



June 2006



New name endorsed; HR plans developing

The final in a series of three Human Resources Forums, held in March 2006 in Edmonton, was well attended and took action on the Human Resource Strategy developed at previous forums. Sixty-four participants, including representation from 11 agencies new to the process, dedicated the day to the practical work of developing plans to be taken at provincial, regional and agency levels to implement the strategy.

Regions checked in with short presentations on any activities taken to date to advance the human resource strategy and even inspired some good old-fashioned rivalry between Edmonton and Calgary. (No comment on the winner, but Calgary did have an impressive Power Point presentation!) It was encouraging to see the work already undertaken across the province.

Those in attendance received copies of a new document, the latest deliverable of Workforce 2010, a best practices handbook titled *Be an Employer of Choice – Human Resource Practices that Attract and Retain the Best People*. They were also the first to see the new name and positioning statement developed for the sector through a series of consultations led by the communications firm of Calder Bateman.

The name and logo you see at the top of the page were endorsed by the consultation process and forum participants. The visual image is now available for downloading from the Workforce 2010 website (www.workforce2010.com) and the sector is encouraged to embrace the new name and positioning statements when recruiting or promoting the workforce.

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Workforce 2010 Vision

By the year 2010, the Province of Alberta will have a well-trained and stable community rehabilitation workforce recognized as professionals providing valued service.

What's in a name?

*The term Community Rehabilitation was not understood in community. The communications firm Calder Bateman confirmed through market research that without a clear identity, the sector would never achieve recognition as a valued service. They worked with us to create a new name, visual identity and positioning statements to market the sector as a recognizable career choice. **Community Disability Services—Meaningful Work. Stronger Communities** describes the work and it also inspires.*

Get behind it!

The sector needs every service provider to get behind the new name. Download it from www.workforce2010.com and use it at every opportunity—in recruitment ads, on your letterhead, signage—put it on T-shirts!. Do your part to make Community Disability Services a recognizable profession providing valued services.





Communication and trust crucial to the HR strategy

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The single biggest challenge identified by participants to implementing the Human Resources Strategy is achieving collaboration among agencies and coordination of activities. Trust and communication were identified as the critical components to a coordinated strategy. Resources and leadership are needed to support the process.

Participants endorsed the creation of a Human Resources Council under the leadership of the AARC (now the Alberta Council of Disability Services) and stressed the importance of maintaining and developing partnerships, including those with PDD, Children's Services, Human Resources & Employment, post-secondary education institutions, the Office for Disability Issues and the Premier's Council.

Top priorities identified for the Council included developing a common culture and image for the sector using the new name and positioning statement and building awareness through education, data collection and communication.



Workforce Classification System introduced in regional workshops

By Yvonne Martodam

The Workforce Classification System has been launched with the training in all six regions. This tool provides six benchmark positions that describe the work that is required and is being done within the Community Disability Services sector. It also provides a job evaluation process, a systematic way of comparing jobs and ranking them based on their relative worth to the organization.

This system was rolled out to all six regions commencing late fall 2005, with the final training occurring in March 2006. An evaluation of the training and tools provided positive feedback and indicated that organizations have the information needed to implement the Workforce Classification System. (See evaluation article on Page 3.)

But what is next?

First up, we must look at some of the job titles. It has been suggested that the term "Community Support Worker" and "Experienced Community Support Practitioner" need to be reframed to clarify roles and job titles need to align

with the renaming of the sector. Emerging leaders from the Fair Compensation Committee provided the feedback that job titles should be shorter – moving away from cumbersome titles – and should be based on the clear and descriptive term disability services.

A system is also needed to provide training to those organizations who were unable to attend the pilot sessions in their regions and to provide support to organizations as they adopt the six job profiles and complete the job evaluation.

Once job titles are finalized and the material updated to reflect these changes, the next step is to address the issue of resources. Based on evaluation of the training and interviews with training participants, a significant number of organizations lack the resources, both human and financial, to implement the system. The Alberta Council of Disability Services will work to find a solution for the resource issue and will continue to press to have the Workforce Classification System implemented across the province .

Alberta Council of Disability Services

In keeping with the new name approved for the sector, Community Disability Services, the AARC announced plans for a new name of its own. At the Spring Conference, CEO Gail Davis introduced the sector to the Alberta Council of Disability Services. Bags handed out at the conference sported the current name on one side and the new name on the other. The name goes to the membership for approval this month at the Annual General Meeting.



SEEING WITH NEW EYES

The three days of Spring Conference from May 10 to 12 brought together over 325 participants who opened not only their eyes, but also their hearts and minds to 82 different presenters from all walks of life. Self-advocates, professors, parents, siblings, and agency staff shared a variety of perspectives and differing points of view! 99% of the participants who responded stated that it was a good return on their investment. We invited conference participants to give us some feedback on the new names. Here's what was said...

