



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR PROVINCIAL CLUSTER MEETING

March 24th, 2015, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

St. John's (Boardroom, Newfoundland & Labrador Centre for Applied Health Research, Memorial University)

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTION ITEMS

*In order to move forward with the work on this initiative, six **major action items** were identified at this meeting as important next steps for the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial cluster:*

- 1) Begin using the CRWDP project page of the SafetyNet website as a central hub for posting important items specific to our own provincial cluster (<http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/crwdp.php>);*
- 2) Draft a recruitment letter outlining the benefits and responsibilities associated with CRWDP partnership, and distribute it to cluster members to aid them in initiating contact with potential new partners;*
- 3) Develop some of the ideas generated during our discussion on seed grants into full proposals, to be submitted in response to the upcoming call;*
- 4) Begin planning a CRWDP networking/outreach event aimed at the Memorial University community;*
- 5) Ensure that all interested members of our cluster who were absent from this meeting get an opportunity to provide Steve Mantis with their contact information, so that they may be included in upcoming discussions about community caucuses; and*
- 6) Aim for shorter time lapses between future meetings.*

This document summarizes the discussions that took place at the third Newfoundland and Labrador provincial cluster meeting of the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP), which took place in St. John's on March 24th, 2015.

The meeting was chaired and facilitated by Barbara Neis, Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Co-Lead. In addition to Dr. Neis, the following individuals were in attendance:

- Stephen Bornstein – Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Co-Lead
- Gordon Cooke – Academic Co-Investigator (Business Administration)
- Catherine de Boer – Academic Co-Investigator (Social Work)
- Patricia Dodd – President, Newfoundland and Labrador Injured Workers' Association
- Kim White – Manager of Strategic Initiatives, Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL
- Kathy Hawkins – Manager of Employer Supports & Services, Independent Living Resource Centre of NL



- Daniella Simas Medeiros – Master's Student (Sociology), CRWDP Student Stipend Applicant
- Aleksandra (Saska) Stefanovic – PhD Student (Community Health), CRWDP Student Stipend Applicant
- Chrissy Vincent – Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Coordinator

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The meeting opened with a round of brief introductions, intended for the benefit of those attendees who were either new to the provincial cluster or unable to attend previous cluster meetings. We were pleased to welcome three individuals who were completely new to the initiative and had not previously attended any CRWDP-related meetings or events – Kathy Hawkins, Manager of Employer Supports & Services with the Independent Living Resource Centre of NL; Daniella Simas Medeiros, a Master's student in Sociology who has submitted a CRWDP student stipend application; and Aleksandra (Saska) Stefanovic, a PhD student in Community Health who has also submitted a CRWDP student stipend application.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

At our previous provincial cluster meeting on May 27th, 2014, seven major action items were identified as being important next steps in moving our cluster forward. All seven of those action items have now been addressed:

- 1) Our Guiding Principles document has been revised to reflect the edits and suggestions made by last meeting's attendees, and has been distributed to our cluster members and shared with the national office.
- 2) A CRWDP listserv has been created for our provincial cluster, and is being actively used to circulate important information and interesting local news pieces related to work disability policy. An e-mail news brief summarizing important activities and developments (both within our own cluster and nationally) was sent out to our cluster members in December in an effort to keep everyone up-to-date and informed.
- 3) Our National Co-Leads have been contacted in an effort to clarify the policy on funding availability for national symposium attendance. We are currently still waiting to receive that clarification from them.
- 4) Last meeting's attendees have been reminded to make contact with any individuals from potential partner organizations with whom they indicated having personal connections, in order to invite their participation in the CRWDP initiative.
- 5) Two seed grant proposals were submitted from our cluster in response to last year's call, one of which was successful in receiving funding.
- 6) An advertisement was circulated in an effort to identify graduate students interested in working with our cluster. This resulted in the recruitment of two students (both present at the current meeting) who have submitted CRWDP student stipend applications to the national office.



- 7) We are now using off-campus meeting spaces in order to alleviate problems with parking. In the future, we intend to continue this practice by making use of the various boardrooms available at the offices of our partner organizations.

During our discussion of the first two items, an idea emerged regarding the CRWDP project page of the SafetyNet website. It was suggested that this page be used as a central hub for posting important items that are of specific interest to the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial cluster. These may include key documents (such as our Guiding Principles), news briefs/updates on our cluster's activities, and links to interesting local news stories on the topic of work disability policy. This would ensure that these items are collected together in one online location that is easily accessible to team members within our province.

