

Declaration Overview:

Securing a Good Life for family members with a disability

June 2004



CANADIAN
COALITION FOR
FAMILY
SUPPORTIVE
POLICY

The Canadian Coalition for Family Supportive Policy (CCFSP) is a national coalition committed to advancing the citizenship, rights and full participation of persons with disabilities in their communities. Our goal is to advance a national agenda that will assist families to secure a good life for their family member with a disability. For our coalition, the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are paramount. We know that families provide an essential bridge to the realization of citizenship in the daily lives of children, youth and often adults with disabilities.

We have come together to secure federal investments and the development of a family-supportive policy agenda. Such an agenda complements and supports the promotion of a citizenship agenda for persons with disabilities.

This insert is part of a larger CCFSP Declaration. It provides an overview of the opportunities for developing a family supportive-policy agenda. For more detail, please refer to the CCFSP Declaration in full. Copies can be obtained by contacting any of the partner organizations or by emailing ccfsp@cacl.ca.

CCFSP's GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Families are the cornerstone to inclusive community life.
- Families come in all shapes and sizes.
- Children should grow up in families and all families are entitled to the necessary supports to raise their children at home.
- In supporting families, it is understood that the equality rights of individuals with disabilities that ensure access to needed health care and other disability related supports must be foundational in developing and implementing family supports.
- It is normal for all families to need different forms of support at different times.
- Supporting and strengthening families contributes to community well-being.
- For families, inclusion is naturally rooted in their love for their sons and daughters.
- Policies should be designed to strengthen all families, respect and honour family choices, facilitate participation in all aspects of family and community life and recognize family contributions.
- Supports to families should not be provided in place of the supports which children, youth or adults with disabilities require.

The development and investments in family supportive policy for families who have a family member with a disability are key to strengthening and enabling families across Canada. Only once we begin to address the main areas will our governments and society begin to give recognition and acknowledgement to the roles and contributions that these Canadian citizens make in building a strong and inclusive Canada.

Definition of Family:

A family consists of two or more people, whether living together or apart, related by blood, marriage, adoption or a commitment to care for one another.

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**For more information,
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Commitment to Four Main Policy Goals

Under each goal CCFSP has developed specific policy recommendations that call on governments, employers and civil society to recognize and support the valuable contributions of families.

1. To Ensure Families Have Access to Needed Supports.

- **Develop Family Leadership** - Support capacity development, networking, and the sharing of knowledge among families who have a family member with a disability.
- **Develop a National Respite Strategy** - Deliver individualized and flexible support options, giving families an increased choice and the ability to tailor respite supports to meet their unique needs.
- **Develop a Federal/Provincial/Territorial and Aboriginal Investment Strategy for Families** - Federal transfer of block funding to provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments to:
 - a) expand provisions for disability-related supports to children, youth and their families based on principles of choice, flexibility, portability and community inclusion.
 - b) expand flexible and individualized funding opportunities, and planning and coordination supports for families

2. To Safeguard the Economic Security of Families.

Assure the economic security of families who face present or future income losses caused by the need to leave the workforce to care for a family member with a disability-

- **Canada Pension Plan** - Expand the Drop-Out provisions, and allow for contributions to CPP for those who stay out of the labour market to care for a family member with disability-related needs.
- **Canada Labour Code** - Amend the Canada Labour Code to include family leave provision for those who must leave paid jobs temporarily to care for a family member with disability-related needs.
- **Employment Insurance Paid Leave** - Provide paid leave for family members who must leave their jobs temporarily to care for a family member with disability-related needs.

Recognize the direct economic impact on families caring for a family member with a disability. The federal government can use the tax system as a vehicle to recognize the contributions that families make -

- **Family Tax Benefit** - Create a refundable tax benefit for family members who provide support for a family member with a disability

3. To Develop Communities that Advance and Promote Citizenship for Persons with Disabilities and their Families.

Invest in the capacity of communities that they are able to be more inclusive-

- **Child Care** - Use the Multi-Lateral Framework to promote and secure inclusive child care.
- **Community Capacity** – Invest in community organizations so they can provide leadership, information, knowledge and partnership building opportunities to enhance and understand disability-specific issues and to challenge negative and stereotypical attitudes and perceptions.
- **Investment in Infrastructure** - Ensure that any federal government investments are in developing infrastructure that is physically accessible and socially inclusive.
- **Community Transition Fund** – Develop a fund for strategic initiatives that will assist communities to change from exclusive outdated institutional systems of support to inclusive and enabling community-based systems.

4. To Provide Families with Tools and Mechanisms to Plan for the Future.

Develop a National Disability Investment Fund which will:

- a) Provide a new mechanism for savings and investment, including tax incentives for financial contributions made by families;
- b) Recognize and encourage families' financial contributions to the current and future security and well-being of their family members with disabilities;
- c) Pool family and individual investments from trusts, RRSPs, RRIFs and a newly created Disability Savings Plan to maximize the rate of return, minimize fees and finance a vehicle to assist individuals and families with low incomes overcome isolation and loneliness and secure a good life.