



Saskatchewan Association for
Community Living

Statement of Beliefs & Positions on Social Issues

*Adopted by the SACL Membership
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Hilton Garden Inn, Saskatoon*

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Forward

The Saskatchewan Association for Community Living came into being in the mid 1950's when parents gathered to support their dreams of education services for their sons and daughters. The Saskatchewan Association for Retarded Children was incorporated in 1961; it became the Saskatchewan Association for the Mentally Retarded in 1969. In 1988, our membership voted to change the name to its present form to reflect our belief that everyone deserves a good life in the community.

As an advocacy organization, the SACL developed its belief statements on what we believe should be available to individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. We have been in the forefront of developing community-based services and supports in Saskatchewan and we will continue to develop communities as places where all citizens are valued, supported and included in all aspects of life.

The SACL was founded by parents and its belief statements continue to be guided by individuals who are determined unselfishly to work in the best interests of children and adults with an intellectual disability. We will continue to encourage a stronger voice for and by the individuals we are proud to serve.

We believe the visionary statements in this document will guide our actions as an Association in the coming years. This document is the guide from which our resolutions, recommendations and daily action will draw meaning. It is up to our Board of Directors and each member to make what we believe the reality for every individual with an intellectual disability.

Our Vision

All individuals are valued, supported and included in all aspects of life.

Our Mission

Is to ensure that citizens of Saskatchewan who have intellectual disabilities are valued, supported and included members of society and have opportunities and choices in all aspects of life.

Our Goals

To achieve the vision and fulfill its mission, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living will work to see that the following elements are fully present in individuals' lives:

Citizenship: Having their rights and freedoms respected and protected, but also having the opportunity to meet their obligations as participating and contributing citizens;

Membership: Belonging to families, friends, and neighborhoods, with full inclusion in schools, places of work, and the community as a whole;

Determination: Having an active and decisive voice in decisions which affect their lives.

Our Principles

Any philosophy or action must take into account the following tenets:

- Individuals of all ages with an intellectual disability are citizens of their country, entitled to consideration, respect and protection under the law.
- Individuals with an intellectual disability shall live, learn, work and enjoy life in the community and shall be included and valued.
- Individuals with an intellectual disability shall be provided with all supports necessary to realize the fullest use of their abilities.
- Intellectual disability shall not justify any form of discrimination.

Our Values

Respect and Dignity

We shall be respectful of the diversity of beliefs, opinions and practices while at the same time promoting movement towards inclusion for all people.

Inclusion

We shall promote and model the best practices of inclusion in all aspects of our work; we will promote citizenship, membership and self-determination for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Accountability

We will be accountable for all our actions and comments for the individuals and families for whom we work.

Cooperation and Collaboration

We will work in partnership with individuals, families and other organizations constantly ensuring that personal choices and supported decisions guide outcomes towards inclusion.

Integrity and Honesty

We will support the mission, vision and values of the SACL, with honesty and integrity and in a professional and trustworthy manner when representing the SACL.

Innovation

We will seek, propose and promote innovative solutions. Moving towards inclusion, we will challenge existing services, systems and attitudes.

Definition of Intellectual Disability

“Intellectual disability is a term used to refer to the challenges that some individuals face in learning and often communication. These challenges are usually present from the time they are born or from an early age.” [CACL definition of an Intellectual Disability, 2010].

Human Rights

Canada is part of the global family endorsing the Declarations set out below:

- a) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) which states is intended to “promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”
- b) The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) which states in part that “every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”
- c) The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code (1979) which outlines specific rights and protections.

The SACL believes while acknowledging that the evolution of attitudes toward intellectual disability may occasionally render particular statements of principal inappropriate, the SACL will continue to strive for the general philosophy of those Declarations to be embodied in the laws of Saskatchewan so that they are enforceable through the courts.

The SACL acknowledges that the implementation of its philosophies must reflect the nature of Canada, and this province in particular, and be sensitive to all affinities and the multi-cultural needs of Saskatchewan.