ACTION: Begin using the CRWDP project page of the SafetyNet website as a central hub for posting important items specific to our own provincial cluster (<http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/crwdp.php>).

UPDATES ON FUNDING APPLICATIONS, PROPOSALS, AND RESEARCH PROGRESS

1) WORDS FROM OUR STUDENT STIPEND APPLICANTS

In advance of the meeting, our two student stipend applicants were asked to be prepared to speak briefly about their proposed research. Each of them delivered a summary of their intended research goals, methodologies, and community partnerships, and attendees were encouraged to provide them with suggestions and feedback.

- **Daniella Simas Medeiros** is a Master's student in Sociology, under the supervision of CRWDP co-investigator Dr. Rose Ricciardelli. The aim of her proposed research is to explore the occupational health and safety experiences of provincial correctional officers, with a particular focus on mental health. She intends to work with Dr. Ricciardelli's already existing dataset of interviews with provincial correctional officers in Nova Scotia, and to supplement this, she intends to conduct some of her own in-depth interviews with provincial correctional officers in Ontario (where she is from). She also plans to incorporate an analysis of the various work disability policies, procedures and programs that may impact correctional officers as they navigate these issues. Her research will be conducted in partnership with the John Howard Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, who can assist her in better understanding penal contexts and in making contact with correctional professionals and paraprofessionals.

Attendees offered a number of suggestions and comments with regard to Daniella's intended research:

- Her study would benefit from the inclusion of data/interviews from Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Employer policies, union policies, and compensation policies are all important, and should be considered along with relevant provincial and federal government policies.
- It might be interesting to compare the policies and programs in place for correctional officers with those that are in place for comparable private sector workers (for example, security guards).



- In addition to interviewing current correctional officers, it might also be worthwhile to interview former correctional officers who have left the profession as a result of health and safety issues.
- It might be valuable to make comparisons between correctional officers from prisons of different sizes and security levels, as well as between correctional officers from women's prisons and from men's prisons.
- It might be interesting to consider mental health issues resulting from interactions with other staff members or management (for example, bullying) in addition to those resulting from interactions with prisoners.
- **Aleksandra (Saska) Stefanovic** is a PhD student in Community Health, under the supervision of CRWDP co-investigator Dr. Stephen Bornstein and Dr. Rick Audas (a new CRWDP co-investigator who recently joined our team). The aim of her proposed research is to compare and evaluate supported employment programs for individuals with mental health disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her primary goal is to define pathways and increase opportunities for individuals with mental health issues to successfully integrate into their local labour market, improve their health outcomes, and live more fulfilling lives. She intends to use a combination of literature review, environmental scan, and key informant interview methodologies in order to identify best practices in supported employment programs for such individuals. She hopes that her resulting list of best practices can be used to better connect people with mental health disabilities to the local labour market, as well as to improve the efficiency of current supported employment programs. Her research will be conducted in partnership with several different organizations, including Evergreen Recycling – a local non-profit organization that provides meaningful and sustainable employment for individuals recovering from mental illness.

Attendees also offered some suggestions and comments for Saska with regard to her intended research:

- Although her research will have a Newfoundland and Labrador focus, it is possible that members of the national CRWDP team may be doing some parallel work in other regions, which she might find to be helpful in some capacity.
- The Independent Living Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador (ILRC-NL) is currently involved with two pieces of research that may be relevant to her interests. At a provincial level, they have recently hired a team of consultants to undertake a research project examining the experiences of NL employers with respect to inclusive employment practices for people with all types of disabilities. At a national level, the Canadian Association of Community Living has recently launched an initiative called "Ready, Willing and Able", which is focused on developing inclusive and effective labour markets for individuals with developmental disabilities (such as intellectual disabilities and autism). Kathy Hawkins (Manager of Employer Supports & Services, ILRC-NL) would be happy to put her in touch with local individuals involved with both of these initiatives, if she is interested.



2) WORDS FROM OUR CO-INVESTIGATORS AND PARTNERS

After hearing from our student stipend applicants, our co-investigator and partner attendees were each given an opportunity to provide an update of their recent CRWDP-related activities.

