



Centre de recherche sur les politiques en matière d'invalidité professionnelle (CRPIP)
Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP)

Environmental Scan of Past Initiatives Addressing Canadian Work Disability Policy System Coordination and Navigation Issues

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Study Objective

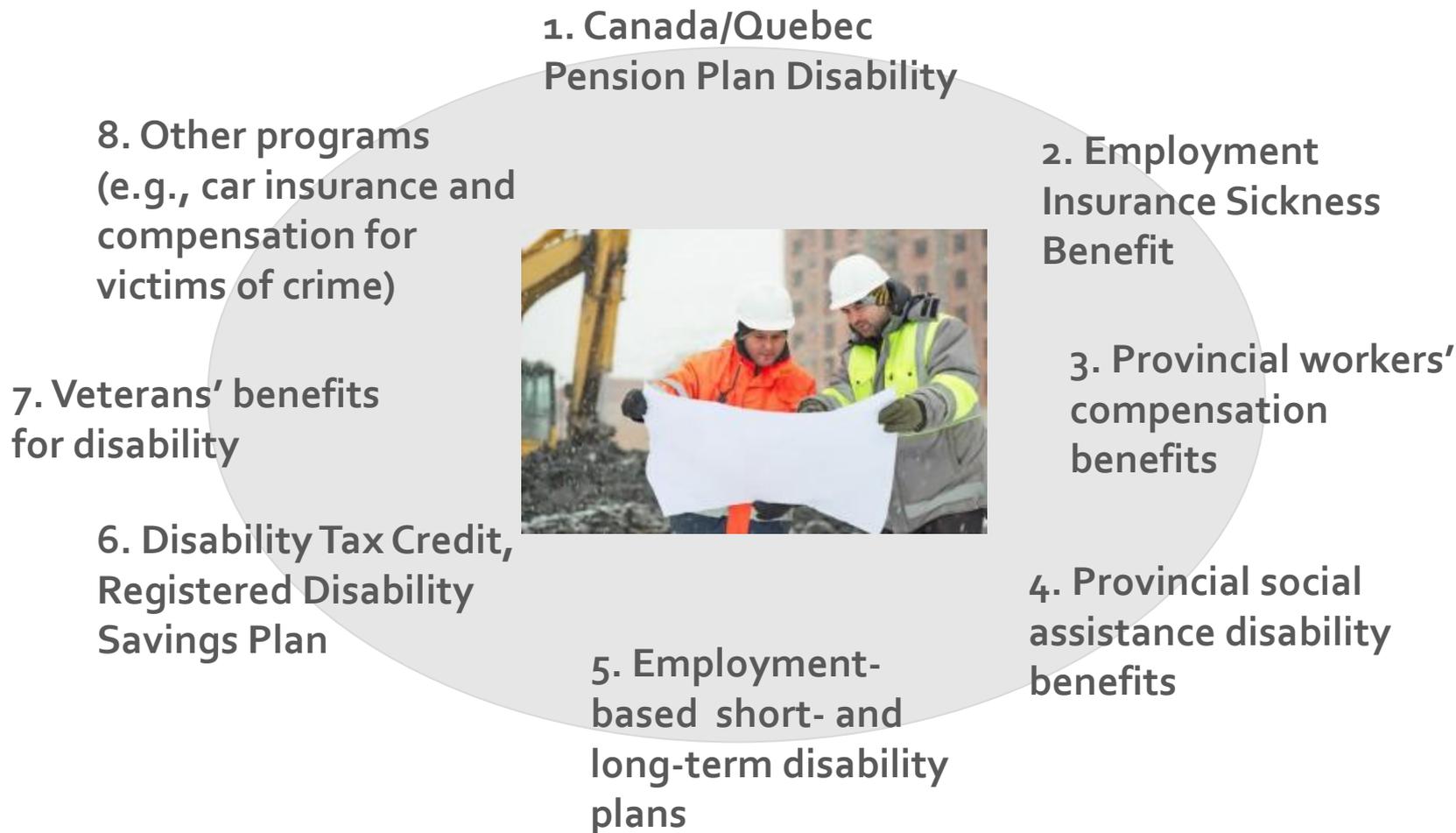
To identify and describe past policy efforts (initiatives) to address issues related to the coordination/navigability of the different disability income support programs in Canada

