SPECIAL NEEDS • MOVING ON

member to member connection

Breaking through barriers for workers who have children with special needs

N° 47 Winter 2023

We asked and members responded!

We wanted to hear from members about their health benefits and other supports for families with children with disabilities. We wanted to know if the health benefits and other supports were in fact working for members and their families.

This is what we learned about health benefits coverage…

> … 73% of the members have an adult child with a disability covered under their health plan with Canada Post.
>
> … Canada Post Health Plan through Canada Life has been very supportive and helpful.
>
> … Both parents are covered by Canada Life plans. Usually, the coverage is great, but sometimes they need more for dental and vision.

This is what we learned about other community supports…

> … difficult to find good supports for childcare and respite as well as finding people that will stay.
>
> … challenging to access mental health supports for my children. Wait lists are long and it's difficult to get service unless you're in crisis.

This is what we learned about other supports and services…

> … Not a lot of supports and services in smaller town. Hard to access services that are not in your own area.
>
> … I like knowing that I can get help, referrals, and resources if I need them for my daughter.

Your health plan benefits are important for you and your family. Please continue to use them.

The long journey for my son Arvin came to the end and he just graduated from high school successfully. His next adventure is coming soon and preparing to go to college to pursue his dreams.

Arvin's achievement didn't come that easy. It was because of all the support he received from the *Special Needs Project*. Particularly from our Advisor, Sylvie, who was very open-hearted and supportive during all those years.

Thank you all in the *Special Needs Project* and wish you the best.

Federal Tax Credits, Deductions and Benefits for Persons with Disabilities and their Supporting Family Members

For more information on the following tax programs go to *Canada.ca* and in the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) search bar, type in the name or acronym of the tax program.

For Special Needs *and* Moving on Projects:

- **Disability Tax Credit (CRA)**—The DTC helps reduce the income tax that people with physical or mental impairments, or their supporting family members, may have to pay. It aims to offset some of the costs related to the impairment.

- **Medical Expense Tax Credit (METC)**—A non-refundable tax credit that provides tax relief for individuals or their dependents who have sustained significant medical expenses. The CRA provides a list of common medical expenses and whether they are eligible.

- **Child Disability Benefit (CDB)**—eligible in addition to the Canada child benefit (CCB) and the Disability Tax Credit (DTC), this benefit is a tax-free monthly payment for families caring for a child/children under the age of 18 with severe and prolonged impairments in physical or mental functions. IF you are already receiving the CCB for your child who is eligible for the Disability Tax Credit you do not need to apply for the CDB; you will get it automatically.

- **Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)**—is a savings plan intended to help parents and others save for the long-term financial security of a person who is eligible for the disability tax credit (DTC). The Government of Canada pays a bond and a grant matching the contributions, depending on the beneficiary's adjusted family net income and the amount contributed.

For Moving On Project:

- **Disability Supports Deduction**—individuals who have an impairment in physical or mental functions and have paid for certain medical expenses may be able to claim the disability supports deduction.

- **Canada Caregiver Credit (CCC)**—you may be able to claim the CCC if you regularly and consistently support one or more of your children or grandchildren with a physical or mental impairment.

New for 2023 tax returns:

- **Multigenerational home renovation Tax Credit (MHRTC)**—for certain renovation expenses to create a self-contained secondary unit that allows an individual eligible for the Disability Tax Credit to live with a qualifying relative.

- **Provincial and Territorial Programs**—In addition to federal tax programs, you can also see what tax programs are available in your province by going to the *Canada.ca* Canada Revenue Agency site.

The *Special Needs* and *Moving On Project's* bilingual Support Navigator, Isabelle Tanner, is available 3 days a week to provide support. In general, that will be on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9am-5pm AST and on Fridays from 9am-4pm AST. Isabelle can be reached by phone at 902-295-1645 or by email at *supportnavigator@specialneedsproject.ca*.

Another resource to help you find services and supports is the CUPW/UPCE-PSAC Disability Supports website portal (*https://www.disability-supports.ca*) which works in conjunction with *211.ca*

"I will remember the members that I spoke with fondly"

My boy Sam started high school this year and my main concern was him getting overwhelmed and making connections with his peers. I took the initiative to get to know the guidance and support team and asked them to please connect Sam to any social clubs or activities that would help him make those connections. Not only have they supported that request, they have all provided me with feedback that he's attending all these groups and clubs. Even math club during lunch provides him the opportunity to not only get extra help, but also help others and help build his social skills. I wanted to share this experience and advise any parent to make that connection with the support team and inquire about social groups and clubs. I promise it makes a world of a difference!

LC-1 Letter Carrier
Whitby, ON

He is taking taekwondo to help him to listen and control his body movement. He is being good and listening.

