



FORUM

Health • Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres
BY JIHAN ABBAS



Access to Recovery

A Substance Use and Misuse Initiative

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTRES

IN THE FALL OF 2005, the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) launched a two-year initiative to address the substance use and misuse needs of the cross-disability community in Canada. Over the course of this initiative, CAILC has had the unique opportunity to connect with consumers, service providers, Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRCs) and other interested stakeholders to explore this issue and develop tools and resources to help support positive action in this area.

Through a thorough national needs assessment, we learned from consumers that issues, including isolation, a need to escape reality, depression, negative relationships, and abuse, can lead to higher rates of substance use within the cross-disability community. Consumers also highlighted the importance of accessibility in terms of accessing existing supports, and the need for an Independent Living lens to be applied to treatment options to ensure choice, flexibility and control. Service providers shared that 86 percent of them would like to learn more about disability and accessibility issues and would like partnerships with the disability community.

Based on what was learned, tools and resources have been developed to support community needs, including the needs of consumers, service providers and ILRCs. For example, a series of themed fact sheets for consumers and service providers has been created and a facilitator's guide is being finalized, as well as useful and informative web links and an educational Powerpoint tool. These tools and resources are or will be available soon on CAILC's website.

In addition, in carrying out this initiative, we recognized that issues related to substance use and misuse for persons with disabilities deserve greater visibility. With this in mind, we have worked with the Canadian Abilities Foundation to develop a pull-out poster that can be used by both consumers and



service providers to raise awareness of this issue, as well as provide a quick guide to information and resources.

The poster is available in this issue of *Abilities* (across from page 26). On it, you will find:

- A brief summary of the Access to Recovery initiative, the tools and resources available, and ways to contact CAILC and/or find your nearest ILRC;
- A brief explanation of treatment models, outlining for consumers the different approaches to substance use and misuse models used by service providers, including harm reduction and abstinence, with a strong emphasis on consumer choice;
- Facts on substance use and persons with disabilities that explore the scope of this issue for the cross-disability community, including the kinds of substances consumers are using and report misusing among the disability community, and reasons consumers identify as leading to higher levels of substance use and misuse;
- A quick reference guide of resources and helplines for those seeking immediate support with substance use issues. These resources reflect places consumers or community groups can access for additional support, includ-

ing regional supports. Again, an Independent Living lens is applied and a strong emphasis placed on consumer choice and control in the process.

CAILC is currently working with its francophone members on an outreach strategy specific to the French media, organizations and people with disabilities in francophone communities.

It is our hope that this poster will be hung up by stakeholders and consumers, and serve not only as a visual reminder of this issue, but also a quick reference to educate and support those in need to quickly access services and supports by exercising choice, flexibility and control.

For more information, please contact CAILC: www.cailc.ca • TEL 613-563-2581 • FAX 613-563-3861 • TDD/ATS 613-563-4215

The poster was illustrated by Marlena Zuber (www.marlenazuber.com), freelance illustrator and artist. She is a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design's illustration program. She is best known for her editorial work in various magazines and the maps she's made for local Urban Arts and Culture projects like Murmur. Marlena is a Rehabilitation Arts Counsellor.