Motivation

- Lack of system coordination one of the themes identified in our centre funding proposal to SSHRC
- Concern about navigational challenges workers face, when disabled; timeliness of supports; and workers *falling through the cracks*
- Coordination issues have been broached by others in the past
- Explore what was done— who was involved; how issue was framed; what was recommended; what, if any, changes were made



Patchwork of Canadian Work Disability Programs





Two Recent Documents Describing the Coordination/Navigability Issue

issue briefing

A patchwork quilt: Income security for Canadians with disabilities

The purpose of this Issue Briefing is to describe the sources of disability income security available to Canadians. We summarize seven distinct sources of disability income security benefits. In 2008-2009, these seven sources provided \$25.7 billion in benefits or tax credits to people with disabilities. This amount represents an income security expenditure about twice the size of the federal Employment Insurance program in Canada. This briefing draws attention to the policy challenge of coordinating and aligning both the goals and the administration of disability income security programs in Canada.

The nature and severity of disability, how a person became disabled, and a person's employment status are all factors that determine eligibility for specific disability income security sources. Some disabled working-age Canadians may qualify for benefits from more than one source. Differing eligibility requirements and program designs have resulted in multiple programs. Some of these programs stack benefits (i.e. allow for benefits from one program to be added to those from another), while others substitute benefits (i.e. reduce benefits in one program as they are received from another). Disability benefit amounts differ by program and degree of disability, and benefit amounts in a number of programs are low by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) standards, exposing persons with disabilities to poverty. Improved coherence in disability programs could simplify benefit administration, provide fairer treatment of persons with disabilities, and increase participation in work and/or community activities.

The prevalence of disability in Canada

How is disability defined? Across most developed economies, national statistical agencies have adopted a (generally) consistent definition of a person with a disability. Canada's Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) refers to "people whose daily activities are limited because of a condition or health problem." This definition encompasses a broad range of impairments across domains of physical function, learning, communication and emotional/psychological function. In 2006, PALS data indicated that 14.3 per cent of Canadians had some degree of activity limitation affecting their participation at work, school or home. Of these 4.4 million Canadians, 2.5 million were between the ages of 15-64.

The severity of disability has a profound impact on the nature and degree of an individual's activity limitations. Some conditions such as a single episode of depression may be transitory,

resulting in temporary disability. Other conditions, such as arthritis, may result in chronic but episodic disability. In one study of Canadians with disabilities, only 13 per cent of participants reported having a chronic continuous activity limitation over all six years studied (Galarneau & Iadulescu, 2009). And some conditions, such as cognitive impairment arising from traumatic brain injury or stroke, can result in permanent and severe disability.

For many Canadians with disabilities, adaptations and accommodations can remove the barriers to participation in socially-valued roles, such as care-giving or participation in the labour force. However, for large numbers of Canadians with disabilities, the impact of their impairments prevents their full participation in work roles. The social goal of disability income security programs is to reduce the impact of economic inactivity arising from disability that prevents participation in the labour force.

Of the 2.5 million working-age Canadians with disabilities, approximately 50 per cent were active in the labour force in 2006. Information on the coverage and adequacy of income security benefits for disabled persons who are not in the labour force is sparse in Canada. A study conducted by the Institute for Work & Health estimated that approximately 5.1 per cent of Canadians aged 15-64 (900,000 individuals) received disability benefits from one of four income security programs in 2001 (Mustard et al., 2007). A further 390,000 Canadians with disabilities in this age group were not participating in the labour force and were not receiving disability benefits. At ages 55-64, approximately 11 per cent of Canadians were receiving a disability benefit.