Position on Social Issues

The SACL believes that our positions on issues are driven by the principles of Inclusion and Participation. This means that as we support individuals who have intellectual disabilities, we must do so in ways that enhance their value and dignity as citizens and human beings. This means working to create environments in Saskatchewan that will encourage and support individuals to have direct and significant participation in the community.

We believe that it is not enough for individuals to be simply physically present in the community. We must support them in achieving full participation in all aspects of community life. This means that individuals will interact inclusively, socialize as a member of the community, and have choice in residential housing, education and work options.

We must support individuals and communities to be inclusive.

Individuals with an Intellectual Disability

The Role of Self-Advocates

The SACL believes self-advocates must be encouraged and supported to become active members of the SACL, to speak for themselves, and to contribute to the work of the SACL.

Personal Rights

The SACL believes individuals with an intellectual disability have the same personal rights and responsibilities as others. Individuals should be made aware of and supported to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

Legal Rights and Supported Decision Making

The SACL believes “adults with intellectual disabilities must have their legal capacity - the right to make decisions about their own lives - recognized and supported. Adults with intellectual disabilities have the right to act legally independently and must be provided appropriate accommodation to exercise this right. Where required, adults with intellectual disabilities must be assured access, with appropriate safeguards, to needed supports. These supports must include representatives and support networks - people who are legally recognized to assist a person to make decisions and/or represent them in the decision-making process, based on their personal relationship, moral and ethical commitment to the individual’s well-being, and their best understanding of the person’s will and intention.” [CACL position statement on Legal Capacity, 2010].

Government legislation and policy must be reviewed to ensure the equal benefit of the law.

Individual Planning

The SACL believes that planning and supports must be based on the active participation of the individual and their family or support network. In the event of conflict between the wishes of an individual who is over the age of majority and his or her family, the SACL will respond on the basis that the individual is a self-advocate and will support the individual to make informed responsible decisions.

Early Childhood and Preschool Programs

The SACL believes that early childhood supports such as day care and other services must be available to all children. Programs, such as early childhood intervention, must include the entire family, whenever possible, as the primary teachers of their children.

As children grow, individualized supports and services must be provided in an inclusive environment.

Education

The SACL believes in inclusive education at all levels. All individuals have the right to an education in an age-appropriate setting. All individuals should have a personalized plan designed to meet their educational needs. This plan shall actively involve the student and their parents/family/guardian. Services, financial assistance, counseling, transition planning and supports shall be available. At the age of majority the student shall have the choice of whom to involve in their education.

Continuing Education

The SACL believes intellectual development is a life-long process and all individuals are capable of further growth and learning. Adults who have intellectual disabilities must have access to post-secondary training and adult education experiences. They should be able to experience various career opportunities and to prepare for meaningful work in regular employment settings.

The SACL believes services, financial assistance, counseling, transition planning, and supports should be available to achieve this.

Behavioural Supports

The SACL believes in positive behaviour management techniques, which support the dignity of the individual and the involvement of family and friends to be included in their community. The SACL recognizes that intervention is sometimes a valuable tool to support individuals to participate with others and to lead a fulfilling and satisfying life. We believe that techniques must be implemented in carefully assessed circumstances using the following tools:

- Behavioural assessment
- Intervention strategies
- External trigger identification
- Counseling
- Parent and staff training
- Program design

Monitoring must be geared toward meeting the unique needs of the individual.

Medical Treatment and Health Services

The SACL believes disability must not be the determining factor in decisions regarding medical or health-related interventions. Medical treatment and health services, both lifesaving and routine, must not be withheld and treatment that is life enhancing must be provided as a matter of right. The right to choose is fundamental for all individuals.

The SACL believes that when contentious treatment issues are considered, they must be dealt with on an individual basis with full attention to the United Nations Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008), the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, other legal statutes and the rulings of the Supreme Court of Canada on similar issues.

