



The VOICE of Albertans with Disabilities

September 1, 2025

Disability Employment Awareness Month: Building Inclusive Workplaces

Each October, Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) invites us to reflect on the value of diversity in the workplace and the importance of creating environments where people of all abilities can thrive. This year's theme emphasizes inclusion, equity, and opportunity—reminding us that when workplaces remove barriers, everyone benefits. For individuals with disabilities, meaningful employment is not just about a paycheck; it's about independence, dignity, and belonging. For employers, embracing accessibility strengthens teams, sparks innovation, and builds a stronger community.



Why DEAM Matters

- Representation: Nearly 1 in 5 Canadians lives with a disability, yet employment rates remain lower compared to non-disabled peers.
- Accessibility: Removing barriers—whether physical, attitudinal, or systemic—ensures workplaces are welcoming to all.
- Innovation: Studies show that diverse teams are more creative and effective at solving problems.

What You Can Do

- Employers: Review hiring practices, provide accommodations, and celebrate the talents of employees with disabilities.
- Community Members: Advocate for accessible workplaces, support local businesses that value inclusion, and share success stories.
- Job Seekers with Disabilities: Explore training and resources available through community organizations, including Voice of Albertans with Disabilities, to strengthen skills and connect with employers.

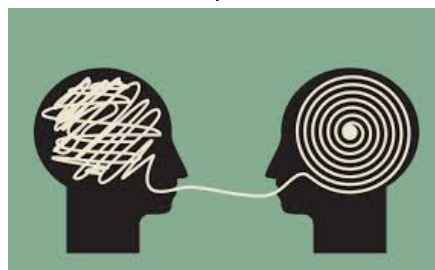
As we celebrate DEAM, let's commit to breaking down

barriers and building workplaces where every individual's contributions are recognized and valued. Together, we can move closer to a society that champions accessibility, equity, and full participation for all.

What is Plain Language?

Plain language means writing so that people can easily understand the first time they read it. It uses:

- Shorter sentences
- Common, everyday words
- Clear structure (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- Active voice instead of passive



Example

Before (complex version):

Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) provides an annual opportunity for organizations and employers across Canada to engage in discussions around accessibility and inclusivity in the workplace, recognizing the significant contributions individuals with disabilities make to economic development and community growth.

After (plain language version):

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month. It is a time to talk about accessible workplaces. People with disabilities bring important skills and ideas that help businesses and communities grow.

Contact VAD to learn about plain language from our education coordinator - presentations@vadsociety.ca



Self-Advocacy: Where to Start

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself, knowing your rights, and making choices about your own life. It can feel overwhelming at first, but you don't have to do everything all at once. Here are some first steps to help

you begin:

105, 10106 111 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB T5G 0B4

780-488-9088

www.vadsociety.ca



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1. Know Yourself

Think about your strengths, needs, and goals. Ask yourself:

- What supports help me succeed?
- What barriers do I face?
- What do I want to change?

2. Learn Your Rights

Knowing your rights gives you confidence. In Alberta, people with disabilities have the right to equal access, safety, and participation in community life.

3. Start Small

Practice speaking up in everyday situations. For example:

- Tell your doctor what works best for you.
- Ask for an accommodation at school or work.
- Share your opinion in a group discussion.

4. Find Your Support Team

Advocacy is easier with allies. Friends, family, mentors, and community organizations (like VAD) can encourage and back you up when needed.

5. Build Confidence Over Time

Each step you take makes you stronger. Self-advocacy is a skill you grow with practice—just like learning to ride a bike.

Remember: Your voice matters. You are the expert in your own life, and your experiences can help create change for yourself and others.

Advocacy in Action: Protecting the Canada Disability Benefit

The new Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) is designed to lift people with disabilities out of poverty by providing additional monthly income support. But there is a concern: if provinces reduce their own benefits (known as clawbacks) when someone receives the CDB, the purpose of the program will be lost.



People with disabilities should not have to choose between keeping their current supports and accessing a new national benefit. That's why it's important for all of us to speak up.

What You Can Do

You can help by contacting your MLA and asking them to commit to protecting the Canada

Disability Benefit from clawbacks. Your message can be simple:

- Tell them you support the CDB as a way to reduce poverty.
- Ask them to ensure Alberta will not reduce existing disability benefits (like AISH) when people start receiving the federal benefit.
- Remind them that the CDB is meant to add support, not replace it.

