

ADWA Launches “Essential but Forgotten” Campaign in support of Community Disability Service Workers

THE ALBERTA DISABILITY WORKERS ASSOCIATION (ADWA) CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA TO INCREASE COMMUNITY DISABILITY SUPPORT WORKER WAGES BY 25%

Alberta's Community Disability Services are in a staffing crisis. Workers paid to support some of the province's most vulnerable citizens have not seen a wage increase in almost eight years. Workers are stressed and feeling very undervalued and their community employers are struggling to recruit and retain qualified staff to provide essential services to Albertans with disabilities.

Community Disability Service Workers are employed by community organizations who receive funding from the Alberta government to deliver mandated and essential services for people with disabilities and their families. This invaluable workforce has experienced a long history of being underpaid and undervalued for their important work.

“It's time for Community Disability Support Workers to speak up and get loud,” says Tim Meyer, who works for an organization in Lethbridge. “We need to be heard or we will be forgotten.”

According to a 2021 report, there are approximately 15,000 people employed in community disability services across the province. The average hourly wage for a direct Community Disability Support Worker (89% of the workforce) is \$18.76. The average wage across the entire workforce (including supervisors and management) is \$21.50.[i]

Community Disability Support Workers are essential in the lives of people with disabilities and their responsibilities require multiple skills. They support people in their homes and in community to help people find and keep employment, develop and retain family and community connections and relationships, assist people with any aspects of their personal care, administer medications, cook, clean and carry out other household management responsibilities, and more.

In a Compensation Survey conducted by ADWA in January 2022, 90% of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with their current wage and 29.44% found it necessary to work two or more jobs to make a living wage. [ii]

Immediate action is required by the Government of Alberta. Community Disability Service Workers must be properly compensated for their essential work and the value they bring to the lives of Albertans with disabilities and their families. Failure to provide an influx of new dollars to raise the wages of this workforce will result in an escalating crisis across the province.

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Visit www.adwa.ca or email campaign@adwa.ca for more information.

[i] Alberta Council of Disability Services. ACDS Survey 2020: COVID-19 Impact on CDS Workforce. February 12, 2021.

[ii] Alberta Disability Workers Association. ADWA Compensation Survey. January 14, 2022