



OUR HEALTH MATTERS

What is it?

In order to increase equitable access to health care services and to share our knowledge and experience on inclusion practice, the DisAbled Women's Network Canada / Réseau d'Action des Femmes Handicapées (DAWN / RAFH Canada) in partnership with the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL), have implemented an innovative project called "Our Health Matters".

A two-year project, which began in 2012, "Our Health Matters" provides a framework for implementing an inclusive approach to health care services in order to ensure equitable access for all Canadians. Project activities are designed to identify existing challenges and barriers which can limit this access, and to develop inclusive tools and solutions to eliminate those barriers.

Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, this project is part of a larger pan-Canadian initiative entitled "In Focus: Bringing People with Disabilities into the Picture".



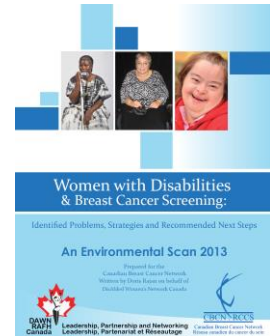
Why is this project important?

- ✓ In 2012, there were 3.8 million people with disabilities in Canada. More than half (55%) were womenⁱ.
- ✓ Disabled people are at considerable risk of poor health and face many barriers to accessing health care services. For women, this risk is doubled.
- ✓ As their situation is often precarious, women experience more significant challenges, and face physical, systemic and attitudinal barriers to health care.





- ✓ “The social determinants of health relevant to women with disabilities such as poverty, lack of access to education and employment, lack of accessible and affordable housing, congregated living arrangements resulting in high stress levels and inadequate income supports, put women with disabilities at a significant risk of poor health, acquiring serious health conditions and having limited access to health promotion activities.”ⁱⁱ
- ✓ Studies, including the 2013 “Women with Disabilities and Breast Cancer- Screening: An Environmental Scan: Identified Problems, Strategies and Recommended Next Steps” conducted by DAWN-RAFH Canada, show that women with disabilities have difficulty accessing appropriate health care services resulting in negative health consequences.



Who is “Our Health Matters” for?

- ✓ People with disabilities and chronic illnesses and Deaf people;
- ✓ Health care and social service providers, managers and leadership as well as researchers, policy makers and curriculum developers in the health and social services sectors.

Objectives

- ✓ To identify barriers and challenges facing disabled people and Deaf people with regards to access to health care services in general, and to early screening programs for different types of cancer in particular;
- ✓ To develop training and awareness tools that demonstrate ways in which barriers and obstacles can be decreased or eliminated, and which help improve knowledge of people in the targeted groups.



Expected results

- ✓ Increase awareness of different health care professionals to barriers that limit access to health care services in general, and of inclusive practices which can eliminate obstacles, so that they are better able to respond to clients with different disabilities;
- ✓ Increase disabled people's knowledge of rights, health and well-being, and ways in which they can advocate for their rights regarding equitable access to health care.
- ✓ Augment the ease of access and full accessibility of health care services, especially for early screening programs of different cancers, including breast cancer.

How?

- ✓ By developing partnerships: with community and health care organizations;
- ✓ By conducting site visits to medical institutions that offer early cancer screening programs and assessing their level of accessibility;
- ✓ By developing educational and promotional tools that enable disabled people and Deaf persons to increase their awareness of their own health and well-being and that encourage the implementation of inclusive practices to eliminate barriers that limit access to equitable health care services;
- ✓ By offering training workshops to raise awareness of different barriers and identified challenges that limit access to equitable health care services, as well as providing inclusive solutions and practices that can limit or eliminate these barriers.



Awareness tools

The project activities include bilingual awareness and education tools in accessible formats, as well as workshops directed at different target groups.

Themes discussed in workshops offered for people with disabilities and Deaf people:

- ✓ Developing healthy habits;
- ✓ Challenges and barriers to accessing health care services;
- ✓ How to get over these barriers in order to get the health care services you need!



Themes discussed in workshops offered for health care providers

- ✓ Module 1: Understanding disability
- ✓ Module 2: Barriers to accessing health care services
- ✓ Module 3: Towards accessibility
- ✓ Module 4: Inclusive practices – direct intervention and management

Participants' comments



“Now, I understand better what it means to live with a disability, thanks to this workshop.” (**Manager of Healthcare Services**)

“I used to be unaware of the importance of these barriers and challenges in Canada. This will definitely change my practice and my interventions when dealing with patients with disabilities.” (**Medical Doctor**)

“They advise us to go with someone. But when a disabled woman is going with someone, they often talk to the guide (unacceptable attitude).” (**Disabled participant**)

“Access to a healthy life is twice as difficult for disabled people. They are in a vicious cycle of poverty and it's hard for them to access education.” (**Representative, local disability organization**)



Contact us!

In order to promote equitable access to health care for everyone, DAWN-RAFH Canada offers training workshops, and information and awareness solutions using the “Our Health Matters” framework.

For further information, please feel free to contact us by email: projects@dawncanada.net, or toll-free from anywhere in Canada: 1-866-396-0074.

ⁱ Statistics Canada. Canadian Survey on Disability 2012: Data Tables, Table 1.1 Prevalence of disability for adults by sex and age group, Canada, 2012. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/2013001/tbl/tbl1.1-eng.htm> Accessed October 1, 2014.

ⁱⁱ Rajan, Doris. Women with Disabilities & Breast Cancer Screening: An Environmental Scan; Identified Problems, Strategies and Recommended Next Steps. Prepared by DAWN-RAFH Canada for the Canadian Breast Cancer Network. 2013.