

# Specialized Programs in the Settlement Sector to Support Newcomers with Disabilities



November 24, 2025





# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded past and present territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We are all treaty people.

As we help settle newcomers to Nova Scotia, we also teach them about the history and rights of Indigenous Peoples in Mi'kma'ki. We honour the enduring presence and contributions of the Mi'kmaq people, and we are dedicated to fostering meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

## AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN AFFIRMATION

We also acknowledge that people of African descent have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years, and we honour and offer gratitude to those ancestors of African descent who came before us to this land.

# AGENDA

- **Accessibility Support**  
Jessica Leslie, ISANS
- **Language Acquisition for Deaf Students**  
Gary Griffiths, ISANS
- **Individual Program Plans for LINC Students**  
Danielle Barnes, Norquest College
- **Providing Compassionate Case Management and Supportive Health Navigation Services**  
Sahar Masoud, ISANS
- **Employment as a Pathway to Inclusion for Newcomers with Disabilities**  
Firat Sayin, Saint Mary's University





# Accessibility Support





Belong & Grow

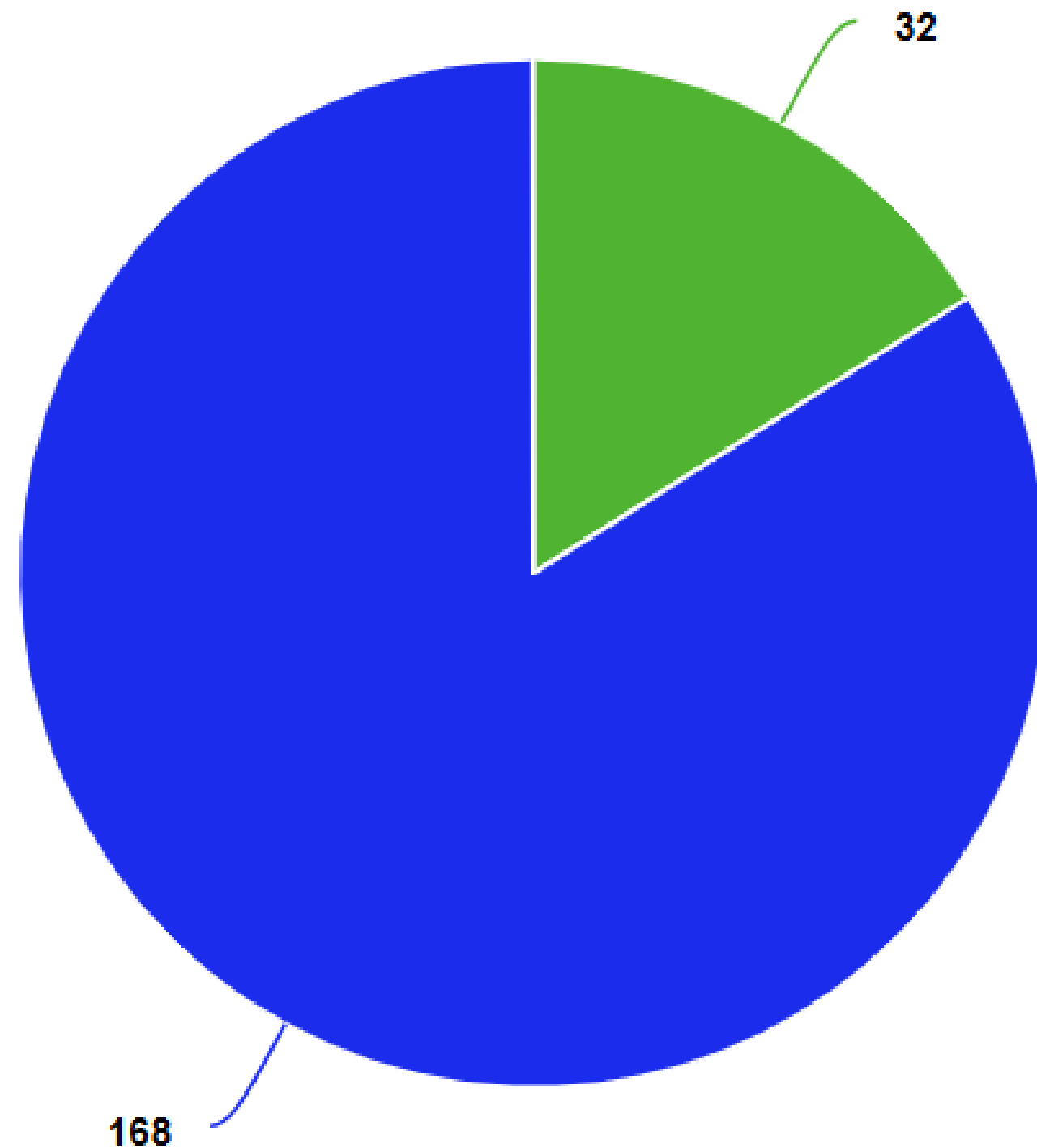
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**Building  
our future  
together**





Program of 200



Students with a disability    Students without a disability

**An estimated 1.3 billion people experience significant disability. This represents 16% of the world's population, or 1 in 6 of us.**

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>



A photograph of four people standing together at what appears to be a community event or fair. From left to right: a man with a beard in a dark blue polo shirt, a man with a beard in a green long-sleeved shirt, a woman with long dark hair in a grey top, and a woman with dark hair in a floral top. They are all smiling. In the background, there are other people, a display of small items, and a banner with a red maple leaf and the word 'ASST'. A red rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'Accessibility Support Program' in white.