KEY MESSAGES

- In Canada, there are seven distinct sources of disability income security benefits at the federal and provincial levels.
- These seven programs are not well-coordinated and differ in terms of eligibility, disability definitions and benefit generosity. They also have different rules with regard to allowing other program benefits without deductions, or income from a partial return to work. As a result, individuals with similar degrees of impairment often have different benefit levels.
- Ongoing dialogue among key stakeholders is needed to develop and implement successful reforms to create a better coordinated, more client-oriented approach to programs that also facilitate reintegration to the workforce and provide greater equity in income security benefits.

november 2010

IWH Institute for Work & Health | Research Excellence
Advancing Employee Health

Stapleton J, Procyk S. 2010. A patchwork quilt: Income security for Canadians with disabilities. IWH Issue Briefing

Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers

CANADA : Opportunities for Collaboration

OECD

OECD. 2010. Sickness, Disability and Work – Breaking the Barriers – Canada: Opportunities for Collaboration, OECD



Defining Coordination and Navigability

Defining coordination and navigability:

- Coordination defined as the way different disability programs interact
- Navigability defined as the ease with which clients can identify the program(s) most suitable for them as well as move within and between programs when their circumstances change



Different ways that coordination and navigability could be improved:

- Common access point to help identify what program is the right one for a client
- Coordination of application processing to reduce administrative load and waiting time
- Common definition of work disability that minimizes need for multiple assessments
- Coordination of services across programs to ensure clients get the supports needed
- Assist clients who access two or more programs at the same time or sequentially



Challenges and Opportunities

Some challenges include:

- Programs have different histories, mandates and focus on different clients/needs
- Programs are administered at different levels of government and by different ministries
- Some programs are contributory and others not
- Funding sources differ

Some opportunities include:

- Reduce waiting times and improve access to support
- Greater assurance that clients access the most appropriate program
- Improved employment, return to work, and stay at work outcomes
- Increase equity for clients
- Increase efficiency in administration





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Criteria for Initiatives in Scope for the Scan

Four key components:

- A *group of people working together on an endeavour* with...
- A *mandated duration or outcome* that is...
- Considering *improved coordination within Canada's disability income system* in its Goals, recommendations or focus and has...
- Expressed goal of *influencing policy*

NB: Academic research activities and ongoing policy think tanks that may possess some of these qualities have not been included in favour of a focus on policy-driven initiatives





Two Pronged Methodology

1. Grey Literature Review

- Grey literature (reports/policy documents) identified with assistance from **key informants** – individuals familiar with subject and history of involvement in system
- Snowballing approach to gathering literature – documents referenced other relevant materials which were then located and reviewed

2. Semi-structured Interviews

- Sought out individuals involved in the initiative and/or with first-hand knowledge of it
- Candidate interviewees identified through **key informants** and **reports/policy documents** consulted for the study
 - Interviews recorded, transcribed and analyzed using thematic content analysis
 - If interviews were not recorded, detailed notes were taken during the interview





Policy Initiatives Identified



1. Mainstream '92 (1992-1993)
2. **Federal Task Force on Disability Issues (1995-1998)**
3. In Unison (1998-2000)
4. Round Table Project on Safe and Timely Return to Function and Return to Work (1998-2003)
5. **Service Canada (2001-2005)**
6. Newfoundland and Labrador Review of Social Assistance (2002)
7. **Listening to Canadians (2002-2003)**
8. Québec Poverty Reduction Strategy (2002-Present)
9. **Newfoundland and Labrador Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006-2016)**
10. Federal Poverty Reduction Plan (2005-Present)
11. Ontario Poverty Reduction Plan (2008-2013)
12. **Navigating the Maze (2008)**
13. **Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (2010-2012)**
14. British Columbia Accessibility 2024 (2014-2024)



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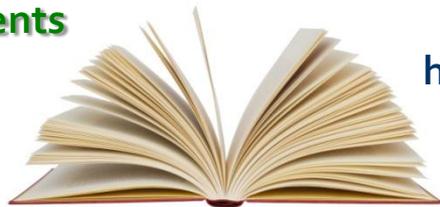
Other Related Activities and Reports Identified

