disability support sector.

Trauma-Informed Care Training:

- **110 frontline staff** participated in Trauma-Informed Care workshops in February and March 2024, delivered by the provincial lead in Trauma-Informed Care, enhancing staff capacity to provide compassionate, responsive care.

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Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Sector Transformation Complexity
- In the context of ongoing reforms guided by the Remedy, there is the challenge of navigating significant changes in government policies, regulations, and funding models.

- The transition towards individualized funding (IF), the shift from institutional care to community-based services, and the development of new service models require adjustments in organizational structures, delivery methods, and compliance standards.

- These changes can introduce uncertainty, complicate the delivery of services, and pose challenges in maintaining consistency and quality in care.

Access to Services and Waitlists
- Many individuals and families in Nova Scotia face long waitlists for developmental services, which can lead to delayed access to necessary care and supports.

- Rural and remote communities in Nova Scotia often have fewer resources and service options compared to urban centers like Halifax.

Opportunities

Sector Transformation Complexity
- With the closure of large-scale institutions by 2028, there is opportunity in providing support for individuals transitioning out of institutions. By offering supported living options and community participation supports, individuals can be supported in living independently within their local communities.

- As Homeshare expands, there is opportunity to support in matching individuals with disabilities to families or caregivers in the community. Additionally, individuals can be helped with meaningfully filling their day with activities, in accordance with support plan development assistance from IPSCs/LACs.

Access to Services and Waitlists
- Using telehealth, virtual services, and digital intake systems can enhance access, especially for remote clients.

- Expanding mobile services or collaborating with local community centers can make care more accessible in underserved areas, reducing the need for travel and addressing geographic barriers.

Developmental Services Landscape

Challenges

Workforce Challenges

- **Staff Shortages:** Recruitment and retention remain critical issues. Low wages, heavy workloads, burnout, and a general undervaluation of the sector contribute to staffing shortages. There is also a disconnect in personal relationships between DSP, and service providers, and the individuals and families they support, impacting the overall quality of care.

- **Training and Development:** There is a pressing need for both comprehensive initial training and ongoing professional development. The lack of philosophical and practical training hinders a shared understanding of progressive service delivery.

Silos and culture

Fragmentation across departments and a lack of collaboration create inefficiencies and barriers. A new approach is needed to dismantle these silos and promote partnerships between service providers, individuals, and families to ensure a unified, person-centered system.

Opportunities

Workforce Challenges

- The Nova Scotia Disability Support Workforce strategy outlines plans to strengthen the workforce through updated core competencies, certification programs, micro-credentials, and prior learning recognition.

Silos and culture

- DSP's new service delivery model offers the following opportunities:
  - Embedding LAC within local networks can facilitate cross-sector collaboration
  - Shift to individualized planning by integrating education, healthcare, social services, and employment supports into a single planning process streamlines support across departments and service providers.
  - The new system prioritizes evidence-based planning, which necessitates better data-sharing practices between departments, which can reduce redundancy, improve service delivery, and ensure a holistic view of each individual's needs.
  - Peer-led planning networks and community-based support groups can empower individuals and families, making services more transparent and accessible.

Developmental Services Landscape | Key Actors

Department of Opportunities and Social Development (DOSD)

The department provides disability support, income assistance, child welfare, and housing services. It focuses on inclusion, independence, and modernizing support systems. The key programs include DSP, ESIA and CFW.

Disability Support Program (DSP)

DOSD program responsible for providing and overseeing disability support services for persons with disabilities, including funding for participants and service providers to access and provide community and living support.

Government Disability Roundtable

As part of the Remedy, this cross-governmental group has been established to carry forward a whole Provincial Government Remedy response and ensure consistency across departments and issues.

Advocacy Groups

Groups such as the Disability Rights Coalition, InclusionNS, reachAbility and AutismNS support individuals with disability through advocacy, education, and diverse programs & services across the province.

Associations

Associations such as the Nova Scotia Residential Agencies Association provide support to their member while also advocating to government on behalf of their members and the sector.

Service Providers

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