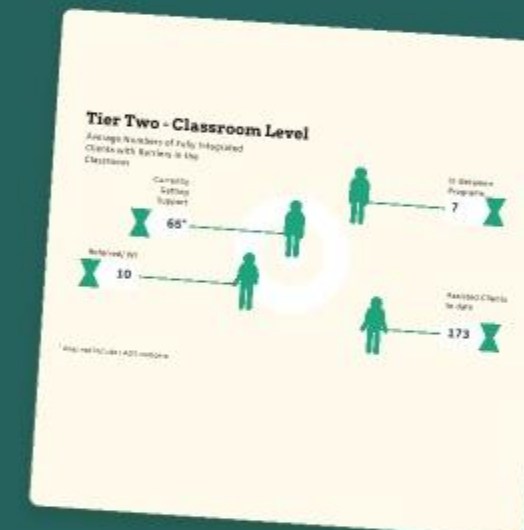
# Accessibility Support Program





# Multi-Tier System of Support

MTSS allows for the flexibility to responds to multiple kinds of needs and abilities in a given educational setting.







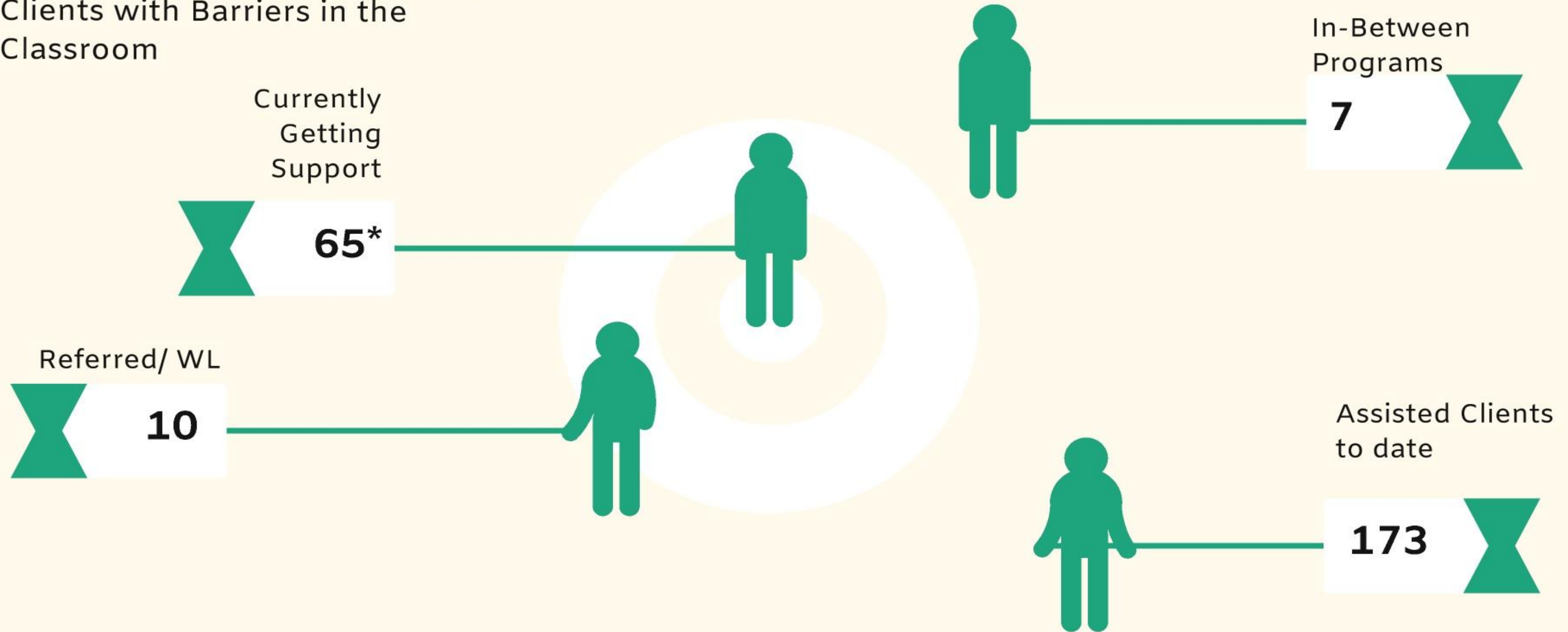
## Tier One - Program Level

- ISANS PD Sessions (7 options)
- UDL resources and curriculum
- Team teaching
- Multi-sensory lending library