When treatments are considered, the SACL recommends that the following steps be followed with the full participation of the individual to be affected:

- That the full nature of the concern has been adequately assessed by the appropriate health care professional;
- That alternatives have been fully explored;
- That an adequate action plan is in place which assigns specific responsibilities for follow up;
- That the medical condition and information must be fully explained to the individual and their family so that an informed decision can be made;
- That informed consent must be explained and received; and
- That the right to choose must remain a fundamental right for all individuals

Residential Options

The SACL believes individuals should be supported to live in inclusive residential housing. Residential options must ensure that each individual and his/her family/support network have collaborative input into the decision-making process over all aspects of his/her home, and be supported to have a lifestyle that allows for independent choice and decision making.

Active Living, Recreation & Leisure

The SACL believes that individuals must be made aware of and supported to participate in inclusive recreation and leisure experiences. The enjoyment and pursuit of activities, which enhance the quality of life, are vital to mental, physical, social and emotional well-being. All community programs and services must be supported to be inclusive and accessible for all citizens.

Sexuality, Social Connections and Relationships

The SACL believes that all individuals have the right to develop their individual sexual and social identities. Individuals with intellectual disabilities have a right to express their sexuality and should be supported to practice responsible social and/or sexual behavior.

Individuals shall be supported to connect and form friendships and other social relationships.

Support, counseling and plain language information should be readily accessible to individuals in all aspects of sexuality and relationships, including privacy, informed decision-making, consequences and responsibilities associated with sexual activity.

Meaningful Work

The SACL believes that all individuals must have the opportunity to choose and experience meaningful work.

All individuals must have the opportunity to work as valued employees who can be role models and with whom one can develop a relationship. Support for both the employee and employer must be assured.

Employment services must assist individuals to realize their full employment potential with an emphasis on individual interest and job expectation. Such services must include counseling to creatively support individual dreams such as self-employment and specific career choices.

The SACL believes individuals should be supported in inclusive employment. All individuals should have the opportunity to choose and experience meaningful employment. Individuals should be supported to realize their full potential with an emphasis on individual interest and job expectation. Employment rates and compensation must be commensurate with that of individuals without disabilities.

Aging

The SACL believes that individuals must receive supports to live inclusively throughout their life cycle.

An individual must be supported with dignity to continue living in the home of their choice regardless of their age. When an individual with an intellectual disability requires supports that are ordinarily provided to the general population because of age, it must be tailored to the individual. Their skills, talents, and relationships should be recognized and maintained.

The Family

Family Rights and Support

The SACL believes that family is recognized as the primary source of love and security for children and family members.

While the relationship between parents and their sons/daughters changes over time as children grow, this relationship must be supported. Support and education must be provided to families to help them to not only support their family member with a disability, but to also learn to recognize and nourish growing independence in their family member. Families have the right to raise their own children and;

- to provide them with affection and security;
- to provide them with religious, moral and ethical training;
- to think about and plan for their future;
- to defend their rights; and
- to seek the support of the SACL and the community to ensure that the supports being received by their sons/daughters/family members are appropriate and of acceptable quality.

The Community

Service Standards

The SACL believes that any standards and guidelines which are developed must be flexible and responsive to individual needs and changing trends in the development of human services. At a minimum, standards developed must recognize and respect individual choice and be provided in such a way as to enhance community participation.

Support

The SACL believes that individuals require varying levels of support in order to participate meaningfully in the life of the community. We believe that, without exception, support must be provided in a manner that recognizes and reinforces individual rights and needs, and which promotes individual growth and participation.

Services and programs must enable individual growth and do so in a manner that provides continued ongoing opportunities for friendship, inclusion and recognition from the community as a whole. The SACL believes that services and supports should be available to serve each individual and/or family, and that the response to organizational or bureaucratic constraints must always be secondary to individual concerns.