I think it makes a lot of sense; it is a positive change and brings a lot of clarity.

It has been a long time in coming. It's going to be a boost for the whole industry.

Pleased to be moving away from the term "rehabilitation". I would prefer "supports" rather than "services".

Just like anything new, it will take some time to get used to.

It certainly does a much better job of describing what the organization is all about. However, I don't understand why you dropped the word "association" for a member-based organization.

Good idea. When is it officially legal?

Will it improve performance? Impact?

Great accurate representation of the field and the organization.

I like it! ACDC ... oops! ACDS.

It's OK.

It's about time! I never understood who or what we were "rehabilitating" within this field.

I think that is a great name that describes our job purpose.

I think the new name is reflective of the work we do and that it will lead to better recognition & eventually respect for the field.

Evaluations mainly positive

By Allan Douglas

Most of the results are positive from evaluations of the Workforce Classification System Training provided in each region.

Participants were asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of the training. In addition, interviews were conducted with participants once they were back on the job. Although the purpose was to learn if the training adequately prepared individuals to implement the classification system, the interviews also provided some insight about whether participating organizations are poised to follow through with implementation plans.

Interviews were conducted with representatives from 33 organizations in five regions. Generally, the training was highly rated by participants – they reported that it was clear, well presented and easy to understand. They said tools such as the Job Information Questionnaire and the Job Evaluation Handbook are valuable to the implementation process. Most of those trained feel

prepared to implement the system in their respective organizations.

A very small number reported that the training was too advanced or complicated for them to follow. Others would value follow-up support from the Alberta Council for Disability Services or others with expertise.

Most say yes, 15 say no

Of the 33 organizations interviewed, ten are proceeding with implementation of the Workforce Classification System and eight indicated that they plan to implement the system in the future.

The remaining 15 organizations, however, do not plan to implement it. The reasons for not implementing the system immediately or at all were unrelated to the training received or the tools provided. The most commonly cited reason is lack of human and financial resources to proceed.

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New HR council a 'big vision'

An interview with Gail Davis, CEO, Alberta Council of Disability Services

One of the last major activities of the Workforce 2010 project is the creation of a provincial Human Resource Council to guide human resource activities in our sector. The concept was soundly endorsed at each of the three Human Resource Forums held during the past year. As the Provincial Advisory Committee that has been guiding Workforce 2010 wraps up its role in June, a process for establishing the Council must be developed. Since the new Council will report to the Alberta Council of Disability Services Board of Directors, CEO Gail Davis has been giving this a lot of thought.

"First of all," Gail explains, "I can see calling it a Workforce Council. It seems more inclusive of all the activities I see it responsible for, and it makes the connection with the Workforce 2010 initiative. It also fits well with the new name for our organization – a council within a council."

Gail sees the Workforce Council as the culmination of much of the work accomplished over the past 20 years. "We have been holding conferences for 20 years and providing inservice training for longer than that," she explains. "We also began collecting data about the people who work in the field, turnover and wages, but in a less organized way. The Community Rehabilitation Careers Project (CRCP) fed directly into Workforce 2010 as we completed the functional analysis of staff roles and responsibilities within the sector."

Gail sees the Workforce Council comprised of 10-12 people from across the province, representing people who work, educate and manage in the sector. They will assume responsibility for the important work of ensuring

a stable and professional workforce. "As someone who works in the field," says Gail, "I see the Council as the body I could look to learn about best practices, to connect me with others doing the same work, to show me how to get credentials and move up in my profession. It should be able to link me with opportunities for ongoing education and professional development opportunities."

From an organizational point of view, Gail sees the Council providing tools like the Workforce Classification System and data and information that help hire and track employees. "The Council should be there to provide professional advice on Human Resource management issues," she explains, "and help organizations become Employers of Choice."

She also envisions the Workforce Council as acting on behalf of employers in the sector to provide information to funding bodies and ensuring appropriate Human Resource standards are in place along with standardized levels of compensation for positions.

The Council would also take an active role in promoting the new name and positioning statement developed for the sector: Community Disability Services. Meaningful Work. Stronger Communities.

And educators could look to the Council for a template to design appropriate courses to prepare students for a career in Community Disability Services.

"It's is a big vision," Gail admits, "but one that fits with the recommendations coming from Graham Lowe's work with us in designing a comprehensive Human Resource Strategy."

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Several organizations were faced with higher priorities such as a CET review or preoccupation with addressing funding cuts. Many cited staff turnover issues that were extremely time-consuming, with a number identifying the staffing situation as a crisis. Two said that

in order for them to proceed they needed assurances from the funder that wages would be adjusted to reflect the new classifications.

In summary, the Workforce Classification System Training and the tools developed were effective. They successfully prepared

participants in all regions of the province for the implementation phase, with a number of organizations already working to do so. It remains to be seen, however, how many or how quickly organizations adopt the Workforce Classification System.