# Tier Two - Classroom Level

Average Numbers of Fully Integrated Clients with Barriers in the Classroom



\* does not include LADS numbers





## **Tier Three – Individual Level**

**These clients get 1 on 1 targeted support for a set period of time with the goal of community integration or sheltered employment.**



## Sight Loss Integration Teacher Toolkit

2024



Web link:  
<https://isans.ca/resources/integrated-sight-loss-teacher-toolkit/>



# Language Acquisition for Deaf Students





# LADS

Language **A**cquisition for **D**eaf **S**tudents



## History of LADS

The LADS Program is a collaborative initiative between Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians (SDHHNS).

It teaches American Sign Language (ASL) and English to Deaf immigrants to improve communication skills and support their integration into Canadian society and employment.



# History of LADS

- LADS began over 15 years ago with weekly classes taught at SDHHNS with a focus on conversation and acclimatisation.
- In 2022, a new Lead Instructor with a background in speech pathology joined the program. The class began using ISANS classroom space and formalising its teaching content.
- This evolution saw the program move from informal lessons to a curriculum-based model aligned with ISANS's LINC programs, using Canadian Language Benchmarks for both ASL and English.

# Aligning LADS with LINC

- Turning a “conversation class” into a LINC class.
- Language Assessment collaboration → overcoming client fears.
- Introducing Themes, Task-Based Teaching and Real-World Tasks
- Tailoring tasks to the deaf community





# Program Materials

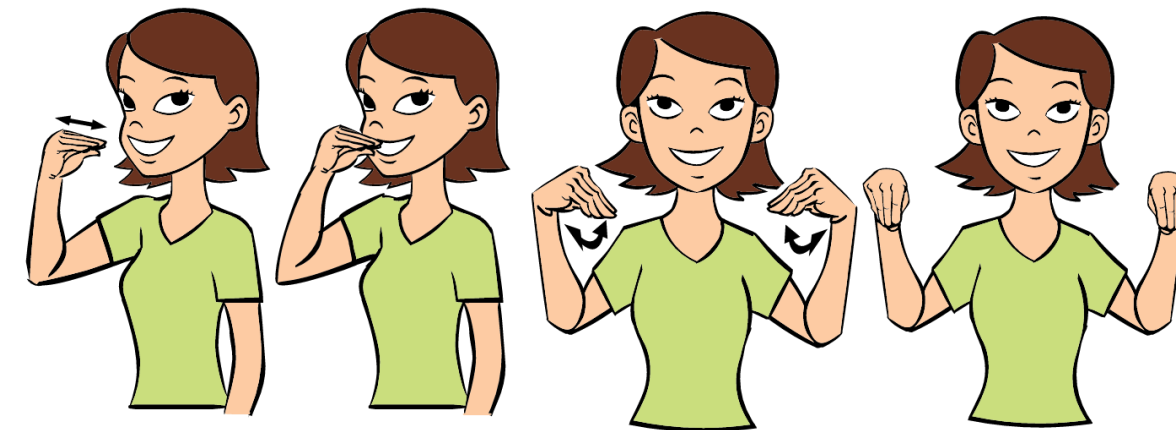
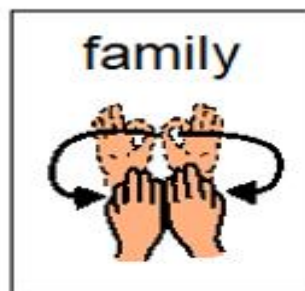


Karen's Family



Karen's immediate family is small. She has a husband and 3 children. Karen has 2 sons and 1 daughter.

