



# The VOICE of Albertans with Disabilities

February 1, 2026

## A message from our Executive Director.

Hello VAD Society Members,

I am thrilled to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Voice of Albertans with Disabilities Society (VAD Society).



I was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta, and I bring both lived experience and a strong commitment to accessibility and inclusion to this role. I live with an invisible disability and am the parent of two boys, including my youngest son, who was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age of three. These experiences have shaped my lifelong advocacy for equity, diversity, and inclusion, both personally and professionally.

I strongly believe in the importance of the work VAD Society is doing and in the opportunity we have to further advance accessibility across Alberta. By working collaboratively with community partners, employers, government representatives, and service providers, we can continue to reduce barriers and support meaningful, sustainable accessibility across workplaces, programs, services, and community spaces throughout the province.

I am excited to bring my lived experience, professional background, and passion for giving back to my community into this role, and I look forward to working alongside you to strengthen accessibility and inclusion for Albertans with disabilities.

## Alberta Disability Assistance Program

Taken from: ©2025 Government of Alberta | February 4, 2025 | Seniors, Community and Social Services

The Alberta Disability Assistance Program (ADAP) will provide financial, health and personal supports to Albertans with permanent and short-term disabilities who are able to work.

### Purpose

The Alberta Disability Assistance Program (ADAP) will empower Albertans with disabilities to pursue fulfilling job opportunities while continuing to receive the financial, medical and personal supports they need.

Albertans with disabilities and the organizations that support them have made it clear that they want supports that meet their unique needs and abilities, rather than the current one-size-fits-all solution offered by the long-standing Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program. Albertans with disabilities stressed the importance of providing pathways to employment for individuals who are able to work but still need to receive benefits, and AISH is not designed to provide this type of support.

ADAP is being thoughtfully designed based on input from Albertans with disabilities to address a gap in supports for individuals with disabilities who are able to work and want to enjoy the benefits that come with employment, such as earning a pay cheque, building relationships, developing skills, and providing a sense of purpose, belonging and independence.

### How it works

Albertans on ADAP will also have access to the resources and tools they need to gain new skills and be empowered to work to their full potential.

Starting in July 2026, the new Alberta Disability Assistance Program will become operational and disability income assistance applicants will be assessed for both the new program and AISH. Eligible applicants



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will be placed in the program best suited to their unique situation. If deemed eligible for AISH or ADAP, applicants will receive the difference in benefits retroactively to the date that their complete application was submitted.

There will be a single combined application for AISH and ADAP, and an applicant's needs and situation will determine which program they are eligible for. In general, people with a permanent and severe disability who are unable to work will be eligible for the AISH program, while those with disabilities who are assessed as able to work will be eligible for ADAP. ADAP clients can apply for reassessment for AISH if their medical condition or ability to work changes.

All existing AISH clients will be assured a place in either the new Alberta Disability Assistance Program or the AISH program. Those currently on AISH will continue to receive their existing benefits until they are able to be placed in the program best suited to their unique situation, and can rest assured that their care and wellbeing will be prioritized as the new program is

implemented. Benefit amount and duration. Benefit rates and earned income exemptions for ADAP are still being decided, and more information will be shared in the near future. Alberta provides some of the most comprehensive supports amongst the provinces for people with disabilities, and Alberta's government is committed to ensuring that the province continues to have the best disability programs in Canada.

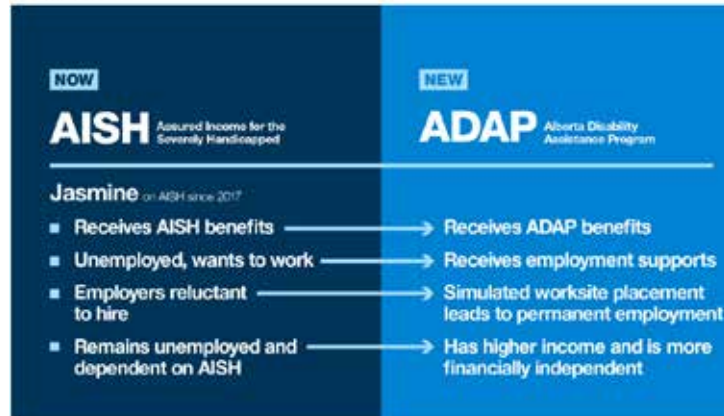
There is no maximum program duration for ADAP - clients will receive supports for as long as they need. ADAP will provide higher earning exemptions than any other program, meaning Albertans on ADAP can earn more from working while continuing to receive their financial benefits. Monthly benefits will be gradually reduced as employment income increases.