Policy think tanks and research Initiatives

1. Roehrer Institute (1986-2005)
2. Caledon Institute (1992-Present)
3. Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) Project (2008-2014)
4. A number of other relevant reports from various organizations identified

An Environmental Scan of Past Policy Initiatives

Archive of Documents



<https://www.crwdp.ca/en/archive-documents>



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Categories Considered in the Review of Each Initiative

1. Motivation
2. Objectives/Goals
3. Activities and Outcomes
4. Barriers and Facilitators





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1. Federal Task Force on Disability Issues (1995 – 1996)

Government of Canada

Motivation

- Between 1981 and 1995, the federal government produced several reports outlining a variety of **visions and recommendations** designed to benefit Canadians with disabilities
- Frustration voiced by people with disabilities regarding inaction to the reports
- Task Force was jointly commissioned by Minister of Human Resources Development Canada, Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice and Minister of National Revenue

Objectives/Goals

- To determine the **federal government's role** in addressing disability issues
- To identify a **vision** to promote inclusion of people with disabilities in Canadian society
- To use this vision for making general recommendations with **specific action plans** for the short, medium and long term

Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities

Federal Task Force on Disability Issues



Government of
Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

The will to act





1. Federal Task Force on Disability Issues (1995 – 1996)

Government of Canada

continued

Activities and Outcomes

- People with disabilities included as full members of the task force
- Conducted **15 consultations** across Canada involving **2,000 participants** with disabilities
- Produced *Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities* report, outlined **52** recommendations, key ones :
 - Moving toward a comprehensive disability insurance program covering all Canadians
 - Giving programs better mechanisms to improve workforce participation
 - Reconfiguring programs with consideration of tax system and cost of disability
- Several legislative, policy and program changes enacted

Barriers and Facilitators

- **Time and timing** — changes take time, and depend on governmental priorities of the day
- **Structure of government** — system coordination requires coordinating different departments at different levels of government
- Financial constraints— focus of the day was on deficit cutting
- Having a respected champion spearhead the initiative (Andy Scott)



2. Service Canada (2001-2005)

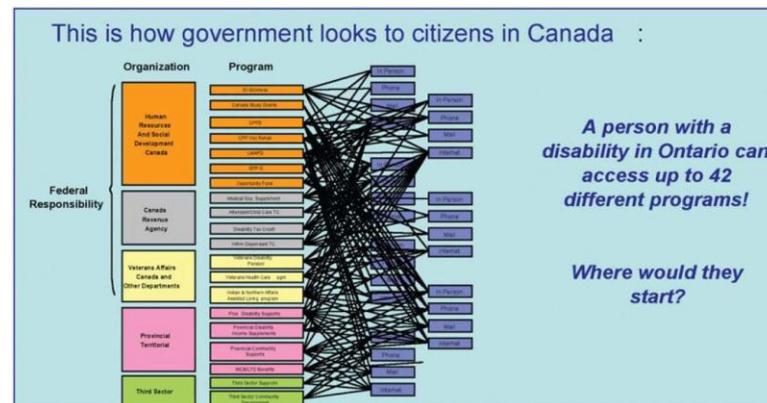
Human Resources Development Canada

Motivation

- Realization that service access was complexity from viewpoint of client and administratively costly
- **'Spider Diagram'** created by staff at HRSDC highlighted complexity of the disability support system
- Some political pressure for change

Objectives/Goals

- **Improve the coordination** of federally-administered income supports (among other programs) from both a service delivery perspective and a policy perspective





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2. Service Canada (2001-2005)

Human Resources Development Canada

continued

Activities and Outcomes

- Four years of planning, researching international best practices, consolidating independent call centres and office spaces and training staff
- Brought several services for Canadians with disabilities together under one roof (Service Canada) to improve access and delivery

