CUPW Program Evaluation:
Special Needs and Moving On Projects

Final Report

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CANADIAN CENTRE ON DISABILITY STUDIES

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Acknowledgements

Needs and Moving On Project staff in Nova Scotia and Quebec, and the many advisors that work on these projects from all across Canada. We sincerely thank these countless contributors for their enthusiasm, wisdom, and dedication to these projects, which has provided invaluable insights during the evaluation of these CUPW projects.

Executive Summary

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) initiated this program evaluation to reflect and learn from the 20 years of the Special Needs (SNP) and Moving On (MO) Projects. These Projects provide support to CUPW and PSAC-UPCE members who have daughters and sons with special needs and disabilities. The purpose of the CUPW Program Evaluation: Special Needs and Moving On Projects was to evaluate the project outcomes and implementation, assess the needs of members and identify opportunities for growth.

Quantitative and qualitative data sources were used for this evaluation. This datum was gathered through an outcome/needs questionnaire and interviews with key stakeholders including project advisors, project staff, union and Family Place Resource Centre representatives. More than 400 members completed the questionnaire which assessed project outcomes and ongoing needs of members. Interviews provided opportunity to assess the project process, implementation and complement findings from the questionnaire.

Key Findings

Members indicated increased knowledge and ability to identify supports that would help their child(ren) locally and through disability organizations. Members reported increased quantity, quality, appropriateness, and security of the supports they accessed for their children now. Since joining the project, members also reported experiencing greater economic well-being.

Since joining the projects, members reported that they increased or enhanced their advocacy skills. Members reported an increased sense of personal and family well–being. They also reported improved family relationships and less overall stress.

Members described feeling less isolated with a greater sense of belonging and connectedness. They described feeling better understood and supported by co-workers who appeared to have an increased awareness of the challenges faced by families and workers with children with disabilities. Members reported using less vacation and sick leave (i.e., personal days) for child related reasons.

Evaluation findings indicate that members had increased understanding of the role of the union in the project, as well as increased union pride and some became more active in the union. Overall, members reported having less financial, respite, information, support, and advocacy need since they joined the projects.

Findings also indicate that there continue to be gaps in supports for several member groups, especially for members who live in rural communities, those who have children with unique needs and MO members who were not part of SNP.

Discussion

This evaluation provides evidence to suggest that both projects are making a positive difference in the lives of CUPW and PSAC-UPCE members who have children with special needs and disabilities. With support from these projects, members have greater access to financial, respite, information and advocacy supports.

Participants described how the SNP and MO projects provided an important and meaningful service that reflected their needs as parents and workers. Participants described project staff as dedicated to their work and meeting the needs of members. Staff were thought to foster an environment of mutual respect with members, advisors, and union representatives.

Recommendations

Findings from this evaluation point to five recommendations for CUPW to consider going forward:

1. **Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the SNP and MO Projects**. Consider sharing key findings with unions, members, social stewards, staff, advisors, and Canada Post. Consider a knowledge sharing process to energize and support the current project activities, and to promote the projects throughout the memberships.

2. **Support the experiences and needs of specific member groups identified in this work**. Evaluation findings indicate that some members have specific needs that may require additional or unique support. These members include those who live in rural communities, members who have daughters and sons with unique needs, and members in the MO Project who did not have experience in SNP.

3. **Support increased program membership with streamlined technological solutions**. Consider options to streamline technological systems that will increase the capacity of the project administration while continuing to build authentic connections among all stakeholders.

4. **Support professional development opportunities for staff and advisors**. Findings from this study point to a gap in supports for some members. Consider training opportunities to equip staff and advisors with the tools and resources to meet the needs of all members, including those from rural areas, members with children with unique needs, and MO project members who were not part of SNP.

5. **Continue the evaluation.** This evaluation can be leveraged to support continuing project development with reflective learning to promote strategic decision making. This evaluation provides the tools that can be utilized to build and implement an ongoing evaluation that includes regular input from members, staff, advisors, and other stakeholders.