Who are we?  NSACL is a province-wide association of family members and others working for the benefit of persons of all ages who have an intellectual disability.

Why are we writing this paper?  Because in 2010 hundreds of adults with intellectual disabilities are still institutionalized in Adult Residential Centres and Regional Rehabilitation Centres in Nova Scotia.

Definition of an Institution

“An institution is any place in which people who have been labeled as having an intellectual disability are isolated, segregated, and/or congregated. An institution is any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise control over their lives and their day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size.”

- People First of Canada – CACL Joint Task Force on Deinstitutionalization

Joint Task Force on Deinstitutionalization - 2002

People First of Canada and the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) joined forces with the following stated purposes:

“WE, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, commit to working together to assist persons to return to their communities and call on all levels of government in this country to:

- Acknowledge that institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities have no place in today's society;
- Stop financing or otherwise supporting the establishment of new institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities;
- Stop all new admissions to existing institutions;
- Support the right of all people with disabilities to live in the community as equal citizens;
- Commit the necessary resources to support the development of quality, comprehensive community-based alternatives to institutional care;
- Acknowledge the wrongs that have been committed against those individuals who have been held for far too long in institutions across this country.”

NSACL supports the purposes of the Joint Task Force and in 2006 resolved to make deinstitutionalization its highest priority. NSCAL has named a member to the Task Force every year since its inception and regularly seeks and receives separate funding to support this activity.
Human Rights

On March 11, 2010 the Government of Canada announced that, with the support of all provinces and territories, it had ratified the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Several Nova Scotians played a significant role in the writing of the convention, some serving as part of the NGO delegation to the United Nations. Furthermore, Nova Scotia was among the first of the Provinces to indicate to the Federal Government its willingness for Canada to sign the convention.

Article 19 - “Living independently and being included in the community”:

“States Parties to this Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

a. Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;

b. Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;

c. Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.”

Nova Scotia’s 1995 Discussion on Deinstitutionalization

In the two decades between 1975 and 1995 the Government of Nova Scotia displayed real commitment to community living. Numerous institutions closed and government actively engaged with advocacy groups and others to develop community-based alternatives.

In its February 1995 paper “Moving Towards Deinstitutionalization – A Discussion Paper” the Dept. of Community Services attempted “to outline the policy directions the Dept. of Community Services feels should be pursued in order to effectively and responsibly replace adult institutional services with community living alternatives” (page 2). Government went on to state “There is a growing level of commitment at all levels of government, within the generic service community and amongst advocacy groups for ‘de-institutionalization’. The questions appear to be how quickly and by what means should
this process be accomplished” (page 4). And on page 6 while identifying policy issues the paper stated “The department believes that not only do all Nova Scotians have the right to live in the community, it believes the community is the natural setting for individual growth and fulfillment.”

NSACL endorses the positions articulated by government in 1995 and finds it regrettable that our province has lost so much ground on community living in the intervening 15 years.

**Principles to Guide Deinstitutionalization**

NSACL subscribes to a Statement of Core Principles and Values and is guided in all of its actions by the principles of:

- Respect
- Dignity
- Equality
- Diversity
- Human Rights
- Justice
- Self-determination
- Mutual responsibility
- Inclusion
- Moral courage

NSACL further believes that “deinstitutionalization must be about more than simply closing large institutions, about more than simply replacing large institutions with smaller ones, about more than creating networks of group homes and ultimately about more than substituting isolation outside the community for isolation within the community” – The Right Way, March 2010. Also in keeping with The Right Way, NSACL believes:

A deinstitutionalization plan must ensure that people have:

1. The right to choose where they will live and with whom;
2. Services/programs that are directed and controlled by the person and that are respectful of that person’s right to make choices and take risks;
3. The right to individualized living arrangements and control over the required individualized funding;
4. The disability related supports needed to fully participate in the community;
5. Support, as necessary, from friends/family/advocates to assist in decision making (supported decision making);
6. Services and housing that meet all of their needs and are of high quality, portable, responsive to changing needs and/or aging, continuous, physically and socially integrated and accessible.
NSACL Positions

1. **NSACL believes** there is no place in Nova Scotia for institutional services for persons with intellectual disabilities. Regardless of degree of disability or complexity of needs, **all are equally entitled to community-based support.**

2. **NSACL endorses / promotes** a future when Nova Scotians and its Government recapture “the dream” of 3 decades ago, a future that
   - Empowers self-expression and the right to choice.
   - Plans supports and implements them according to the needs of the person, rather than “placing” people in facilities.
   - Endorses Supported Decision Making, including family and friends as needed or wanted.
   - Includes a formal, timely and transparent deinstitutionalization process for all persons with intellectual disabilities.
   - Eliminates the support gap between 21 hours/week and 24/7 and the concept of “continuum of service” in favour of flexible, life-long support and homes.
   - Incorporates community collaboration at all stages of the above process, and specifically with NSACL and People First of Nova Scotia.

3. **NSACL calls on the Government of Nova Scotia to join in creating this future and to provide leadership by:**
   - Developing a new community living philosophy.
   - Guiding its future policies, planning and operational decisions according to the community living philosophy.
   - Training its staff to implement the community living philosophy and person-centred support.
   - Developing legislation that is focused on “person” rather than “facility”.
   - Removing disability supports from the income assistance framework.
   - Researching successful models from outside of Nova Scotia.
   - Gathering and sharing demographic information that will assist in planning from such sources as census data, people presently supported within families and in other arrangements, admissions/discharge trends, and people graduating high school who have an intellectual disability.

4. **NSACL urges** the Government of Nova Scotia to **immediately adopt a policy of “no new admissions or readmissions” to institutions** while the above work is underway.

5. **NSACL believes that**, with modest investments, **communities have a powerful ability to support their own citizens.** The repatriation of persons to their home communities supports Nova Scotia’s policy of sustainability by promoting community development and employment, thereby enhancing the quality of life for all.

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