Turning heads far and wide

Workforce 2010 receives national and international attention

*By Ed Riediger
CEO Robin Hood Association
Co-Chair Workforce 2010*

The International Summit for the Alliance on Social Inclusion, held May 3-5 in Montreal, provided a wonderful opportunity to share information on workforce challenges across North America and how they are being addressed. Gail Davis, CEO of the Alberta Council of Disability Services (formerly AARC) and I were invited to present on Workforce 2010 at this AAMR sponsored conference.

The Workforce 2010 session was well attended and generated considerable interest. It resulted in an invitation from Community Living Ontario to present the information at a provincial meeting of CEOs and Board Chairs in Toronto in early June. Wendy Hollo and Yvonne Martodam, acting Project Managers, accepted the invitation on behalf of Workforce 2010. This presentation follows closely on the heels of their recent session at the AARC Spring Conference in Edmonton where they shared the stage with Catrin Owen of Calder Bateman.

Common workforce issues

There were a number of other presentations at the Summit in Montreal that focused on workforce issues, and a common theme was staff turnover and retention. Gail and I were fortunate to attend several sessions about workforce issues and bring back the following highlights:

The University of Minnesota's National Training Institute for Frontline Supervisors undertook an ambitious project aimed at improved recruitment and training techniques as strategies to reduce turnover and improve staff retention of direct

service employees. Eight organizations across five states participated, using a curriculum called "Remove the Revolving Door Training." Initial turnover rates within participating organizations were about 20% (Alberta experiences average turnover rates of 30-35%) with staff wages lower than they are in Alberta.

Key strategies involved innovative recruitment campaigns, realistic job previews, behavioural based interviews, mentoring programs, a focus on making new employees feel welcome and retention-focused training for supervisory staff. The results were impressive! In the first year of the project, turnover was reduced by an average of 6 % across five of the eight participating organizations. This is a three-year project, so it will be interesting to monitor their progress. There is an excellent website at <http://rtc.umn.edu/ntiffs>.

The other side of staff turnover

Dr. Buntinx from the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands has done some interesting work evaluating the impact of staff turnover from the service recipient's point of view. Typically, we look at staff turnover in terms of its impact on an organization. His focus is on what he calls 'staff continuity' or the impact of staff turnover on the life of the individual receiving support.

His research showed that service recipients' perception of staff continuity increased significantly when their interaction is with a larger group of staff, rather than only a few key workers. He suggests that a staffing group of 25 that rotates across multiple living situations reduces the impact of staff departures on the life of individuals receiving support.



Kara enjoyed a farewell lunch with Maureen Murphy Black.

Farewell, Kara!

Workforce 2010 and the Alberta Council of Disability Services wish Kara Belcourt all the best as she leaves Workforce 2010 and the Council to accept a position in the Edmonton AISH office. Kara was the familiar voice on the phone in the Edmonton office of the former AARC and was active on a number of committees and initiatives.

Committee working to secure fair wages

By Gina Belich

The Fair Compensation Committee (FCC) hosted a hospitality suite at the Alberta Council of Disability Services (ACDS) Spring Conference in Edmonton. Front-line employees, a representative from Lethbridge Community College and ACDS board members met with emerging leaders and supervisors from across the province to discuss the future of the Community Disability Services field and the important issue of wages.

Questions were posed regarding the advocacy roles of individuals and networks within the workforce. How can we provide leadership within the sector to advance the case for decent compensation? How do we ensure that your voice is heard?

There was much common ground in the discussion that followed. Participants called for a united voice and coordinated action to improve wages across the board, regardless of the type of service provided.

There was consensus that wages and quality of service to individuals are linked, and that wages must improve to ensure quality services in the future. There was a call to keep employees in the sector informed about the work of the Fair Compensation Committee and provincial decisions that impact the field.

Making contact with emerging leaders

Committee members look forward to continuing their efforts and are especially committed to involving the many dynamic emerging leaders working in the sector across the province. This past year, the FCC participated as one of the focus groups for the renaming of the field and researched wage rates for non-comparable jobs to those within the Community Disability Services field. Committee members also took part in the Quick Response Team that developed a brochure, soon to be published, that takes action on the wage issue.

The Fair Compensation Committee dedicated a considerable amount of time to research the possibility of an *associate membership* to the Alberta Council of Disability Services, providing a mechanism for individuals working within the sector to become actively engaged in the Council. While this proposal was not accepted by the membership of the ACDS, the committee will continue to work with the ACDS Board to create a new plan to ensure that emerging leaders are recognized and engaged in a meaningful way.

Both Workforce 2010 and the Fair Compensation Committee realize the importance of dedicating resources to continue to acknowledge and strengthen the work occurring in the field. This includes providing opportunities for employees to define and refine their skills and expertise through training, standards, networking, further education and the promotion of continual learning.

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Full descriptions of Workforce 2010 and the sub projects are available at www.workforce2010.com.