1



supermarket



apple



# Challenges

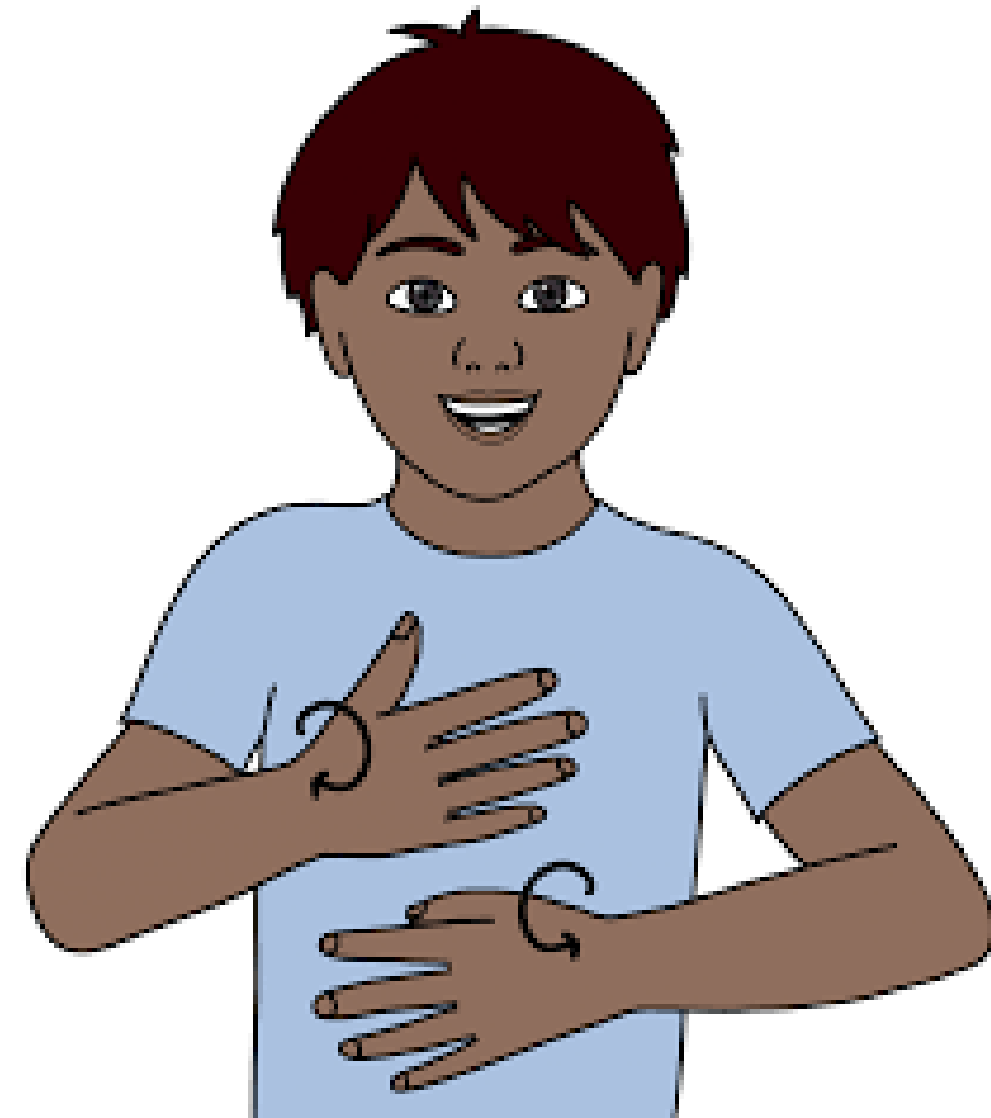
- Exposure to education
- Teaching two languages: English & ASL → syntax/semantic differences
- Unfamiliar use of facial expressions (e.g. bowl of strawberries)
- Attendance
- Technology