Working as an advisor with the CUPW *Special Needs Project* has been a wonderful experience. I began working with the project in the early 2000s and continued until June of 2023. In that time, I had the privilege of speaking with over 40 different families, all with unique needs and circumstances. I was continually impressed by people's willingness to share their experiences and allow me into their lives. In some cases, I spoke with families from their child's infancy through to the time that they aged out of the program. It was a very rewarding experience to follow the child's journey and be a witness to their successes as they moved on to adult lives.

I was also privileged to work alongside the wonderful support staff at the office in Nova Scotia. The staff there work tirelessly to advocate for as much support to members who have children with special needs as possible. Their efforts in creating educational materials for members are unlike anything that I have seen other unions provide for their members.

I will remember the members that I spoke with fondly and wish you all the best in your efforts to provide the best possible outcomes for your children.

"The Special Needs Project staff would like to thank Janet for her many years of providing advisory support to our members".

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society. Helping your teen with special health needs move to adult care. April 2022. For a wealth of information on child and youth health and well-being visit CaringforKids.cps.ca

Helping your teen with special health needs move to adult care

The transition to adulthood is a major life process for young people, which for many, includes a change in their health care providers. For youth with chronic health conditions, this change can cause a range of feelings from fear and worry to uncertainty or excitement.

Some children, teens and their families have spent years receiving care from paediatricians and/or pediatric specialists and healthcare teams. They may have developed strong bonds with health care providers, who can be difficult to leave behind.

Most Canadian children's hospitals have an age by which patients need to move on, usually between 16 and 18 years old. The process of getting ready for this change should start early and continue even after your teen starts to see their new doctor or health care team. By talking with your teen about this transition early, you will help them see it as a normal, expected part of life.

It will be important for your teen to understand that they can develop a trusting relationship with their new adult health care provider. By working together, you can encourage your teen to take a more active role in their care and understand how to use their new health care services. It is also important for your teen to learn how to manage their condition on a day-to-day basis.

What is the difference between paediatric care and adult health care?

- **Paediatric care** is family-focused, with care suited to your child or teen's developmental stage. Parents are more intensely involved in decision-making when the children are young, with teens being gradually more involved as they mature. It also typically includes a team of professionals who each provide specific expertise.
- **Adult care** tends to be more patient-focused. Patients are usually independent and make their own decisions. Although there is a place for family members in this system; support, decision-making and family involvement is often different from paediatric care.

What should I do to prepare my teen?

- Have a positive attitude. If your teen sees the change as a step forward, like a graduation from paediatric care, the change may seem less scary.
- Your teen should gradually become more responsible for their health care. Encourage them to practice doing more on their own and offer support.
- Encourage your teen to develop a relationship with their family doctor before they have to leave their paediatrician—the earlier the better. In some communities, this may mean seeking out a family physician to assume general care.
- Plan to attend appointments with your teen, but let them try to lead the appointment and spend time with their health care providers alone. This process will help them develop the confidence to talk to you and their health care providers, and to make decisions affecting their health. You can participate by listening and offering your support and opinion when appropriate.

- Your teen's health care teams should all be part of the discussion. Each can provide resources to help with the transition. Ask for books, newsletters, magazines and good websites that deal with youth health issues, and information on living with your teen's health condition.
- Help your teen understand their health condition and reasons for treatment. Have open discussions about their illness and how they can fit their health needs into everyday life situations. For example, having to take medications at school, or exercising while at a friend's house.
- Let your teen meet their health care professional on their own for part of the appointment. Teach them the skills they need to talk openly with their new doctor and let them know that they shouldn't be afraid to ask questions.
- Help your teen find information about the things any teen may need to know, including information about resources in your community that provide confidential services related to sexual health, drug and alcohol use or misuse, emotional counseling and educational/career planning. The general pediatrician or family doctor may provide some of these services. In some communities, these services are also offered through community clinics.
- Teens will often need extra support, counseling, and education to help them through the transition. Some also benefit from peer support groups. Speak to your teen's doctor about options.
- It is normal for all teens and young adults to wonder about things like their future ability to become pregnant or have healthy children. These questions can be even more important for teens with special health care needs. Assist your teen in bringing up these issues with their doctor, or asking about whether genetic counseling is appropriate.

- There are many "apps" that can help people with special health needs track and manage their conditions. Encourage your teen to explore the Internet for options or ask health care providers for their recommendations.
- It may be helpful to ask your teen's doctor for a copy of a transfer letter that summarizes their medical information, current health status, and goals of care. This will help your teen plan visits to their new doctor.

With proper planning, education and practice, your teen will be better able to get the health care they need and have a healthier transition into adulthood.

Digital Newsletters

If you want to read or share a digital version of the newsletter you can find it at the address below. To view past copies of the newsletter click the "Downloads" button on the top right corner of the page. Enjoy!

https://membertomemberconnections.com

Spring/Fall Interview Statistics for Support Navigator Contact Requests

On the MS23 interview, the question was asked about whether members would like to be contacted by the Support Navigator. Out of the 299 members interviewed, 84 said yes, they wanted to be contacted by the Support Navigator while 215 said no. (28% yes, 72% no).

