



#201, 10941 120 Street
Edmonton, AB T5H3R3
Ph: 780.454.0701 Fax: 780.454.0843
www.gatewayassociation.ca

DISABILITY SERVICES FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

COMPLETED BY
GATEWAY ASSOCIATION
April 1, 2025- March 31, 2026

Gateway Association: Transformation of community through the lens of disability

REG. # 107420986RR0001



Thank you so much for the time and care your team has put into working with our family.

As parents of twins, we are so used to people grouping them together but what stood out to us most was how intentionally you took the time to understand each of our boys as individuals. Their strengths, their personalities, and their unique paths were truly seen and respected.

Through the conversations and planning process, we began to shift how we see their future. Instead of focusing on what they struggle with, we started to see what is possible, what they can build, grow into, and move toward.

The ISP goals didn't feel like a checklist of deficits. They felt meaningful, personalized, and achievable, something that actually reflects who our boys are and where they can go.

For the first time in a long time, we feel like we have direction. Not just support but a clear, thoughtful path forward.

It's hard not to think... we only wish we had found Gateway sooner.

Thank you for helping us see our children and their future in a completely new way.

Key Impacts

Gateway Association opened its doors to the Family Resource Center (FRC) on May 14, 2021. The FRC saw an exponential positive impact on the community over the first 36 months of the contract which was celebrated and praised by families, caregivers, individuals living with disabilities, various professionals and clinicians and disability service caseworkers. In the last 24 months, the narrative shifted to encompass the fluctuating times of fiscal changes and decreased resources and funding. The last 12 months specifically, had a significant impact on our FRC team with a very high staff turnover of 5 members moving onto other career opportunities that could secure them full time employment and one member retired.

Regardless of these challenging situations, the FRC once again proudly maintained a standard of excellence for families and caregivers and those living with disabilities, maintaining high satisfaction rates and quality control measures. We continued to see this past year, frustrations from families with the limited funding available and decreased resources. This continued to be a substantial impact on families and the community. This is reflected and backed by both quantitative and qualitative data that shows the direct impact these fiscal changes have made on families.

Despite this, the FRC continued to provide valuable resources, deliverables and support to all families who contacted us regardless of the changing landscape of how funding was allocated. We continued to act with thoughtful intent to collaborate with the GoA to provide not only our deliverables but successful support to families in this new age in which families were struggling more than was seen in previous years at the FRC. We have a shared common interest and commitment to Albertans to support them in conjunction with the GoA to help alleviate the extraordinary stressors that marginalized individuals and communities face daily.

We were poignantly reminded of our FRC's impact by a letter that was written by a family member that has accessed our FRC over the past 4 years. This letter was sent directly by the family to The Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services, The Executive Director of Disability Services North and to The Disabilities Advocate in early March of 2026. The letter is attached at the end of this report.

Gateway's FRC was also approached in Winter 2025/2026 to participate as Subject Matter Experts in the Disability Sector and be a part of the Disability Service Program Review at

Norquest College. The collaboration around the table from Government of Alberta (past and present employees), Academics, Community and Norquest College Staff speaks to the power of voices coming together for a unified purpose with deep values and passion rooted in Disability and serving Albertan families. This speaks directly to the respect we have in the community, the reputation of being a trusted advisor within the world of Disability and successful advocates that are passionate about the rights of Albertans living with a Disability. This signifies simply one of the imperative relationships we hold with various community members.

Gateway's FRC was also asked to sit on the Norquest Program Advisory Committee at Norquest College. Gateway continues to support community partnerships and collaborations. Specifically, our FRC will support Norquest in its promotion of external stakeholders; increasing employment opportunities and creating future growth opportunities in the disability workforce with their graduates. Our role supports industry relevant curriculum.

Its important when reporting this 5th year Annual Report of our FRC that we reflect longitudinally over the past 5 years and recognize the outstanding contributions Gateway's FRC has had in the community as directly supported by both quantitative and qualitative quality assurance data and a rigorous program evaluation process.

To ensure continued success of the FRC, program evaluation processes were established at the beginning of our contract and maintained annually to identify strengths, client satisfaction, measure deliverables and monitor feedback. Some key findings have resulted from this process which provide us with the depth of impact the FRC has made. This allowed us the opportunity to continually evolve.

Gateway's FRC has proudly served over **3593 families/individuals** through general support inquiries over the past 5 years. This does not include those attending workshops or FRC completing an ISP. We are honored to have served as the Edmonton Region's FRC over the past 5 years and humbled to hear the impact we've provided to families through their stories, posts, feedback and referrals.