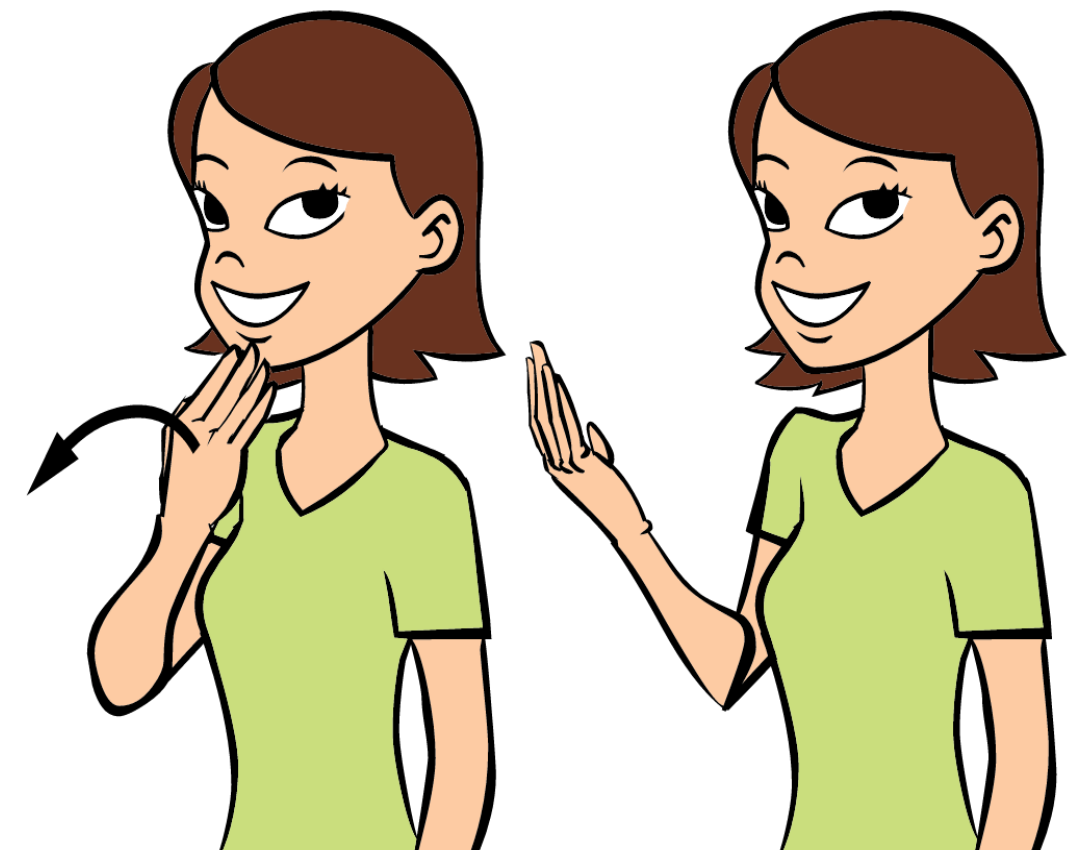
# Successes

- Gaining a pathway
- Real-world language
- Giving texture to their new home
- Job training
- Community college aspirations
- CPR courses
- Having a “voice”



# How Can We Improve?

- Increased community awareness
- Targeted marketing for newcomers to Canada
- Investment in learning materials for adult learners
- Access to technology for low-income residents





# Individual Program Plans for LINC Students



# Individual Program Plans for LINC Students

Danielle Barnes  
November 2024





Students are supported within inclusive classrooms. This allows them to work alongside peers and gives them access to the same programming as everyone else.

# Inclusive Classrooms



# IPP Meetings

(Individual Program Plan)

- Teach clients they have a voice.
- Promote self-advocacy
- Ensure the client is supported in the way they prefer
- Allow students to set learning and settlement goals
- Increase instructor understanding of the needs of the student





## Environmental Accommodations

- Please ensure the walkway is clear of obstacles and advise of any new layout for in-person classes.
- IA will support by accessing student's mic and camera via Screenconnect during online webinar/class. Please be patient and allow time for this.
- 

## Assessment Accommodations

- Instructor **must** provide at least 48 hours' notice of PBLA to ensure support in place.
- Student is only assessed for **listening and speaking**.
- IA to read questions and scribe answers verbatim.
- Student is given extra time for assessments - 1.5x
- Reading assessments can be utilized as Listening **practice**
- Writing assessments should be modified into a speaking **practice**.



## Instructional Guidelines

- **Use student's name before addressing/asking questions in class. This allows the student to know when they are being spoken to.**
- Instructors to read from whiteboard/slides/chat during the class/webinar so that the student feels included in the class in a more natural way. Instructor to describe pictures used during class.
- Please describe any videos that will be played in class PRIOR to pushing play.
- Provide tactile examples, if possible, e.g. bank card.
- Please refrain from using the words "this, that and those". Please state what you are discussing.
- Instructor to advise IA of priorities for async unless otherwise agreed.
- During the webinar, the IA will connect via Screenconnect and assist student with putting hand up and using the microphone. **Please be mindful that this can take a few moments.**
- Ais able to send and receive emails using Siri on his phone.
- When available, IA to send multi modal recordings to student's personal device after online class in lieu of lecture recording. Additionally, student is to use voiceover/Siri to make his own voice memos.