More currently, on the EOS23 interview regarding Support Navigator resources which were for help with transitioning - 41 of 306 said yes while 265 said no. (14% yes, 86% no).

The 2nd question on this interview was regarding Sup. Nav. general support. 53 out of 306 said yes and 253 said no (17% yes, 83% no).

The current MO Spring 2023 – Out of 138 members interviewed, 24 yes 114 no (17% yes, 83% no).

The project asked the Support Navigator, Isabelle Tanner, to respond to the questions below:

1. *How many members from the union are in contact with you that are not in the project?*

   "To date, there have been 6 requests for non-project members - 3 were in-house requests; one inquiry came referred through CUPW, one through a project member colleague of the Canada Post employee and one through an Advisor".

2. *What support do you provide?*

   "For non-project members who have contacted me directly, I have referred them to the SNP and MO coordinator and have done research for them as CUPW members. For project members who request assistance in finding resources, I research for them those services and resources they are looking for using *211.ca* and internet searches primarily, and occasionally the CUPW Disabilities Support portal".

3. *Is the support the same for Special Needs and Moving On projects?*

   "Yes".

4. *If someone calls and is not a union member, what information about 211 do you give?*

   "I have not received any calls or emails from non-union members".

This role has been created to assist members who are looking for online information, referrals, and advocacy for support related to their child's or adult child's special need for disabilities. The Support Navigator is looking forward to helping parents find the online support and services they need.

The Support Navigator in no way replaces the support that Advisors provide to their members. The Support Navigator will be a resource for Advisors and will stay current with new disability support programs and services across the country. This will help enhance the support that the union members can receive from the SN and MO projects.

The Support Navigator will provide assistance to parents who have difficulty finding what they need for their sons or daughters, as well as those parents who are not comfortable with databases or computers. Some parents may also need assistance and follow up with disability support information between times of Advisor contact.

Questions for members to think about:

- Are you having difficulty finding the programs and services you need for your daughter or son?
- Are you frustrated looking for disability information online?
- Do you have little or no time to search for additional programs and services for your daughter or son?
- Are you feeling discouraged or uncomfortable using a computer?
- Do you need assistance following up on government programs or assessment service information for your daughter or son?
- Do you have questions that you would like to ask your Advisor in between Advisor contact times?
- We hope that more members will learn about and make use of our support navigator. We will be working to get the word out about this important resource for members.

I’m so happy to get this support for my daughter. Her bus driver, “who was driving the school bus of intersection classes kids only”, suggested we try vegan supplements for Amyra. Because some other parents of special needs children shared their experience with her, she said, “I noticed some positive changes in that child.” She mentioned that vegan medications are very expensive. But you should try for Amyra. As I was already focusing on her brain development I said, I’ll ask her pediatrician first if she will suggest it’s safe or better for her then I will definitely get what is best for her. I booked an appointment and her pediatrician said it’s always good to choose chemical free or vegetarian. She mentioned some supplements for brain or mental health. Already trying to give her soaked nuts and less sugar. Supplements/medications were really expensive for us to buy. Without your support, I can’t buy them for her. Hopefully they will work for her. Fingers crossed. Thanks very much!

I’m making mixed nut butter, health Nutella (vegan) at home using jaggery (organic) instead of sugar. Switching diet and lifestyle that is healthy for her body, brain and development.

Once again, thanking you!

DISABILITY-SUPPORTS.ca

A place where you can find support and services for you or your family.

Disability Supports is a project of the CUPW and UPCE-PSAC Child Care Fund.

WHAT WE LEARNED AFTER THE LAUNCH OF THE CUPW DISABILITY PORTAL

The CUPW Child Care Fund partnered with Eviance (Canadian Centre on Disability Studies) to undertake a survey of members, and the public to find out how the newly launched CUPW disability portal was to use. We wanted to make sure the portal was easy to understand and navigate.

Members who tested the site were generous with their time and feedback. Insights into the user experiences were instrumental for fine-tuning and improving the portal. Overall, the results suggest that users were generally satisfied with their experience. Many expressed excitement and appreciation at the arrival of this new tool to the disability community in Canada.

Some of what we learned were things like, "*Very helpful site! This will be a good resource for our clients*", and "*Amazing resources. Some of which I had no idea existed in my area.*" Several respondents talked about features of the site. We heard things like, "*Really liked the different languages available*", "*The site was visually appealing*" and the "*How to Guide*" *was very helpful*".

We also got feedback about some problems. Several respondents ran into trouble in their searches, for example, "*When I browsed by disability category, I was able to find services, however if I put in what I was looking for, I received a lot of unnecessary results I didn't need*" and "*categories are easier to navigate than* ***key words.***" CUPW will use the findings from this survey to fix problems identified and to continue to improve how the site works.