- **Gordon Cooke** reported that he was involved last summer with the committee that evaluated seed grant proposal submissions. He is primarily interested in quantitative analysis, and is now planning to get in touch with Emile Tompa (the National Co-Lead who is most focused on quantitative research) to find out how he might become involved with the statistical analysis of large Canadian databases currently being undertaken by the national core. It was suggested to him that he should also touch base with Rick Audas (CRWDP Academic Co-Investigator, Community Health) and ask about partnering with him on his quantitative work, which would be undertaken at the provincial level.
- **Catherine de Boer** reported that she is currently working with Sandra Small (CRWDP Academic Co-Investigator, Nursing) and Michelle Swab (Liaison Librarian for Nursing, MUN) to produce a systematic review of the literature on the topic of chronically episodic disability and employment. This is being undertaken in partnership with the Joanna Briggs Institute (using their methodology), and is intended to be a precursor to a future qualitative study focusing on individuals with chronically episodic disabilities and their personal experiences in navigating the work disability policy system. This review is currently in a preliminary stage. It was suggested that the Newfoundland Centre for Applied Health Research (of which Stephen Bornstein is Director) may be able to offer some help and expertise with this, as synthetic review is one of their specialty areas. It was also suggested that Ellen MacEachen (National Co-Lead) might be able to provide some guidance, as she has had a great deal of experience in conducting systematic reviews of qualitative literature.

Catherine is also in the process of working with Sandra Small and Rose Ricciardelli (CRWDP Academic Co-Investigators) to revise their previously unsuccessful seed grant application for re-submission. Their proposal, which focused on exploring disability policy realities for correctional officers and workers within government-funded security and protective services, has now been expanded in scope to include government-funded child welfare/protection workers as well. They have also added two non-CRWDP researchers from Memorial University to their team – Kathy Sitter, School of Social Work, and Alan Hall, Department of Sociology. They are hoping that the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will agree to join as a community partner.

- **Stephen Bornstein** reported that the seed grant application he submitted in partnership with Kelly White of the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL (COD-NL) was successful in securing funding and has been launched. They are currently in the process of recruiting a student to begin the work of examining disability support policies and their impact on labour market participation in NL.

Although it is not directly related to employment policies, Stephen has also connected COD-NL with a political scientist (Amanda Bittner, Department of Political Science, MUN) who is willing to work with them on investigating the engagement of persons with disabilities in the voting/electoral process.



- **Patricia Dodd** reported that the Newfoundland and Labrador Injured Workers' Association is very excited about the upcoming opportunity to become involved with community caucuses, and is eagerly awaiting more information on how their organization might contribute.
- **Kim White** reported that in addition to the activities already mentioned, COD-NL is planning to offer sensitivity training workshops to businesses/corporations this year. These training workshops will help employers learn how to promote inclusion and participation of people with disabilities.

Their organization also hosted a very successful breakfast event in December, at which Randy Lewis (CEO of Walgreens, an American company renowned for their inclusive hiring practices) was a guest speaker. The event seemed to ignite great interest in work disability policy issues.

- **Kathy Hawkins** reported that the ILRC-NL is hoping that the new piece of provincial labour market research they have commissioned (aimed at examining the experiences of NL employers with respect to inclusive employment practices for people with all types of disabilities) will act as a springboard for opening dialogues with employers on the topic of inclusion. Key informant interviews for this research will be taking place in April and May, with a final report due in June. Providing inclusion-related supports and services to employers is a new area for the ILRC-NL, but it is one that they are very excited about. They have recently launched a new website (www.inclusionnl.ca), and have begun offering workshops to employers focusing on issues such as inclusive hiring practices and website accessibility.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL NEW PARTNERS/STAKEHOLDERS

There was a consensus among attendees that there is still room for growth within our cluster with respect to the recruitment of new partners/stakeholders. In particular, there is a strong need for our recruitment efforts to focus on organizations that are **employers**, as our cluster unfortunately still has no representation from the employer perspective. It was suggested at our last meeting that rather than targeting specific employer organizations, it may be more beneficial to instead approach broader-scale **associations or networks of employers**. At that same meeting, one of our attendees (Marie Ryan, Council of Canadians with Disabilities) mentioned that she had contact information for someone within the Petroleum Industry Human Resources Committee (PIHRC), and indicated that she would be willing to make that connection for us. In light of this, it was agreed at this current meeting that the PIHRC might be a good association/network with which to start.

Kathy Hawkins (Manager of Employer Supports & Services, ILRC-NL) indicated that based on her recent experiences in working with employers, she believes that it should be possible to convince multiple Newfoundland and Labrador employers to become involved with the CRWDP initiative. Saska Stefanovic (one of our CRWDP student stipend applicants) agreed, and mentioned that Evergreen Recycling (one of the community partners involved with her research) would make a particularly good partner for the initiative as a whole and would likely be excited about the opportunity to participate.