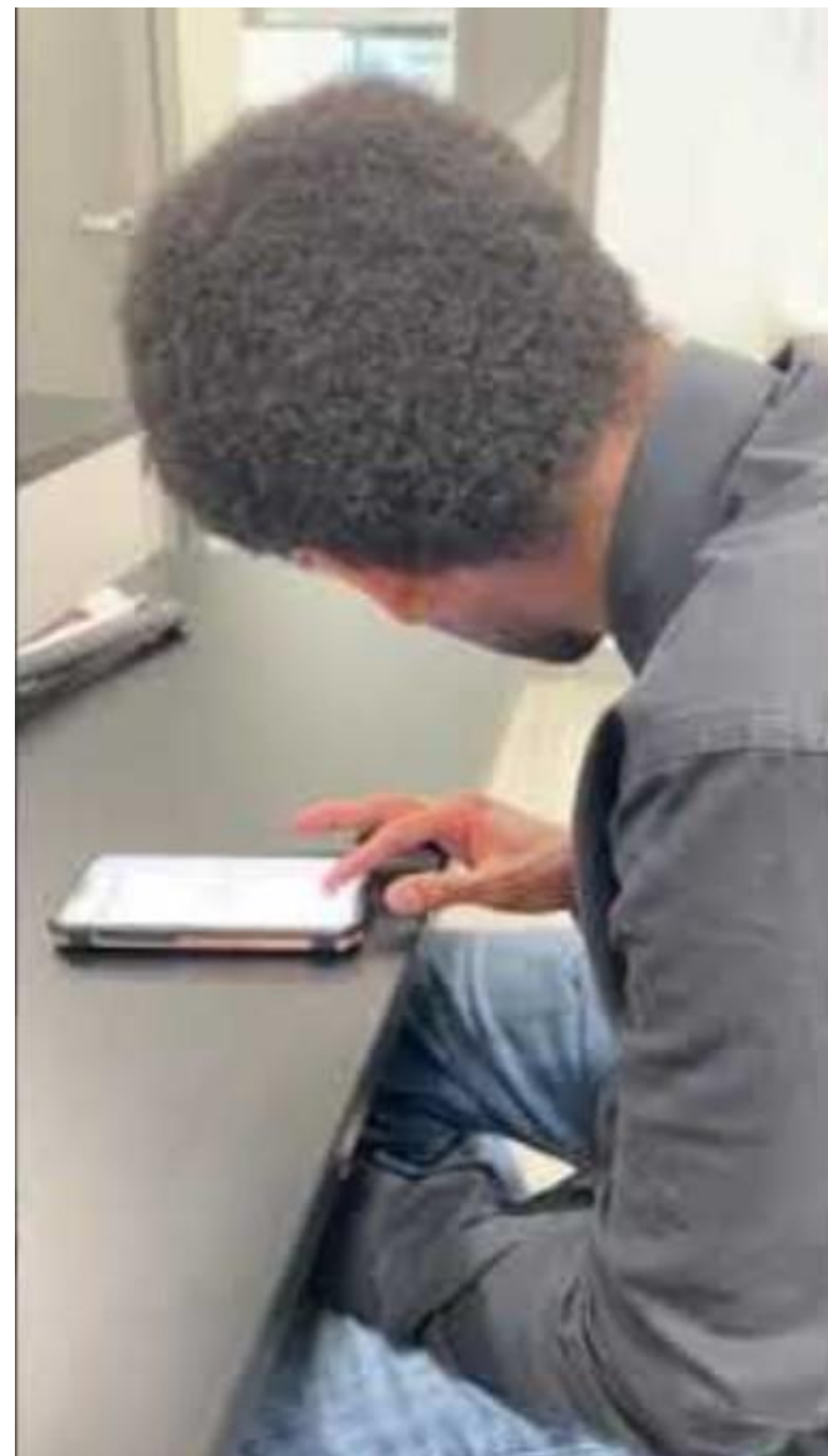




<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Improve Technology Skills</b>
<b>Plan of action</b> <b>September 0224</b>	<p>* A has requested more time to practice and become more efficient with voice over. IA will set up meetings with Assistive Technology to practice using voiceover. One technology goal for A to work towards is to independently record vocabulary using voice memo/recording. He would eventually like to be able to Independently send a voiceover by email.</p> <p>*Continue using typio during lab time and increase keyboarding skills.</p>

# Using Voice Over

*Abdalla is practicing using Voice Over to let his IA know he is ready to meet.*







Danielle Barnes  
Danielle.barnes@norquest.ca





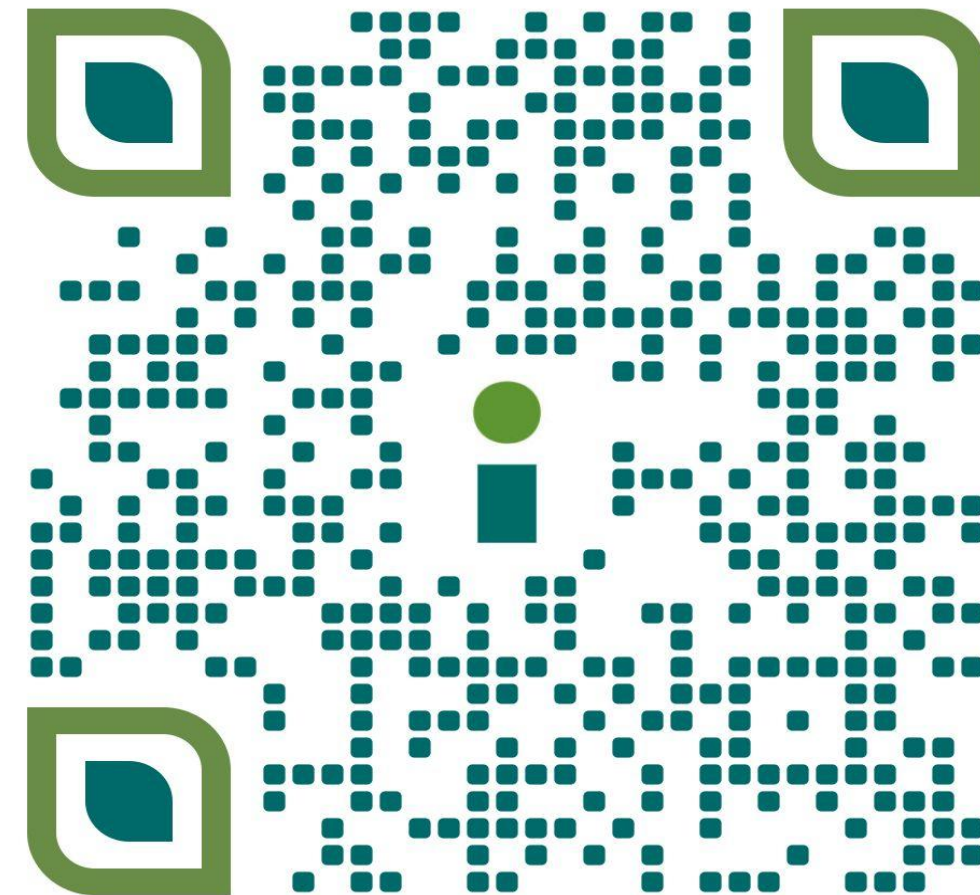
# Providing Compassionate Case Management and Supportive Health Navigation Services