Together, our voices can make a difference. By raising awareness and urging action now, we can help ensure that the Canada Disability Benefit truly improves the lives of people with disabilities. To find your MLA: www.assembly.ab.ca/members

What's New in Benefits

1. Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)

- Regulations are in force as of May 15, 2025. The legal rules for how the benefit works are now official.
- Applications opened June 20, 2025. The first payments were set to begin in July 2025.

Eligibility criteria include:

- Approved for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC)
- Aged between 18-64
- Filed most recent tax return
- Resident status criteria (citizen, permanent resident, certain other statuses)
- Benefit amount: Maximum of \$200/month (i.e. \$2,400/year) for the July 2025 to June 2026 period, adjusted based on income.
- Concern in Alberta: The CDB is being considered "non-exempt income" for AISH recipients — meaning it could reduce what people receive under AISH if Alberta treats it as income. Inclusion Alberta

2. Alberta Disability Assistance Program (ADAP) & Changes to AISH

- The Alberta Disability Assistance Program (ADAP) is a new provincial program set to begin July 1, 2026.
- Under ADAP, applicants for disability income assistance will be assessed for either ADAP or the existing AISH program, depending on individual needs and capacity to work.
- There will be a single, combined application for AISH/ADAP.
- Health & benefit supports: ADAP promises to include the same health benefits as AISH, regardless of employment income (within certain limits), and supports for employment will be



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expanded.

- Benefit rates / earnings exemptions (how much income you can earn without losing benefits) are still being decided.
- Concern: The ADAP discussion guide proposes all current AISH recipients be moved into ADAP, but one worry is that some may get \$200/month less under ADAP than under current AISH.

3. Accessibility & Standards Updates

- The federal government (via Accessibility Standards Canada, under the Accessible Canada Act) has published a revised Standard on Employment (Standard CAN/ASC-1.1:2024, revised in 2025) to raise expectations for inclusive, accessible workplaces, especially under federally regulated entities.
- In Alberta, there's increased coordination between the province and Accessibility Standards Canada (via a Memorandum of Understanding) to align accessibility standards (especially for the built environment and building codes) to ensure more consistency. Accessibility Standards Canada

Issues & What to Watch

- Clawback risk: Because of how provinces treat the CDB (if it's non-exempt), recipients under provincial programs like AISH might see reductions in those benefits. Advocacy is needed to ensure that provincial programs do not reduce supports when someone gets the CDB.
- Survey & public input on ADAP: As of early September 2025, there are town halls, surveys, and feedback sessions open in Alberta about the ADAP proposals. It's an important window to influence how the program will actually work.
- Benefit adequacy concerns: Many advocates believe that the \$200/month maximum for CDB is too low to meaningfully address poverty or cover costs for many people with disabilities. There are calls to increase the amount and to broaden eligibility criteria.

VAD Pop-Up Outreach at Sage

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) is excited to offer pop-up community inclusion outreach sessions at Sage Seniors Association!

When: **Monday mornings**

Where: **Sage Office, 15 Sir Winston Churchill Sq NW**

How: **Make an appointment or drop in — both are welcome!**

What We Can Help With

Our team can provide one-on-one support with:

- AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped)
- CPPD (Canada Pension Plan Disability)
- DTC (Disability Tax Credit)
- CDB (Canada Disability Benefit)
- OAS (Old Age Security)

Whether you need help applying, understanding forms, or navigating the system, we are here to support you. Book your appointment today or simply stop by on a Monday morning at Sage. Call VAD at 780-488-9088



Goodbye Leslie

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the retirement of Leslie Lambert, our Executive Director.

Leslie has been a dedicated leader, mentor, and advocate, guiding Voice of Albertans with Disabilities with vision, compassion, and determination. Her contributions have left a lasting impact on our organization and the communities we serve.



We are grateful for her service and the positive change she helped create. While we will miss her leadership, we wish Leslie all the best as she begins this next chapter in her life.

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BNI Golf Tournament Review

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) was proud to be part of this year's BNI Golf Tournament, a day filled with sunshine, networking, and community spirit. The event brought together local businesses and community partners for a fun round of golf in support of meaningful causes.