Barriers and Facilitators

- Convincing heads of federal government departments to embrace the removal of some of their departmental responsibilities (turf and status issues)
- “It takes a long time to convince bureaucracies that there are better ways of doing things [because] **they’re kind of purpose-built for each of their own silos ...**” (Flumian 2009)
- Internet and technology coming on stream that facilitated the changes



3. Listening to Canadians (2002 – 2003)

Government of Canada Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Motivation

- Many federal MPs were receiving visits and correspondence from their constituents “regarding the operation of the CPP-D and its shortcomings” (Longfield & Bennett, 2003)
- It had been years since a parliamentary committee had examined issues related to CPP-D

Objectives/Goals

- Give the federal government a better understanding of how the rules and regulations surrounding the CPP-D program impacted people ‘on the ground’
- Consult people with disabilities and others in the field to inform recommendations pertaining to CPP-D and its interactions with other programs

**LISTENING TO CANADIANS: A FIRST VIEW OF
THE FUTURE OF THE
CANADA PENSION PLAN DISABILITY PROGRAM**

**Report of the Standing Committee on
Human Resources Development and the
Status of Persons with Disabilities**

Judi Longfield, M.P.
Chair

Carolyn Bennett, M.P.
Chair

Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities





3. Listening to Canadians (2002 – 2003)

Government of Canada Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

continued

Activities and Outcomes

- Held first online public consultation in Canada, attracting 1,500 responses to an issue poll, 135 stories of experiences, and 28 recommended solutions related to CPP-D benefit
- Produced a report containing 53 recommendations — 6 pertained to coordination issues between CPP-D and other disability income programs
- Recommended standardizing definition of disability across all federal/provincial programs
- Received official response from Government of Canada— commitment give to one recommendation

Barriers and Facilitators

- Accountability, priority-setting, and time management issues posed barriers
- Earlier report noted disability issues span many governmental departments working in isolation and each ministry is “ultimately unaccountable for their failure to coordinate their activities to achieve cross-departmental outcomes” (Guarnieri & Bennett 1999)
- Subcommittee dissolved when Liberal government fell in 2006



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4. Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006 – 2016)

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Motivation

- **Election promise** to address poverty made by NL's Progressive Conservative Party, just before winning the 2003 provincial election (had highest poverty rate in country)
- Poverty issues very apparent to new progressive conservative politicians during their door-knocking campaigns

Objectives/Goals

- Transform NL into the province with the **lowest poverty rates** in the country in 10 yrs
- Five goals identified in strategy document, 2 which pertain to people with disabilities:
 - Improve **access** to, and **coordination** of, services for people living on low income
 - Create a **stronger social safety** net by, among other things, increasing disability supports that will help people with disabilities participate more fully in their communities





4. Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006 – 2016)

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

continued

Activities and Outcomes

- Interdepartmental committee struck to examine issues
- Consultation process consisting of 22 workshops, 6 focus groups, phone & mail contacts
- Produced Reduction Strategy document with 5 goals (Government of NL, 2006)
- Developed the Newfoundland and Labrador Market Basket Measure (NLMBM), to help analyze the **combined impacts of poverty-reduction programs**
- In 2011, NL had **2nd lowest poverty rate** in Canada

Barriers and Facilitators

- Departmental prioritization can be a barrier — no one branch of government responsible
- Poverty Strategy progress stalled during the government's Core Mandate Review
- Champions in government – Premier & Minister of Finance – facilitated making changes
- Observing first hand the lived experiences of constituents
- Connecting with community groups and stakeholders during review process
- Small size of the province facilitated change process



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5. Navigating the Maze (2008)

The Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (CWGHR)

Motivation

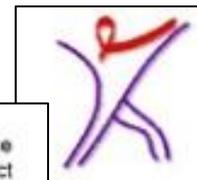
- Treatment for HIV/AIDS had become more effective and accessible, leaving people living with HIV/AIDS with an **episodic disability**, not a terminal illness
- Most public disability programs provide a low level of income, are uncoordinated, and have measures to prevent the pursuit of paid work during periods of wellness