The new program will include the same robust health benefits as AISH. Albertans on ADAP will be able to receive the health benefits they need, regardless of their employment income. Once a person reaches the

maximum earnings and is no longer eligible for monthly financial benefits, they will continue to be eligible for health benefits, up to age 65, when they transition to seniors' health benefit programs.

Through ADAP, Albertans with disabilities will not

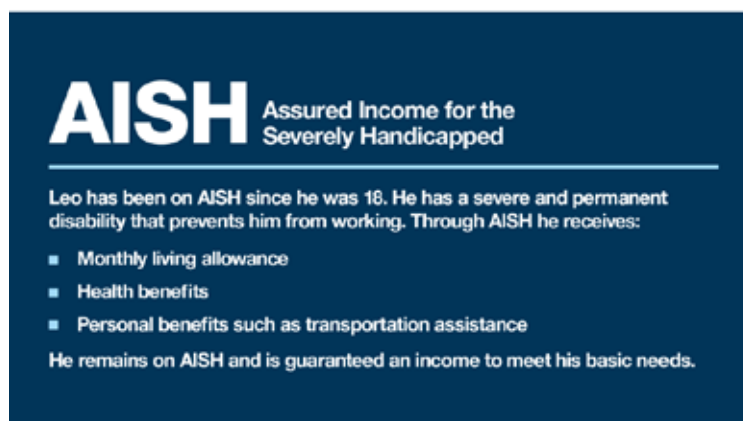
#### Case study #1



#### Case study #2



#### Case study #3



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only receive the financial and health benefits they rely on, but they also will have access to the resources and tools they need to gain new skills and work to their full potential.

To support this, Alberta's government will be investing more to expand employment supports and encourage private sector employers to break down barriers to employment for people with disabilities.

### **Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)**

The long-standing Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program will still be there for those with permanent and severe disabilities who are unable to work. As a legislated program, AISH will remain fully funded and available to all eligible Albertans.

Applications will continue to be processed to ensure eligible applicants receive benefits as soon as possible.

#### **More information**

All existing AISH clients will receive more information about the new Alberta Disability Assistance Program in the near future, and can contact their worker or Alberta Supports if they have questions or want additional information.

Updates will be posted on [Alberta.ca/ADAP](http://Alberta.ca/ADAP).

## **2025 Bursary Recipients**

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities is pleased to announce that we awarded \$5,000 in Education for Life Bursaries and \$1,000 through the Elsa Marie Lodewyk Memorial Bursary in 2025.

Approved bursary recipients were enrolled in the following programs:

- Bachelor of Kinesiology
- Bachelor of Business Administration - Human Resource
- Practical Nurse
- BA in Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Biology

- Child and Youth Care Diploma
- MACP MA Counselling Psychology
- Bachelor of Science
- BFA in Music Theatre Performance
- Interdisciplinary Therapy Assistant Diploma



Thank you to all the individuals who applied for a bursary. Voice of Albertans with Disabilities recognizes the dedication and effort it takes to pursue education, and we truly wish we were able to support every applicant on their educational journey.

Bursary applications will be accepted again starting next September, with a closing date of November 15, 2026. To learn more about eligibility and how to apply, please visit our website:

<https://vadsociety.ca/participation/>

## **Why VAD Membership Matters**

Membership is the foundation of Voice of Albertans with Disabilities' work. Member support helps VAD continue to advocate for disability rights, deliver free one-to-one support, and provide education and awareness across Alberta. Every membership strengthens our collective voice and ensures that people with disabilities have representation, support, and access to information when they need it most.

As a VAD member, you:

- Support disability advocacy and systemic change



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- Help sustain free support services such as benefit navigation and referrals
- Receive updates on programs, events, and advocacy efforts
- Have opportunities to participate in consultations, meetings, and community initiatives
- Contribute to a province-wide network of people working toward accessibility, equity, and inclusion.

### Membership Renewal Reminder

Your membership is due by March 31, we thank you for your continued support. Your membership directly helps VAD remain a strong, independent voice for people with disabilities across Alberta. Renewing is quick and can be done online, or staff are happy to assist if you need help. 780-488-9088

<https://vadsociety.ca/login-signup/>

## Preparing for Tax Season

Tax season can feel overwhelming, especially when you're navigating disability-related benefits. Filing your income tax return on time is important, even if you have little or no income, as many federal and provincial benefits are based on your tax information.