Highlights of the Day

- Community Connections – We had the opportunity to share VAD's mission and raise awareness about accessibility and inclusion with dozens of new contacts.
- Silent Auction & Prizes – Thanks to generous donations, golfers enjoyed bidding on exciting items while supporting local charities.
- Great Energy – From tee-off to the final putt, the atmosphere was full of laughter, teamwork, and encouragement.

Why It Matters

Events like the BNI Golf Tournament are more than just a fun day out. They help build relationships between community organizations and local businesses. These partnerships strengthen our capacity to deliver programs, advocate for accessibility, and provide direct support services to Albertans with disabilities.



Thank You

A big thank you goes out to BNI organizers, volunteers, sponsors, and golfers for welcoming VAD and helping us spread our message: Accessibility. Equity. Full Participation. We look forward to continuing these partnerships and joining future community events that celebrate connection and inclusion.



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Save the Date! International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) invites you to join us in celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities! Location and time to be determined. Watch for information on our social media. This FREE community event will showcase local organizations, supports, and services that empower people with disabilities. Come explore resources, connect with community partners, and celebrate accessibility, equity, and full participation for all.

Highlights:

- Information booths from community agencies
- Networking with service providers and advocates
- Celebrating inclusion and accessibility in Alberta

Mark your calendar and spread the word!

Full event details and registration information will be shared soon. For more info: 780-488-9088 | vad@vadsociety.ca | www.vadsociety.ca

Tips & Tricks for Hosting Inclusive Events

At Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD), we believe every event should be welcoming, accessible, and inclusive. Here are some simple tips and tricks to help you create events where everyone feels comfortable and included:

1. Choose an Accessible Venue

- Ensure there are ramps, elevators, and wide doorways.
- Check for accessible washrooms and clearly marked signage.
- Provide accessible parking close to the entrance.

2. Communicate Clearly

- Share accessibility details in advance (e.g., wheelchair access, ASL interpretation, quiet spaces).
- Offer information in plain language.
- Provide multiple ways to register (online, phone, in person).

3. Consider Different Needs

- Offer seating options with clear sightlines.
- Ensure good lighting and sound quality.
- Provide dietary options (allergies, cultural considerations, vegetarian/vegan).



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**VOICE OF ALBERTANS
WITH DISABILITIES**

SAVE THE DATE

IDPD - International Day of
Persons with Disabilities

DECEMBER 3, 2025

*Take Charge of Your
Disability: Join Us
for the IDPD
Resource Fair*

Location: TBD

780-488-9088

watch for information
coming soon

2025 IDPD Resource Fair



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4. Use Inclusive Language

- Use respectful and people-first language.
- Avoid jargon or acronyms without explanation.
- Recognize diverse cultures, identities, and experiences.

5. Plan for Sensory Inclusion

- Offer a quiet space for people who need a break.
- Avoid flashing lights or sudden loud noises when possible.
- Share schedules ahead of time so participants can plan.

6. Ask & Adapt

- Invite participants to share their accommodation needs when registering.
- Be open to feedback and make adjustments when needed.

Remember: An inclusive event isn't about being perfect—it's about being thoughtful, flexible, and willing to learn. Small changes make a big difference in creating a space where everyone belongs. For more resources or guidance, contact VAD at 780-488-9088 or vad@vadsociety.ca.

Get a FREE Lawn Sign from VAD - Accessible Trick or Treating



Some trick-or-treaters may have difficulties navigating inclines, stairs, curving walkways, etc. Make sure to place your trick-or-treating station at a location that is easily accessible to all.

- Make sure the path to your trick-or-treating station is well lit.
- Clear your driveway and pathways of any obstacles.
- Park your vehicle on the street or in your garage to allow easy access.
- Set up your trick-or-treating station at the end of your driveway or in your garage.

If your home doesn't have a driveway why don't you use your vehicle to trunk-or-treat? Show your creativity and decorate your vehicle to make it extra special.

If you are planning to decorate your trick-or-treating station, your front yard, or other visible areas of your home make sure that you are creating decorations that can be enjoyed by all. Refrain from the use of strobe lights and high-pitched, sudden loud noises which may be alarming for some children.

