

DDRC

Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary

Inclusion

The aim of this position paper is to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity, worth and equal rights for all people. All citizens, including those with developmental disabilities, are part of their local communities and are recognized as having a rich contribution to make in the development and well being of the human community. Our vision is ‘everyone belongs’.

As a resource centre for inclusion, and an agency that has a rich history, we believe we have a responsibility to share information including providing a counterbalance to historical negative perceptions, which if left unchecked, serve as a risk not only to individuals with developmental disabilities, but to the health and vitality of our community.

Social isolation and loneliness are a sad fact of life for countless Canadians and the effects of social isolation can be devastating.¹ Research indicates that:

- Poverty is both a key cause and product of social exclusion and isolation.²
- The actual experience of inequality and stress associated with dealing with exclusion tend to have pronounced psychological effects and to impact negatively on health status.³
- Neurologists studying the brainwaves of people who have suffered rejection or exclusion from a group discovered that neurologically, the brain reacts as though the patient has suffered a trauma to the frontal lobe, a head injury.⁴

Conversely, it is widely known that genuine human connection, or inclusion, is essential for all people and while *all* people have the need to be included, inclusion is critically important for people with developmental disabilities because they have historically been excluded more often than others.

When we speak of inclusion, we mean connection to the ordinary aspects of life – home families, friends, neighbors, schools, jobs. Inclusion also, and in particular, includes a life rich in genuine, reciprocal relationships.

The DDRC knows from experience the enormous potential that exists for people with developmental disabilities to live fuller and more fulfilling lives, to grow and blossom through meaningful human connection and participation in community, through being

included. We also believe in the potential for people without disabilities to open up and relate meaningfully with people with developmental disabilities. We have seen it happen; ordinary people, who have discovered something in themselves when they open up to a relationship with a person with a disability.

With all of this in mind, the DDRC acknowledges that inclusion isn't just important; it is a necessary component of our individual and collective health and well-being. The inclusion of all citizens, including those with developmental disabilities is not just good for individuals, it is essential for community. The DDRC is committed to assisting individuals, community groups and businesses to move towards becoming more aware, knowledgeable and skilled to embrace the benefits of inclusion.

Key Messages:

- Social isolation and loneliness are a sad fact of life for countless Canadians.
- The social and financial cost of isolation and social exclusion is high
- Genuine human connection is essential for all people.
- People with developmental disabilities are more often excluded than included in all facets of life.
- "Inclusion" is about connection to the ordinary aspects of life – home, families, friends, neighbors, schools, jobs and includes a life rich in genuine reciprocal relationships.
- There is enormous potential for people with developmental disabilities to live to grow and blossom through meaningful human connection and participation in community and for people without disabilities to open up and relate meaningfully with people with developmental disabilities.
- Awareness and knowledge are critical steps to enable communities to embrace the benefits of inclusion.

¹Galabubuzi, Grace and Labonte, Ronald: Presentation prepared for the Social Determinants of Health Across the Life-Span Conference, Toronto, November, 2002.

²Wilkins et al. (1989). Changes in mortality by income in urban Canada from 1971 to 1986. *Health Reports*, 1(2).

³Kawachi I, Wilkinson, R, and Kennedy, B. (2002). *Unequal Access: A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income*. Toronto: Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

⁴Janusz, Barbara. (2006). The politics of exclusion. *Viewpoint*.