

Disability Support Outreach Teams

Disability Support Program

Department of Opportunities and Social Development

April 2025



Overview & Agenda

The purpose of today's meeting is to provide an update on the progress made in developing allied health supports for individuals receiving Disability Support Program (DSP) services.

We will share key updates on the work to date, the program design, highlight how the Outreach Teams will support individuals across the province, and discuss how we will deliver this service moving forward.

- Program Mandate
- Scope of Services
- Program Description
- Piloting new teams in Central/Northern regions



Disability Support Outreach Teams | Background

The creation of the Disability Support Outreach Service was initiated to directly respond to **Key Direction #4 outlined in the Human Rights Remedy**. This key direction highlights the need for allied health supports in community that actively support individuals with disabilities in living more independently and with greater dignity in the community.

What Makes the Disability Support Outreach Teams Unique?

- The Disability Support Outreach Teams are specifically designed to meet the unique and often complex needs of individuals supported by the DSP, which are not always fully addressed within the publicly funded health system.
- While the health system provides universal access to core services, the Outreach Teams will offer specialized, person-directed allied health supports that are integrated with disability services and focused on promoting independence, inclusion, and community living.
- These teams will also work closely with support networks (families, caregivers) and service providers (support staff), offering education and capacity-building that extends beyond what is typically available through standard healthcare services.



Progress Update | Work Completed

Significant work has been undertaken to review, engage, evaluate and ultimately inform the elements of the Disability Support Outreach Service design and implementation plan.



Literature Review

- └ A comprehensive literature review which explored various types of multidisciplinary and allied health teams and best-practice evidence.



Jurisdictional Scan

- └ A jurisdictional scan across Canada (and select international jurisdictions) that identified examples of teams and models supporting individuals living with in community.



DSP-Funded Positions Analysis

- └ An analysis of existing DSP-funded allied health positions that explored the options to stand up the teams in community, while also ensuring support continues to be provided within facilities as people plan their transition to community.



Engagements Across Nova Scotia

- └ Conducted significant engagement with several key groups across the province.
- └ Included: individuals with disabilities and family members, DSP staff, ARC/RRC facility clinical staff and leadership, service providers with NSRAA, and DANS.



Project Team Workshops

- └ Two half-day workshops were conducted with the core project team to validate and iterate the proposed phased plan.



Consultation with Remedy Expert

- └ Remedy expert has been engaged for input into the Phased Plan and implementation of the Outreach Teams.

Program Design

Disability Support Outreach Teams | Program Mandate

The Disability Support Outreach Service will be dedicated to enhancing the independence and well-being of individuals with disabilities by providing tailored disability related allied health supports through a person-directed and strengths-based approach. The service will also build community and participant support network capacity through the provision of education, coaching and consultation.

The Disability Support Outreach Program is designed to complement, rather than duplicate or replace, existing universal service obligations, such as those provided by the Nova Scotia health system for individuals with disabilities.



Disability Support Outreach Teams | Scope of Services

The Disability Support Outreach Teams work closely with individuals to understand their goals and needs, employing a strengths-based, person-directed approach. The goal is to collaborate in a way that empowers individuals to achieve their fullest potential, while fostering independence and community participation.

Team Composition



Supports provided by the Disability Support Outreach Teams are provided by various disciplines and may vary based on regional availability and needs.

- Occupational Therapists and Assistants
- Physiotherapists and Assistants
- Dietitians
- Behavioural Interventionists
- Board-Certified Behaviour Analysts
- Psychologists
- Social Workers

Types of Services



The supports provided by the Disability Support Outreach Teams can be either consultative or ongoing, based on the individual's needs and goals.

- **Consultative support** involves a limited number of visits to set goals, identify barriers, and offer strategies or recommendations to address immediate concerns.
- **Ongoing support** involves continuous collaboration to build capacity and address long-term goals, ensuring sustained independence and community participation.

Disability Support Outreach Teams | Scope of Services

The Disability Support Outreach Teams can offer the following scope of supports:



Tailored Strategies, Recommendations, and Education: The Teams offer personalized strategies and recommendations to help individuals reach their goals related to independence, physical and mental well-being, and active participation in their communities. Support, skill development, and capacity building are provided across various environments, including home, work, and community settings.



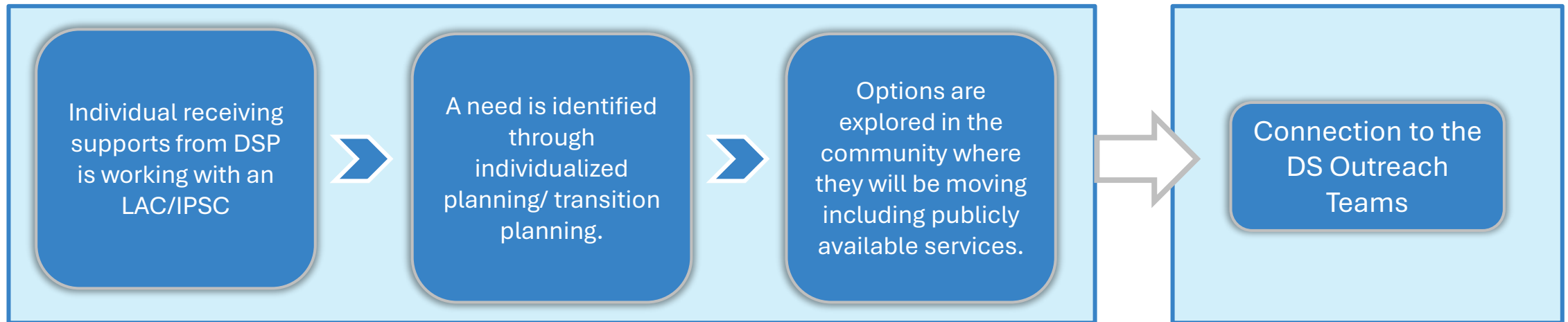
Capacity Building: The teams will provide education, coaching and consultation to participant support networks (family, natural supports, disability support workers, and other health professionals) to enhance their strengths and ability to support an individual to achieve their goals; as well as enhance the long-term capacity of people and systems within the community.