# Health Navigation Team Support

Providing compassionate case management and supportive health navigation services





## Introduction and Context

- Overview of ISANS Health Team and support Eligibility
- Pre arrival readiness
- Health navigation and case management
- Collaborations and partners
- Challenges
- Empowering clients with disability



## ISANS Health Team

- 5 health navigators
- 1 health specialist
- 1 program assistant





# Eligibility for Health Team Support

## Health Navigation

- PR holding clients

## Case Management

- PR holding clients with complex health needs or living with disabilities



# Health Team Support





## Pre-arrival Readiness

- Prepared to support complex cases, including individuals arriving in critical conditions, without family support, etc.
- Work closely with stakeholders
- Gather detailed information
- Develop effective pre-arrival support plan



# Health Navigation

Arrival - Intake

Initial Health Assessment

Health Navigation  
Support

Health orientation and  
group sessions

**Follow up**



## **Case Management**

Clients with complex health needs/clients living with disability

### **Key Strategies:**

- Comprehensive assessment (starting day one)
- Coordinated care planning (with internal and external partners)
- Responsive case planning
- Continuous monitoring through home visits
- Building resilience: long-term independence

# Case Management

## **Tailored Support**

- Early access to health care provider through expedited triage system
- Accessibility accommodations (collaboration with OTPT, continuing care, housing team)
- Support to obtain proper assistive technologies (motorized wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc.)
- Individualized care plans, use of interpreters

## **Advocacy and resource linkage**

- Federal and provincial programs (OTPT, continuing care, disability support)