Gateway Association proudly celebrated its 50th anniversary in April 2025, marking five decades of service, advocacy, and impact within our community. This milestone was commemorated alongside our 2025 Annual General Meeting, bringing together families, individuals supported by our programs, staff, Board members, partners, leaders, and

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community collaborators. The celebration was both a moment of reflection and recognition—honouring the collective efforts, resilience, and dedication of those who have shaped Gateway’s journey over the past 50 years.

This gathering created space to acknowledge the deep relationships built across the disability sector and to celebrate the voices, experiences, and achievements of the families and individuals we serve. It also reinforced Gateway’s longstanding commitment to inclusion, equity, and community-driven support. As we honoured our history, we simultaneously looked ahead with renewed purpose, reaffirming our responsibility to continue evolving alongside the communities we walk with and to remain a trusted, responsive, and values-driven organization for generations to come.

Our Methodology

The FRC instills a methodology of Enhancing knowledge through learning opportunities, implementing knowledge through planning supports and Mentorship and Ongoing support through system navigation and community building. This holds the values of Gateway Association and allows a framework that empowers individuals and families alike. The FRC offers direct support to families across the lifespan and regardless of diagnosis or disability. The FRC proudly provides services with a pan disability lens.

The FRC sees direct impact that we have on families. We hear (formally and anecdotally) from the community that Gateway’s FRC increases the capacity of families and FMS administrators accessing FSCD and PDD; increases caregiver capacity and builds access to natural supports for children, youth, adults and their families. We continue to enhance involvement of community and civil society organizations to create opportunities to maximize the inclusion and independence of children, youth, adults; promote individual and family leadership, mentoring, peer to peer support; utilize innovative approaches and support strategies to promote inclusive lives for children, youth and adults living with disabilities. In addition to direct impact, Gateway serves the community via partnerships such as GRIT, Metis Nation of Alberta and Multicultural Health Brokers Coop.

Gateway Association has offices on both Treaty 6 and Treaty 7 territories. Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton; on Treaty 6), Home of the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Tsuu T’ina & Dene and Mohkinstsis (Calgary; on Treaty 7). Recognizing the land on which we live and work is a

starting point in understanding and respecting the Indigenous communities that have been here for centuries. Reconciliation, to our organization, means prioritizing critical thinking about intersectionality and equity throughout all our work; continuous un-learning of oppressive thoughts/ideas/beliefs/actions; listening to (and believing) Indigenous peoples and their communities about their experiences; and making space for equity-seeking groups (of all kinds) to determine what is best for them.

Here are the current members of our FRC team.

Hello my name is Sahana Parameswara, a Dravidan queer woman and settler in [Amiskwaciy-wâskahikan](#). Reconciliation and land back are my guiding principles.

I, Yonique Ritch (she, her) I identify as a racialized Black Canadian woman and feel deeply honored to live, work, and play on Treaty 6 Territory—Amiskwacîwâskahikan, the traditional lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene, and Nakota Sioux peoples. I am committed to continually deepening my understanding and expanding my knowledge of how to meaningfully support equity-seeking communities, both in my professional role and in my personal life.

I, Stacy (she/her) identify as a third generation German Canadian, racialized white settler. I was born on the beautiful land of Treaty 4 within the traditional territory of the Metis. I had the gift of growing up, living and experiencing Treaty 8 Territory; the ancestral and traditional territory of the Cree, Dene, as well as the Métis and Treaty 6; within the Métis homelands and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. I currently continue to reside on Amiskwacîwâskahikan and acknowledge the many privileges afforded to me and I continue in my journey in learning and unlearning of inequities.

I, Li (she/her), am an Asian by birth, raised in Germany, and for the past six years, I have proudly called Canada home, becoming a first-generation Canadian. I have embraced the land I reside on, which originally belonged to the Mohawk people in Kanien'kéha, and currently reside on Treaty 6 territory, known as Amiskwacîwâskahikan, home to the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Blackfoot, and Métis Peoples. My cultural journey has instilled in me a deep sense of pride in my heritage. Through engaging with and respecting diverse cultures, I have come to prioritize diversity, inclusivity, and equitability. As a member of a multicultural society, I cherish traditions while championing for inclusivity and equitability, aiming to cultivate a community where diversity is celebrated, and every individual feels valued and included.