Research and Prevention

The SACL believes in ethical research into the causes and treatment of intellectual disability and further, as a major component of the SACL, the education of families and professionals is a priority. The SACL recognizes and supports early intervention programs which reduce the impact of disabling conditions. The SACL supports research in the field of prevention, including new technologies which allow for pre- and post-natal interventions to reduce the effect of disabling conditions. However, these interventions must always respect the intrinsic value of the individual with a disability, and respect the decision of a family who choose to raise a child with a disability.

Legal Capacity

The SACL believes “adults with intellectual disabilities must have their legal capacity - the right to make decisions about their own lives - recognized and supported.

Adults with intellectual disabilities have the right to act legally independently and must be provided appropriate accommodation to exercise this right. Where required, adults with intellectual disabilities must be assured access, with appropriate safeguards, to needed supports. These supports must include representatives and support networks - people who are legally recognized to assist a person to make decisions and/or represent them in the decision-making process, based on their personal relationship, moral and ethical commitment to the individual’s well-being, and their best understanding of the person’s will and intention (CACL Statement on Legal Capacity).

Income Security

The SACL believes individuals with “intellectual disabilities must have the income and resources they need to secure a good quality of life and fully participate in all aspects of their communities. Where income support is required to assure income security, it must provide an adequate and appropriate income in a progressive, responsive and non-punitive manner. Individuals with intellectual disabilities must have the means to live life with dignity” (CACL position on Income Security).

Income security must:

- Be negotiated with individuals and their family/support network, and reflect their unique characteristics and needs; and
- Enable the individuals and their family/support network to purchase supports of their own choice, or in consultation with a broker.

Self-Directed Funding

The SACL believes self-directed funding should be available as an option to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Self-Directed Funding (SDF) is a funding mechanism that allocates public funding directly to people with disabilities so that they can have choice and control over the variety of

supports and services they require to live an inclusive life in their communities.

Through SDF an individual, with support if they choose, identifies their needs and develops a plan that describes how their needs can be met in the community. Funding is paid directly to the individual (or supporter) no matter where he or she lives and is managed by the individual or supporters of their choice. The individual and their supporters are responsible for the implementation of the plan. SDF is not a program but one option in a continuum of models that support the delivery of person-centred services to people with disabilities in Saskatchewan [statement approved by the Membership, September 18, 2016].

Training for Staff and Professionals

The SACL believes there must be appropriate support and resources for professionals, para-professionals and others to access ongoing training and upgrading. This training must offer opportunities to learn not only specific skills and procedures, but also the fundamentals of inclusion and human rights that encourage an appreciation and understanding of the individual. As we develop community to best meet the needs of all its citizens, it is vital that service providers and the public welcome the on-going development of inclusive communities in which the rights of all citizens are respected and protected.

The SACL

Advocacy

The SACL believes it has the responsibility to act as an advocate for all individuals in Saskatchewan who have an intellectual disability. The SACL will represent the needs of individuals in the community and support individuals to represent themselves.

Advocacy activities may include, but not be restricted to the following:

- Supporting self-advocacy;
- Supporting the implementation of new legislation or the revision of existing legislation to the benefit of individuals with intellectual disabilities;
- Supporting the revision of provincial, municipal or other regulations;
- Supporting improvements to the operation of services, programs and bureaucracies;
- Supporting the development of inclusive practices/policies in the community; and
- Supporting community education.

Quality Assurance

Evaluation and Monitoring

The SACL believes all services for people with an intellectual disability must be regularly assessed, monitored and evaluated by an independent source. An evaluation must involve participation and opinions of individuals with an intellectual disability, their families, their support networks and their service providers. Evaluations and recommendations must be provided to the appropriate government Ministry.



Saskatchewan Association for Community Living

Provincial Office

3031 Louise Street

Saskatoon, SK

S7J 3L1

www.sacl.org

T. (306) 955-3344

F. (306) 373-3070

E. sacl@sacl.org

 Find us on
Facebook

facebook.com/saskACL

 follow us on
twitter

twitter.com/thesacl