## **Government Benefits**

- Disability Tax Credit, Canada Dental Plan

## **NGO Referrals**

- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada



## Collaborations and partners

NHC

Interdepartmental collaboration

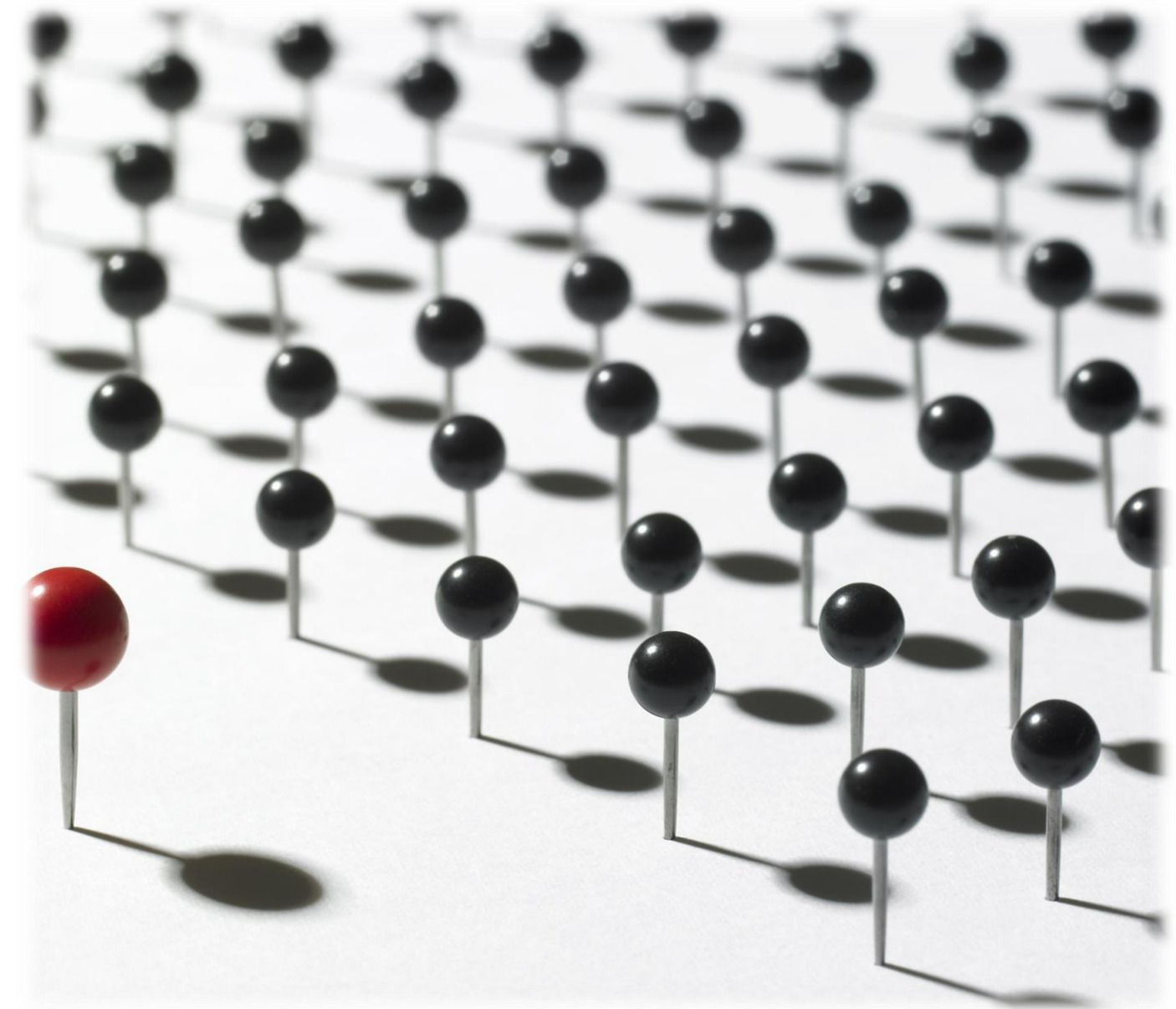
OTPT

Continuing care

Nova Scotia Health Authority

Dalhousie University GAP clinic

Other community org. (HAAC,  
Brothers and sisters, etc.)



## Challenges

1. Navigating complex systems
2. Limited resources
3. Communication, information and documentation
4. Cultural sensitivity and stigma
6. Advocacy and systemic barriers
7. Emotional toll and burnout
8. Coordination with other services



**Access  
to Services**

Ensure healthcare,  
housing, and  
education are  
accessible

Provide  
interpretation and  
assistive  
technologies

**Rights & Advocacy**

Educate  
newcomers about  
disability rights in  
Canada

Support self-  
advocacy and  
community  
engagement

**Social Inclusion**

Encourage  
community  
activities

Address stigma  
and promote  
cultural awareness

**Health Navigation  
&  
Case Management**

Trained health  
navigators to guide  
clients through  
complex systems

Offer trauma-  
informed and  
culturally sensitive  
care

# **Empowering Clients with Disabilities**

# Employment as a pathway to inclusion for newcomers with disabilities





# Why Employment Matters

Work → income, belonging, purpose and dignity

A primary route to social & economic integration for newcomers

Inclusive labour market access key to achieving the Accessible Canada Act's 2040 goal

Yet newcomers with disabilities might be facing poorer employment outcomes

2024	CwnD	lwnD	CwD	lwD		
				lwD (total)	lwD (F)	lwD (M)
employment rate (%)	85	81	68	66	63	71
median hourly wage rate (\$)	36	30	32	30	28	33
average weekly hours	38	37	36	36	35	39

CwnD – Canadian-born with no disabilities, lwnD – immigrants with no disabilities, CwD – Canadian-born with disabilities, lwD – immigrants with disabilities  
Source: Statistics Canada (2025). *Labour market indicators for persons with and without disabilities, annual*. URL: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/4c57df9d-a25a-480e-8227-6efa2a7206dd>



2024

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# Key Barriers to Employment

## **Systemic and structural challenges:**

Credentialing & recognition gaps

Accessibility gaps in job search and hiring platforms

Attitudinal barriers - stigma, ableism and unfamiliarity with accommodation

Fragmented supports - disability vs. settlement services often operate in silos

Limited employer readiness



# Double Integration Challenge

Navigating two systems: settlement and disability support

Newcomers with disabilities may be referred back and forth (settlement → disability → employment)

Risk of falling through the cracks between these systems

Lack of coordinated case-management increases risk of being left behind

Strong settlement support ≠ inclusion without accessibility, accommodation, assistive devices

# Recommendations for Support Agencies

Integrated employment pathways combining language, skill training and accessibility supports

Peer and mentorship programs for immigrants with disabilities

Wrap-around case management models (one-stop access hubs for employment counselling, language training, accommodation services, mental health support, financial/housing referrals, etc.)

# Recommendations for Employers

Inclusive recruitment and onboarding practices

Disability confidence through training and consultation

Partnership with community and settlement organizations

Job carving and flexible work arrangements

Psychological safety and open dialogue



# Policy and System-Level Recommendations

Strengthen collaboration between settlement, disability and employment programs

Fund bridge initiatives specifically for newcomers with disabilities

Develop national accessibility benchmarks for employment services

Encourage employer incentives and accountability under the Accessible Canada Act

Need for data and research disaggregated by disability type and immigration status

Emphasize intersectionality: disability × immigration × gender/class

Move from accommodation to systemic inclusion

# THANK YOU!

Firat Sayin  
firat.sayin@smu.ca

Questions?





A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a diverse group of young people. In the foreground, a young woman with a bright smile wears a red patterned hijab and a brown backpack. Behind her, a young woman with blonde hair and a green scarf also smiles. Further back, several other young men and women are visible, some looking towards the camera and others slightly away. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor public space like a market or festival.

Thank  
you!