Some pets can be intimidating so make sure that they are kept safely away from the front of the house. Different disabilities can affect how someone interacts with others. All it takes is a little patience and understanding to ensure that trick-or-treaters feel comfortable and welcome.

Not everyone can eat candy, so consider stocking some non-edible treats such as stickers, pencils, crayons, small toys, etc. stored in a bowl separate from your edible treats.

You may see trick-or-treaters that appear older, but that doesn't mean that aren't excited about your treats! Some trick-or-treaters may not be able to see what they are getting. Consider explaining to them the delightful treat you're providing.

Not everyone communicates in the same way. Just be patient and understanding. The children and their caregivers will appreciate it.

<https://www.treataccessibly.com/how-to>

VAD has assisted clients from across Alberta.

Here are **some** of the locations we have worked with clients this summer:

Anzac ~ Devon ~ Calgary ~ Edmonton ~ Wabasca
~ Spruit River ~ Grande Prairie ~ Coutts ~ Peace
River ~ Westlock ~ Red Deer ~ St Paul ~ High River
~ Lloydminster ~ Redcliff ~ Chaughnessy ~ Taber
~ Medicine Hat ~ Fort McMurray ~ Fairview ~
Rockyview ~ Lethbridge ~ Airdrie ~ Raymond ~
Sherwood Park.

VAD provides province wide support and services. Contact the office to arrange a presentation and one to one form assistance for your city or town: **780-488-9088**



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Executive Director Position

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD)
Edmonton, Alberta - Full-time

About Us

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) is a provincial, cross-disability organization advancing the rights, inclusion, and opportunities of people with disabilities. We collaborate with communities, government, and organizations to ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard and respected across Alberta.

The Opportunity

The Executive Director (ED) is the senior leader of VAD, responsible for strategy, operations, financial oversight, staff leadership, and advocacy. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the ED will provide guidance to grow the organization, keeping disability rights and inclusion at the forefront of our work.

Key Responsibilities

- Provide visionary leadership to VAD Staff and work with the Board to implement VAD's strategic plan.
- Finances, including successful Grant Applications, Operational Administration, Program Support, HR and Outreach Support.
- Lead advocacy efforts on accessibility, employment, housing, transportation, and income supports.
- Maintain strong partnerships with government, funders, businesses, and the disabled communities across the province.
- Drive fund development including grants, sponsorships, and donor engagement.
- Represent VAD publicly through media, events, and consultations.

Qualifications

Education & Experience

- Post-secondary degree in nonprofit management, social sciences, disability

studies, public administration, or a related field. Equivalent experience will be considered.

- 5–10+ years of nonprofit or public sector leadership experience.
- Strong background in board governance, financial management, and HR/staff leadership.
- Proven experience with fund development and grant management.
- Knowledge of the Alberta Human Rights Act and Canadian Human Rights Act, and familiarity with the Accessible Canada Act and Provincial accessibility legislation. Understanding of Alberta's disability landscape and supports (AISH, ADAP, RDSP, CDB, AADL, RAMP).
- Excellent communication, advocacy, and partnership-building skills.
- Assets: CSAE training/certification, advocacy campaign experience, knowledge of Indigenous perspectives, and familiarity with both rural and urban disability issues.

Compensation

- Starting salary: \$90,000–\$95,000 annually, based on experience.
- Comprehensive benefits package.
- Professional development opportunities, including leadership training.

Apply Now

Submit your cover letter and resume to Dougmanderville@gmail.com by Sept 30, 2025. Please include "Executive Director Application – VAD" in the subject line.

VAD is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, racialized persons, and other equity-deserving groups



We thank all applicants for their interest, but only those selected for an interview will be contacted. Interviews are expected to take place in the week of Oct 6, 2025.

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VAD SOCIETY BURSARY

To mark the occasion of our 25th anniversary in 1998, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities initiated the Education for Life Bursary program. With this program, we help support students who have a disability to achieve their post-secondary goals.

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

BURSARY CRITERIA

- Have a disability
- Live in Alberta
- Be registered for post secondary program with proof of paid enrollment
- Meet eligibility criteria
- Submit a completed application form to VAD by November 15
- Include one letter of reference from an adult other than a family member. (Only one letter of reference will be accepted)
- Write a brief biography (max. one page)
- Include your educational goals, financial need and characteristics of you as a person



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