



The VOICE of Albertans with Disabilities

September 1, 2025

Heading back to college or university this fall?

Whether you're a first-year student or returning to complete your program, navigating post-secondary life with a disability can come with unique challenges—but also opportunities for empowerment and growth.

At Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD), we're here to support your journey. Here are some key tips and resources to help you start the semester strong:



1. Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

Students with disabilities are protected by Alberta's Human Rights legislation. This means you have the right to reasonable accommodations—but you also have the responsibility to self-advocate and request them through your school's accessibility services.

2. Register with Accessibility Services Early

Each school has a different process for disability supports. Reach out to the accessibility or student services office before classes begin to:

- Submit documentation (e.g., psychological assessments, doctor's notes).
- Request accommodations like extra time on exams, note-taking support, or assistive technology. Create a support plan with staff who understand your needs

3. Prioritize Mental Health

Post-secondary life can be overwhelming. Many campuses offer free or low-cost counselling and peer support groups. Don't hesitate to:

- Access mental health resources
- Set realistic goals and manage your time
- Take breaks and ask for help when needed

4. Build Your Advocacy Skills

You know your needs best. Learning how to communicate clearly with instructors and staff about your accommodations can make a big difference. Ask:

- "Can we meet to review how my accommodations will work in your class?"
- "Are lecture materials available in advance?"

5. Explore Supportive Tools and Tech

There are many tools designed to help students succeed:

- Speech-to-text and screen readers (e.g., Kurzweil, Read&Write)
- Calendar and task apps for executive functioning
- Quiet rooms or sensory spaces on campus

Helpful Resources

Alberta Human Rights Commission

www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

- Your school's Accessibility Services Office
- VAD Form Assistance – Need help applying for AISH, DTC, or other supports while you study? Call us at 780-488-9088

Free Support with AISH, CPPD, DTC, and Canada Disability Benefit Applications

As summer winds down and routines settle in, it's the perfect time to check in on your disability-related benefits—and Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) is here to help.

Navigating complex application forms like Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), CPP Disability (CPPD), Disability Tax Credit (DTC), and the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) can feel overwhelming. That's why we offer free, one-on-one support to guide you through the process.

What We Help With:

- Understanding eligibility requirements
- Gathering the right documents
- Filling out forms accurately
- Communicating with medical professionals for



www.vadsociety.ca; vad@vadsociety.ca
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities

required reports

- Following up on pending applications

Where We Help:

- In-person appointments at our Edmonton office
- Pop-up outreach sessions in communities across Alberta
- Phone or video support for those unable to travel

Who Can Access This?

Anyone aged 18 to 64 with a disability who needs help applying for provincial or federal disability benefits. You do not need to be a member, and there's no cost to access our services.

Book Your Appointment Today!

Call 780-488-9088 or visit vadsociety.ca to schedule your free appointment. Don't let paperwork be a barrier to receive the support you deserve. VAD is here to walk with you through every step.

Bringing Disability Benefit Help to Communities Across Alberta

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) is hitting the road this fall! As part of our commitment to reaching underserved and rural areas, we're offering free, in-person presentations, and one-to-one form assistance in communities across Alberta—including Indigenous and multicultural populations.

Whether you need help applying for AISH, CPP Disability (CPPD), the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), or the new Canada Disability Benefit (CDB)—our team is here to support you where you live.

Appointments are free and available to individuals aged 18 to 64 living with a disability. To book call us at 780-488-9088 or visit vadsociety.ca/bookings

What We Help With:

- Completing disability benefit forms
- Understanding eligibility
- Navigating paperwork with healthcare providers
- Offering referrals for appeals or denials

Don't miss your chance to get in-person help right in your community. VAD is here to help you access the benefits you deserve—without the travel, confusion, or cost.

deam

**DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT
AWARENESS MONTH**

Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) – Get Involved!

Join VAD in Promoting Inclusive Workplaces This October.

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM)—a time to celebrate the contributions of workers with disabilities and promote inclusive hiring, accessibility, and equity in the workplace.

At Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD), we believe that employment is a right, not a privilege. This October, we're encouraging employers, job seekers, and community members to join us in taking action to break down employment barriers.

How VAD is Participating

Awareness Presentations:

- Book a free presentation for your organization or community group to learn about disability inclusion, workplace accommodations, and accessible hiring practices.

How You Can Get Involved

Invite VAD to Speak at your workplace or event. Celebrate Inclusive Employers in your community.

Share Your Story if you're a person with a disability who wants to inspire others. Use Hashtags like #DEAM2025 #InclusionWorks #DisabilityEmployment on social media. Learn and Advocate—even small actions make a big impact.



Together, We Hold the Power!

Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity



www.vadsociety.ca; vad@vadsociety.ca
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities

Why It Matters

Nearly 50% of working-age Canadians with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed—not because of lack of ability, but because of barriers in attitudes, policies, and environments.

By working together, we can create a future where everyone has equal access to meaningful work. To book a presentation or learn more, contact us at 780-488-9088 or visit vadsociety.ca. Let's build workplaces that welcome all abilities.



Breaking Barriers: Common Myths About Invisible Disabilities

What You Don't See Still Matters

Not all disabilities are visible—and that can lead to misunderstanding, stigma, and barriers in everyday life. Invisible disabilities can include chronic pain, mental health conditions, cognitive disabilities, sensory sensitivities, and neurological disorders such as ADHD, autism, PTSD, fibromyalgia, and more.

At Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD), we work to challenge assumptions and promote understanding. Here are a few of the most common myths—and the truths that break them down:

Myth #1: "You don't look disabled."

Truth: Disability doesn't always come with visible signs. Many people with serious impairments appear outwardly "fine" but live with daily challenges like pain, fatigue, anxiety, or processing difficulties.

Myth #2: "They're just being lazy or dramatic."

Truth: Invisible disabilities often impact energy, attention, and the ability to function consistently. It's not about motivation—it's about managing a condition that others can't see.

Myth #3: "If they need help, they should say something."

Truth: Many people with invisible disabilities face shame, fear of judgment, or difficulty advocating for themselves—especially if their needs have been dismissed in the past.

Myth #4: "Accommodations are special treatment."

Truth: Accommodations are about equity, not privilege. They level the playing field so everyone can access work, education, and daily life with dignity and independence.

How You Can Help:

- Believe people when they share their experiences.
- Avoid making assumptions based on appearance.
- Use inclusive language and support universal accessibility.
- Encourage safe spaces for disclosure and support—whether at work, school, or in the community.

Together, we can challenge stigma and create a more understanding and inclusive world—one myth at a time. Learn more or book a disability awareness presentation at 780-488-9088 or visit vadsociety.ca

What We've Heard: Barriers Across Alberta - Real Voices. Real Challenges - Real Change.

Through our outreach and one-on-one support across the province, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) has heard powerful stories from individuals and families living with disabilities. These voices reveal the systemic barriers people face every day—and they guide our advocacy and programming.

Here are just a few of the recurring issues we've encountered—and how VAD is responding:

Barrier: Access to Medical Professionals

Many Albertans report long waitlists, travel barriers, and lack of family doctors—especially



Together, We Hold the Power!

Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity



www.vadsociety.ca; vad@vadsociety.ca
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities



in rural and Indigenous communities. This makes it nearly impossible to complete benefit applications that require medical validation.

VAD's Response:

We help clients prepare clear documentation, communicate with clinics, and explore alternative routes (like accessing walk-in or nurse practitioner assessments). We also share this data with health networks to advocate for better access.

Barrier: Complex and Confusing Government Forms

Applications like AISH, CPPD, DTC, and the Canada Disability Benefit often feel overwhelming and unclear, especially for people with cognitive, sensory, or literacy challenges.

VAD's Response:

We provide free one-on-one form assistance, in-office, on the phone, and through community pop-up sessions across Alberta. We've expanded our resources and simplified guides to help individuals and support workers navigate the systems with confidence.

Barrier: Inaccessible Service Environments

Some agencies still use non-accessible buildings, paper-only processes, or inflexible appointment structures—making it hard for people with mobility, mental health, or sensory disabilities to access services.