Objectives/Goals

- “To promote opportunities for **optimal labour force participation** for people living with HIV/AIDS through security and continuity of needed supports” (Stapleton & Tweedle, 2008)
- Implicit goals – improving CPP-D interaction with other programs and earned income, extending EI sickness, and changing definition of disability to person-centred approach
- To bring issues affecting people with episodic disabilities to the **Council of the Federation**, a group of Canada’s provincial and territorial Premiers that meets annually

Navigating the Maze:
Improving Coordination and Integration of Disability
Income and Employment Policies and Programs for
People living with HIV/AIDS -
A Discussion Paper

Submitted to the Advisory Committee of the
CWGHR “Navigating the Maze” Project





5. Navigating the Maze (2008)

The Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation

continued

Activities

- Identified 5 areas needing solutions – definition of disability, duration of disability, adequacy of benefits, workplace concerns, communication of issues (Stapleton & Tweddle, 2008)
- “Helped people start to talk about the lack of coordination” and draw attention to the way disability income supports affect people with episodic disabilities (Interview)

Barriers and Facilitators

- Lack of long-term funding for initiative (received project funding from PHAC & others)
- **Complexity** of episodic disability
- **Cost constraints** – for expense of re-engineering programs
- Absence of ‘**Champion Premier**’ to put episodic disability issues to Council of the Federation agenda



6. Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (2010-2012)

Government of Ontario

Motivation

- Review committed to in Ontario's 2008 **Poverty Reduction Strategy** document
- Possibly a **political effort** to appeal to left-wing Ontarians, after the Drummond Report had been commissioned to reduce the provincial deficit (interview)

Objectives/Goals

- "Develop specific recommendations and a concrete action plan for reforming the social assistance system to improve client outcomes" (Lankin & Sheikh, 2012)
- Give advice on **how to**:
 - Establish an **appropriate benefit structure**
 - **Simplify** the social assistance system
 - Provide supports for **labour market engagement**
 - Ensure system **sustainability**
 - Identify **Ontario's role** in providing income security relative to the role of the federal and municipal governments





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6. Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (2010-2012)

Government of Ontario

continued

Activities and Outcomes

- Produced a report with **108** recommendations, **9** of which relate to improved coordination and navigability within and across programs
- Instrumental in raising rates for **single individuals without disabilities** receiving Ontario Works support
- Small steps taken to address dental, pharmaceutical & health benefits to low income

Barriers and Facilitators

- **Vested interests in the status quo**
 - recipients of social assistance concerned sweeping changes may affect eligibility or level of support receive
 - Politicians and policymakers reluctant to institute large-scale changes due to their complexity and downside risk (i.e., negative perceptions in the public eye)



Insights from Review of Grey Literature and Interviews

The Advocacy Coalition Framework

- Examines how policy change happens in situations involving a multitude of actors with conflicting goals and differing understandings of—or access to—technical information
- Rooted in **macro-**, **micro-** and **meso-**level “foundation stones”:

Macro-Level: Policy Subsystems	○	Arenas in which certain policy specialists are largely responsible for decision-making, but can be influenced by external political or societal changes
Meso Level: Resources	○	Advocacy coalition formation
	○	Use of resources
Micro-Level: Beliefs	○	Normative core beliefs
	○	Policy core beliefs
	○	Secondary beliefs



Insights from Review of Grey Literature and Interviews continued

Macro-level: System coordination requires coordinating governments & ministries

- biggest challenge is that disability issues are spread across governments and ministries
- need some entity accountable for coordination since policy specialists will prioritize issues for which they are directly accountable

Meso-level: Making policy change requires leverage resources and opportunities

- champions, personal experience, timing, funding, technology, partnerships, and trust

Micro-level: Changing policy requires changing policymakers' beliefs

- personal experience and stakeholder engagement can be powerful resources for changing beliefs





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Thank You



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