Specific Assessments: When required, the Teams conduct specific assessments to facilitate community transitions and support planning. For instance, a team member may complete a formal home safety and accessibility assessment before an individual moves into their chosen home.

Disability Support Outreach Teams | Connection Pathway

As part of individualized planning, individuals will receive supports from their LAC/IPSC to explore options related to allied health supports within their community of choice, and if appropriate, they will be connected to the DSOTs.



Reasons for connection may include the following but are not limited to :

- Delays in accessing supports that can postpone transitions to community living or impact an individual's abilities to be independent.
- Services may not be available in rural or underserved areas where individuals live.
- Existing services often have strict eligibility criteria that may not align with the specific needs or diagnoses of individuals supported by DSP.
- Individuals often require multiple coordinated supports (e.g., OT, PT, behavior support), which the public system may not deliver in an integrated or team-based way.
- Traveling to centralized health facilities can be challenging due to lack of transportation, physical accessibility barriers, or support needs during travel.
- Families and caregivers may need more hands-on guidance, coaching, and capacity-building than what standard health services provide.
- Individuals may face challenges accessing culturally safe care or communicating effectively in settings not designed for their needs (e.g., non-verbal individuals, AAC users).

Disability Support Outreach Teams | Program Outcomes

The program outcomes outlined below are designed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Disability Support Outreach Teams. Key Performance Indicators will be developed under each of these high-level outcomes to accompany service agreements and inform continuous improvement.



Improved Access to Allied Health Supports

Ensure timely and equitable access to allied health services in home and community settings, addressing diverse needs.



Enhanced Well-Being

Assist individuals in improving or maintaining their functional abilities and independence on the basis of self-directed goals, promoting overall well-being and quality of life.



Collaboration & Partnerships

Strengthen collaborations with healthcare providers and community organizations to ensure coordinated supports, minimize service duplication, and enhance support delivery.



Person-Directed Supports:

Provide services tailored to individuals' goals, preferences, and functional requirements to facilitate personalized supports.



Capacity Building for Individuals & Support Networks

Offer education, training, and resources to individuals and their support networks to foster greater independence, active participation in support planning, and capacity to provide long-term quality support.



Continuous Quality Improvement

Utilize data collection, feedback, and evaluation tools to assess service demand, capacity, and make continuous improvements based on insights.

Piloting New Outreach Teams

Approach to Implementation

DSP is planning to establish disability outreach teams through a hybrid model delivered by DSP, Service Providers, and health/community partners. These teams will be comprised of allied health professionals key to supporting the varied needs of individuals transitioning out of institutions and to living a good life in their home and community of choice.

Regardless of the region, the teams' mandates, roles and responsibilities, and connection pathways will be consistent across all four regions to ensure access for DSP participants.

Scaling Up Existing Teams

- In Western and Eastern Regions, DSP-funding for the existing allied health positions will continue, with additional funding being provided **as required** to strengthen the teams and broaden the scope of services offered.
- New service agreements will be established to support these teams in shifting to providing community-based outreach support as DSP participants move into their desired communities.

Piloting New Outreach Teams

- In Central and Northern Region, DSP will seek to pilot two new outreach teams in collaboration with health system partners and/or community-based partners
- This pilot aims to support collaboration and address gaps in the support currently provided by both DSP and the health system for people with disabilities.

Key Considerations

Nursing Positions

- ✓ Please note, these teams **will not include RN/LPN positions**. There will be a separate **Nursing Strategy Project** initiated this fiscal year, and more information will be provided on this as we progress with this project.
- ✓ Funding for RN/LPN positions that are currently vacant or not filled by nurses, will be considered through the facility closure staffing assessment process currently underway with your Facility Closure Specialist.

Funding for Allied Health Positions

- ✓ Funding will continue this fiscal for allied health **positions if they are included in the composition of the Disability Support Outreach Teams** and if they are presently held by professionals with the designated credentials for said positions.
- ✓ Funding for allied health positions that are currently vacant or not filled by an allied professional will be considered through the facility closure staffing assessment process currently underway through your Facility Closure Specialist.

Disability Support Outreach Teams | Next Steps

Over the next few months, DSP will be working towards formalizing key partnerships and finalizing new service agreements to support the implementation of this new service. A detailed communication plan will also support all key audiences through this change.

Next steps include:

- **Host Service Agreement conversations & partnership conversations**
- **Sign Service Agreements**
- **Support the roll out of this new service offering**

Questions?