VAD's Response:

We are working with partner organizations to promote universal design, offer multiple ways to access services (in-person, online, and by phone), and advocate for policy changes that remove physical and procedural barriers.

Stay Safe, Warm, and Independent as the Seasons Change

As the temperature drops and daylight hours shrink, fall

and winter can bring unique challenges for people with disabilities—especially when it comes to safety, mobility, and comfort at home.

Here are a few simple, proactive steps to help make your home more accessible and ready for the colder months:

1. Clear Paths & Prevent Slips

Keep walkways, ramps, and stairs free of snow, ice, and leaves. Use non-slip mats and consider a heated walkway mat for high-traffic areas. Install grab bars near entrances for stability during icy conditions.

2. Improve Lighting for Shorter Days

Add motion-sensor lights near entryways. Use plug-in night lights in hallways and bathrooms to reduce fall risks. Consider smart bulbs or timers to automatically light up areas before dark.

3. Maintain a Comfortable Indoor Climate

Ensure heaters and thermostats are easy to reach and adjust. Stay Safe, Warm, and Independent as the Seasons Change.



Get Your Flu Shot – Why It's Crucial for the Disability Community

Protect Yourself and Others This Fall. As flu season approaches, getting your annual influenza vaccine is one of the easiest and most effective ways to stay healthy—especially for individuals with disabilities who may be more vulnerable to complications.

Why It Matters:

Many people with disabilities have underlying health conditions that can make the flu more severe.



Together, We Hold the Power!

Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity



www.vadsociety.ca; vad@vadsociety.ca
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities

Some rely on personal care aides, live in shared housing, or use public transportation—increasing exposure risk. A flu shot helps reduce hospitalizations, missed appointments, and interruption of vital services.

Flu Shot Facts:

It's safe, and available at most pharmacies, doctor's offices, and public health clinics across Alberta.

You can get the flu shot even if you receive other vaccines, including COVID-19 boosters. Caregivers and family members are also encouraged to get vaccinated to protect those they support.

Flu shots are typically available starting in October. Check with your local pharmacy or book online through ahs.ca/influenza. Protect your health, your independence, and your community—get vaccinated this fall. Need help finding a clinic or booking your appointment? Call VAD at 780-488-9088.



Alberta Disability Assistance Program

(Taken from the Alberta.ca website)
Provides financial, health and personal supports to Albertans with permanent and short-term disabilities who are able to work. <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-disability-assistance-program>

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 longstanding 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 was 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 paycheque, building relationships, developing skills, and providing a sense of purpose, belonging and independence.

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 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



Together, We Hold the Power!

Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity



www.vadsociety.ca; vad@vadsociety.ca
Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @VADisabilities

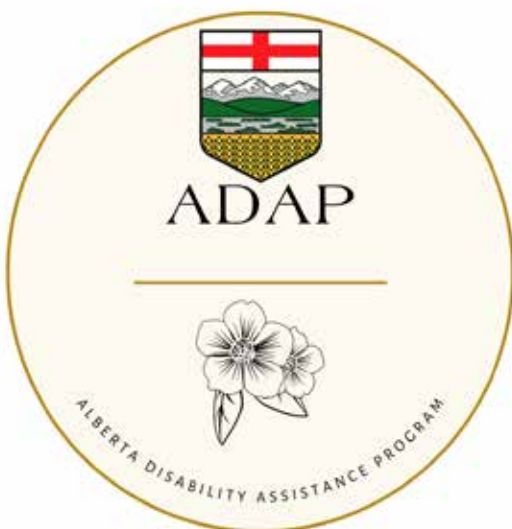
to their unique situation and can rest assured that their care and wellbeing will be prioritized as the new program is implemented.

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 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 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.

The longstanding 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.

Existing AISH clients will receive more information about the new Alberta Disability Assistance Program in the near future, and can contact a generalist or Alberta Supports if they have questions or want additional information. Updates will be posted on Alberta.ca/ADAP.



Together, We Hold the Power!

Full Participation - Accessibility - Equity