We will also continue to capture the experiences of members using the portal through a simple questionnaire administered through SNP staff. This will ensure continuous feedback to our technical staff for site improvements.

We hope that you have had a chance to use the portal, and that it makes your search for services and supports for you and your children easier and more fruitful.

DISABILITY SUPPORTS.ca

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD AND THEIR TEACHER

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

How can you collaborate with your child's teacher regarding homework assignments or unfinished classwork to be completed at home?

For children who take more time to complete homework, the likely scenario is that they also need more time to complete classwork assignments. Parents can ask their teacher how much time students are expected to spend on homework. Reducing workload to fit within that time frame may be the best option. Also, ask your child what support might look like to them; they may have some good suggestions!

When are the best times to correspond with a teacher regarding your child's disability and planning for support?

Before the school year begins is a great time to touch base with the teacher and let them know of your child's strengths and weaknesses. Also take advantage of the parent/teacher interviews scheduled throughout the school year. Have some bullet points that are clear and concise for the teacher. Teachers have a lot of tasks and responsibilities, and a class full of students; a brief list is the most effective way to get your message across.

How should my involvement and communication with the teachers differ when my child enters high school?

As students move into their teenage years it is more and more important for them to be able to step up and self-advocate, if possible. Parents should make it a practice of asking for their child's input and support. If problems do arise, such as poor grades or falling behind on homework assignments, parents can work on an agreement with their child to alleviate these concerns. Parents should make sure their child knows that at times it may be necessary to check in on their progress and communicate with the school.

What you said... about additional services and support for your child

During the Advisor-Member End of Summer 2022 interview, you shared information about the types of services and support you need for your child, which of these services you are currently accessing and if you need more of these services.

Here are some highlights of what you said.

The number of services you need:

On average, members in both the Special Needs and Moving On Projects need 10 types of services for their children with special needs. Some members need one or two types of services while others need up to 24 types of services.

“As a parent I need all the resources I can find.”

“Member says that she often has difficulty finding resources on her child’s diagnosis because it is so rare.”

The types of services you need:

There were 314 members who completed the SNP interview.

Below are the 5 top services that Special Needs Project members need:

Canada Life benefit plan	84%
Education	64%
Therapies (ST, OT, Physio)	61%
Assessment	55%
Individualized funding	44%

There were 134 members who completed the MO interview.

Below are the 5 top services that Moving On Project members need:

Canada Life benefit plan	86%
Individualized funding	65%
Connection with peers	62%
Suitable support person	60%
Create a personal plan for the future	60%

A high percentage of both SNP and MO members identified the “Canada Life benefit plan” as a support service they need for their child/adult child. As well as Individualized funding as one of the other supports that both SNP and MO members indicated that was needed.

Concerning the disability supports portal members have the following comments.

“He is at the regional conference and plans to speak about it at the microphone tomorrow to promote it.”

“Member shared he is always cautious when he researches online-this (referring to Disability Supports website) may be helpful.”

“Member is very interested in the website. Always looking for resources that can benefit his child.”

Accessing the services you need and needing more of those services:

Top 5 services that Special Needs Project members access but need more of:

Advocacy	81%
Connection with peers/social	82%
Suitable support person	81%
Individualized funding	63%
Respite/Creating a personal plan for the future of the child.	78%

Top 5 services that Moving On Project members access but need more of:

Employment Opportunities/support	76%
Inclusive opportunities	74%
Supported living/alternative housing	73%
Mental health therapy/counselling	71%
Education Support	70%

A high percentage of both SNP and MO members identified the “Advocacy” and “Individualized funding” as support services they are accessing but need more of.

Other Comments from members:

“A resource for training the people who come to help us. Because we often find people, but they’re not trained and don’t know how to intervene. We need help to get help.”

“Need to think ahead to the future about living arrangements, plans and a will.”

“Things are going well for our son at this time. He has a good routine and a variety of things he is involved in. The family has not yet looked at a long-term plan, but Dad said it is something they will look at soon. The same applies to will and estate planning… they are talking about it but have not actioned it yet.”

“More opportunities and support for our adult child to participate in typical activities.”

Season's Greetings from your friends at the *Special Needs* and *Moving On* projects.

Happy Holidays! Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a new year filled with peace

Special Needs and Moving On Advisors:

Agnieszka G.
Angelia B.
Anne G.
Catherine L.
Catherine D.
Cathy B.
Donna M.
Dorothy H.
Ellen B.
Enna M.
Gail B.
Janet M.
Janice S.
Jessica C.
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Karen W.
Laura G.
Lesa M.
Lesley-Anne C.
Lisa V.
Marie-Hélène M.
Marie-Josée L.
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Member-to-Member Connection

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