### Disability Tax Credit (DTC)

The Disability Tax Credit is a non-refundable tax credit that can help reduce the amount of income tax you owe and may make you eligible for additional benefits and programs. Many people are unsure if they qualify, or how to apply. VAD can provide information, guidance, and referrals to help you understand the process.

### Why Filing Your Taxes Matters

Filing your taxes helps ensure you remain eligible for important benefits, including:

- Disability Tax Credit (DTC)
- Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)
- GST/HST Credit
- Canada Carbon Rebate
- Other federal and provincial income-tested programs

Even if you have no income, filing a return helps protect your access to these supports.

### Free Tax Clinics with VAD

VAD offers free tax clinics for eligible individuals with disabilities. Our staff assist with basic tax returns and help connect you to additional supports if needed. Appointments are limited and fill quickly, so we encourage members to contact VAD beginning in March to schedule an appointment.

VAD's Tax season runs from April to May, and taxes can only be done by appointment in person. If you are unable to provide your T-slips, VAD can download them from the CRA for processing. VAD is able to do taxes from 2020 to 2024. VAD's FREE tax clinics are for low income individuals with simple taxes only.

## FREE TAXES



What to bring:

- Government ID
- Social Insurance Number
- Tax Slips
- Charitable Donation Receipts
- Medical/Dental Receipts
- DTC Approval letter

## Call for appointment



105 Royal Alex Place  
10106 111 Ave, Edmonton



780-488-9088



[vad@vadsociety.ca](mailto:vad@vadsociety.ca)

### Are you Eligible?

1 person	\$35,000
2 persons	\$45,000
3 persons	\$47,500
4 persons	\$50,000
5 persons	\$52,500



Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

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## Reporting from October to December 2025

	Non-Indigenous		Indigenous On Reserve/ Settlement	Indigenous Off Reserve/ Settlement	Total
Total # of received referrals	Accepted	1995	0	13	2008
	Not accepted	0	0	0	0
	Total # of received referrals:				2008
	Number of referred clients with a <b>developmental</b> condition/impairment:				4
	Number of referred clients with a <u>mental</u> condition/impairment:				40
	Number of referred clients with a <b>neurological</b> condition/impairment:				10
	Number of referred clients with a <u>physical</u> condition/impairment:				80
	Number of referred clients with a <b>sensory</b> condition/impairment:				0
Total # of unique clients served	Male	879	0	4	883
	Female	1028	0	8	1036
	Other	88	0	1	89
	Total # of clients served:				2008
Description of community referrals challenges/trends/barriers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•AISH has provided their clients with VAD's phone number and has told them VAD will assist with the DTC, CDB and any AISH issues arising. This was done without consultation with VAD and therefore we needed to hire extra staff to <u>handle</u> the workload. 1974 clients did not disclose their disabilities.</li> </ul>				
Community connection strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Working with SAGE to provide <u>pop up</u> services every Monday for client appointments. Continued referrals to and from organizations, presentations to bring awareness to community, newsletters, social media, and word of mouth. -Presentations provided in the community to other organizations</li> </ul>				

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## Community Inclusion Project

### Update on Indigenous & Multicultural Outreach

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities continues to strengthen relationships with Indigenous and multicultural communities across Alberta. Through community presentations, outreach meetings, and pop-up information sessions, VAD is working to reduce barriers and improve access to disability related information and supports.

Our outreach focuses on building trust, listening to community needs, and providing culturally respectful, accessible information. This includes offering plain-language resources, multilingual materials, and one-to-one support for individuals navigating programs such as AISH, CPP-Disability, the Disability Tax Credit, and the Canada Disability Benefit.

VAD remains committed to working alongside community partners to ensure people with disabilities from diverse cultural backgrounds feel welcomed, informed, and supported. Outreach activities will continue throughout the year, with additional community visits and collaborations planned.

### Language-First, Accessible Materials

VAD is committed to using language-first, accessible materials that respect individual identity, culture, and lived experience. We strive to share information in clear, plain language and offer materials in multiple formats whenever possible.

Our approach recognizes that language matters. Using respectful, inclusive wording helps reduce barriers, build trust, and ensure information is understandable and accessible to everyone. VAD continues to work with community partners to adapt resources so they are culturally appropriate, easy to navigate, and responsive to diverse communication needs.



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VAD works to make information easy to understand and easy to access for everyone. We know that clear communication helps people feel more confident and supported when navigating disability-related services.