All attendees agreed that it would be extremely helpful to have access to a draft recruitment letter outlining the benefits and responsibilities associated with CRWDP partnership. Since recruitment materials were developed at the inception of the initiative in an effort to encourage interest and attendance at the original launch event, such a recruitment letter for potential partners would be easy to put together. It was agreed that such a letter should be drafted and circulated to all cluster members in order to aid them in initiating contact with potential new partners.

ACTION: Draft a recruitment letter outlining the benefits and responsibilities associated with CRWDP partnership, and distribute it to cluster members to aid them in initiating contact with potential new partners.

GROUP BRAINSTORMING/DISCUSSION SESSION

1) POSSIBLE FUTURE SEED GRANT APPLICATIONS

Since a new call for seed grant applications is expected to be issued in May or June of this year, we held a short brainstorming session to generate ideas for new proposals that might potentially be developed and submitted in response to that call. The following possibilities were put forward:

- An examination of the model used by the Women in Resource Development Corporation (WRDC) to support the employment of women in the resource development sector, and how it might be adapted and applied to support the employment of people with disabilities in that same sector. Since resource development employs a large segment of the Newfoundland and Labrador population, this topic holds a great deal of relevance for our cluster. Although many employers within our province's resource development sector have policies in place regarding inclusive hiring practices, it seems that these policies are often poorly upheld in the case of persons with disabilities. An endeavor such as this one may be a first step toward changing that reality.
- An examination of the different types of policy models used internationally to support the employment of people with disabilities, with particular attention to countries that have shown significantly more success than Canada in this area.
- An exploration of supported employment models for individuals with a wide variety of disabilities. Supported employment models for people with intellectual disabilities are relatively common, but much less attention has been given to the application of such models in cross-disability contexts.
- An analysis of the employment equity policies at Memorial University as they relate to people with disabilities, with comparisons to other universities in Canada and perhaps even internationally. Such a study would be both useful and fascinating, as universities are large employers of extremely diverse workers. This could be done in partnership with Memorial's Department of Human Resources.

ACTION: Develop some of these ideas into full seed grant proposals, to be submitted in response to the upcoming call.



2) POSSIBLE FUTURE NETWORKING AND OUTREACH EVENTS

We also held a brief discussion about the possibility of hosting some community networking/outreach events, which could help us spread the word about our cluster's work and about work disability policies issues in general. Attendees agreed that such events would be valuable, and that Memorial University would be a good place to start. An event on campus, hosted in collaboration with the Department of Human Resources and the Glenn Roy Blundon Centre for Students with Disabilities, would be relatively easy to organize and would help to raise the profile of our CRWDP cluster and the issues we are working to address. There seems to be silence around work disability policy at Memorial University, with practically no current curriculum touching on the topic. A university-based event, spearheaded by our CRWDP cluster and widely publicized to the Memorial University community (as well as to the public), may be successful in opening up a dialogue on these issues.

ACTION: Begin planning a CRWDP networking/outreach event aimed at the Memorial University community.

CONVERSATION WITH STEVE MANTIS ON COMMUNITY CAUCUSES

During the last half-hour of our meeting, Steve Mantis joined us from Ontario via virtual technology to speak with our group about the concept of community caucuses. Much of the material that he covered is contained within the companion document that he distributed as an accompaniment to his presentation. Overall, he emphasized the importance of community caucuses as a venue in which members of the disability community can come together and share their stories. He described these caucuses as an opportunity to throw some light on the subject of work disability policy, and to get people thinking about these issues and taking them seriously. He also highlighted the value of community caucuses in fostering positive relationships between members of the academic and disability communities, enabling them to find common ground and learn how to work together to produce results that can ultimately be used as a basis for evidence-based policy change.

Attendees interested in learning more about community caucuses were given the opportunity to provide Steve with their names and contact information. In the coming weeks, he hopes to set up a conference call with all interested members of our cluster to discuss the first steps we should take in order to get such caucuses up and running in Newfoundland and Labrador.

ACTION: Ensure that all interested members of our cluster who were not in attendance at the meeting also get an opportunity to provide Steve with their information, so that they may be included in the upcoming call.

WRAP-UP

During wrap-up, attendees agreed that our cluster should strive for shorter time lapses between meetings. It was also agreed that we should continue to hold future meetings in off-campus locations, making use of the various boardrooms available at the offices of our partner organizations.

ACTION: Aim for shorter time lapses between future meetings.