

Family Matters

Exploring the Impact of Job Loss for People with an Intellectual Disability during COVID-19

COVID-19 caused significant job disruption for many people with an intellectual disability. This had a big impact on their lives and the lives of their family members. Inclusion Canada wanted to understand how people have been impacted. We talked to self-advocates and families across the country to learn about their needs now and for the future.



26 family members participated
representing 21 different families.



5 individuals with an
intellectual disability



2 focus groups



9 key informant interviews



Participants from Alberta, Ontario, Quebec,
Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan

“We all know being gainfully employed is so important- to be productive, to contribute to society, to gain skills, and to socialize with others while doing this.”



Employment means:

- being with your colleagues or co-workers and feeling included
- having your abilities and purpose recognized
- contributing to your community
- building relationships with allies – others who advocate for people with disabilities



“These days, we (parents) work at spelling each other off to get our work done to make sure our son isn’t just parked in front of the TV. Time that used to be available to us for creative work has certainly been curtailed. Keeping his mind active, keeping him in front of interesting things to do and experience falls entirely to us.”



How families felt during the COVID-19 pandemic because their family member’s employment was disrupted:

- Hopeless
- Worried
- Frustrated
- Stressed
- overwhelmed

They had more responsibility because their family members depended on them more.



How people with an intellectual disability felt when their employment was disrupted:

- Disconnected
- Uncertain about their job security
- Socially isolated – it was hard to connect with family and keep relationships

They felt like they had lost their purpose, routine, and independence



Everyone experienced the stress and challenges of the pandemic and this was further exacerbated by the loss of employment or in some cases someone having to move back home as a result of job loss.

“Our family members bring something to the workforce that cannot be monetary value. They bring a culture and a change to that workforce that really emphasizes compassion and empathy”.



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