We do this by:

- Using plain language instead of technical or legal wording
- Providing translated materials when possible
- Using visuals, such as images and simple graphics to explain information
- Adding QR codes that link directly to forms, resources, and supports online

These approaches help reduce barriers, support different learning styles, and ensure people can access information in ways that work best for them.

### Culturally Respectful Support

VAD is committed to providing support that is culturally respectful, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse communities we serve. We recognize that experiences of disability are shaped by culture, language, family, and community, and that trust is built through listening and understanding.

Our team works alongside Indigenous and multicultural community partners to ensure supports are delivered with care, respect, and cultural awareness. This includes adapting communication styles, offering language-appropriate resources, and meeting people where they are—both literally and culturally.

By centering respect and relationship-building, VAD strives to create safe, welcoming spaces where individuals feel heard, supported, and empowered to navigate disability-related services.

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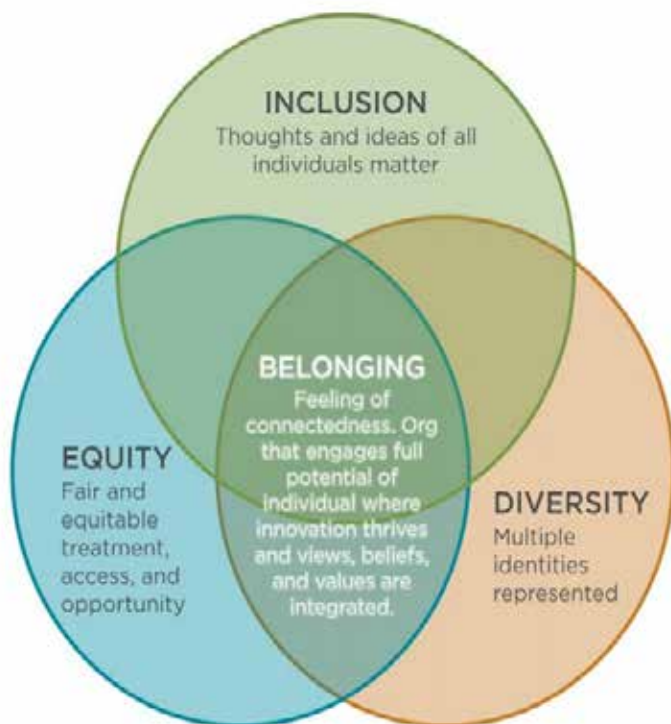
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## VAD Society Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace for all our employees, contractors, and business partners. We believe that a diverse and inclusive environment is critical to our success as a Society and is essential to creating a culture of full participation, accessibility and equity.

We are committed to fostering a culture that is inclusive of different backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and ideas, and that is free from discrimination, harassment, and bias. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law.

We acknowledge our inherent distinctions as individuals and the realization that each person is unique. Skills, experience, thought, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, cultural or socioeconomic background, religion, sexual orientation, political or ideological beliefs, as well as other aspects like lifestyle and family duties, can all be seen as sources of these inequalities.



VOICE OF ALBERTANS WITH DISABILITIES

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



## Interested in joining us?

Call us at 780-488-9088 or  
email [vad@vadsociety.ca](mailto:vad@vadsociety.ca)  
Looking forward to your help!

[WWW.VADSOCIETY.CA](http://WWW.VADSOCIETY.CA)

WE NEED HELP WITH:

- Fort Road Bingos
- Castledowns Bingos



Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) is looking for reliable volunteers to help at upcoming bingo fundraisers at Castledowns Bingo and Fort Road Bingo.

Bingo volunteering is a fun, easy way to support VAD while helping us raise essential funds for programs and services for Albertans with disabilities.

Why volunteer?

- Support an important cause
- No experience required (training provided)
- Flexible shifts
- Meet new people and give back to the community

Interested?

Email [vad@vadsociety.ca](mailto:vad@vadsociety.ca) or call 780-488-9088 to sign up or learn more.

Your time makes a difference—thank you for supporting VAD!



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# Come Join us!

## 2026-2027 VAD Membership Campaign

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### Why Join VAD?

1. Be Part of a Strong Provincial Voice
2. Access Trusted Disability Information
3. One-on-One Support & Navigation
4. Priority Access to Programs & Events
5. Stay Informed & Connected
6. Inclusive & Welcoming Community
7. Opportunities to Share Your Voice
8. Support Disability Awareness & Education
9. Accessible, Low-Cost Membership
10. Strengthen Disability Advocacy in Alberta



VAD Membership

<https://vadsociety.ca/login-signup/>



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