Key Deliverables

- ❖ Formal Program Evaluation Process was in place to track and collect data after **every** workshop that the FRC created, after **every** Individual Support Plan (ISP), and there was an Informal Process to gather anecdotal feedback on general inquiries and within the community.
- ❖ The FRC made a commitment to quality assurance by ensuring these measures have been taken. There were no questionnaires provided by the GoA for the workshops offered specifically to their created content; therefore, no formal data is collected allowing families to have a voice from those workshops. The FRC utilizes data from family support inquiries, our workshops, ISPs and anecdotal feedback to encapsulate our quality assurance.
- ❖ The FRC facilitated a variety of workshops under this revised contract; a total of **22 (FRC) workshops** were offered over the past year.
- ❖ Based on the FRC's quality assurance questionnaires, we are very pleased to report the consistent trend of a high **satisfaction rate of 91%**. This is the number of respondents that indicated satisfied to very satisfied with the workshop they attended which is consistent with past years.

Overall Workshop Satisfaction
2025: 95%
2024: 94.7%
2023: 94.1%
2022: 94.6%

- ❖ Another positive deliverable that became a trend was that the majority of respondents (**87%**) continually indicated they would **recommend** the workshop they attended to others.

Recommend FRC Workshops
2025: 95%
2024: 95.5%
2023: 94.0%
2022: 92.3%

- ❖ Another incredible deliverable that is a trend, was that nearly all respondents indicated that they **feel confident** implementing strategies learned in the workshop (**99%**).

Confidence in Implementing Strategies Learned in FRC Workshops
2025: 99%
2024: 99%
2023: 96.5%
2022: 98.9%

- ❖ Another favorable deliverable that became a trend, was that families indicated (**86%**) that they have increased their confidence in **navigating community resources**, have increased ability to **enhance inclusion strategies (88%)**, and feel they can **apply knowledge learned** from our FRC for planning for their family member (**94%**). This is a significant direct impact on Albertan families which speak to building families voices; their capacity and confidence and ability to help navigate the system(s). **This is what Gateway’s FRC established.**

Confidence in Navigating Community Resources	Ability to Enhance Inclusion Strategies	Ability to Apply Knowledge Learned
2025: 92%	2025: 89%	2025: 95%
2024: 85.1%	2024: 91.2%	2024: 96.5%

- ❖ Another incredibly reassuring trend was that families continued to **feel supported by their learning** at the FRC workshops (**92%**) and that their **voice was heard (93%)**. *These are integral components of families ability to build their capacity, their connections and their confidence in helping their loved ones.* **We would like to see the next FRC continue this level of competence.**

Feel Supported by their FRC Workshop Learning	Feel Voice was Heard at FRC Workshop
2025: 98%	2025: 97%
2024: 94.7%	2024: 92.1%

- ❖ There were **5** community presentations (last report 10) for resource fairs and various community organizations.

- ❖ In the past, we had designated RDSP Coordinators in which their impact was significant. Although there are no designated RDSP coordinators any longer, there were still many requests for services for this as well as DTC support. Overall, there are lack of services and resources for families to access this type of support.
- ❖ Program impact is shown not only quantitatively above; however also from numerous qualitative comments; feedback and anecdotally. This past year has felt differently for families as mentioned at the beginning of this report. Each month, the FRC has provided “Trends and Issues” to the Government of Alberta (GoA) with what we are hearing directly from families. This includes challenges, delays, urgent family needs, navigating FSCD agreements, Caseworker experiences, accessibility, understanding and variability, encouraging and campaigning in education, in health care, overall frustration with communication, enhanced support structures as families navigate and transitioning to PDD services. Each month the FRC also provides potential solutions and strategies. Families may be feeling heard from the FRC, however, they are not feeling heard by the ministries in which they are trying to reach out to, to see direct change for their loved ones that they care for with a disability. Continued collaborative meetings with the GoA is needed and these discussions need to be had with decision makers as well to improve care for all Albertans living with a disability. Open communication with both the FRCs and the GoA on an ongoing basis is imperative for positive communication and relationship building with families so that all voices are being heard.
- ❖ Families have diverse needs and diverse stages of needs as they move through the FSS/FSCD/PDD world as well as education, health care and other ministries. The constant dynamic is that change is static and families continue to need increased supports to navigate the disability area that has become more ambiguous with less direction. Increased communication between ministries would also better serve the families that are marginalized and have intersectionality’s across the various ministries they must maneuver.
- ❖ Specific to our FRC, Families have continued to indicate that they are heard and seen. They still feel supported (albeit with less). They continue to be grateful and appreciative of the growth they experienced personally after taking a workshops and the impact that this growth had on their families journey and development.
- ❖ Here are a few (of many) qualitative comments on the impact that Gateway had with families across the lifespan:
 - “(FRC Staff) was very thorough, explained things clearly and at a good pace. The videos were awesome! I appreciated this workshop and all it provided to me as a parent of 3 teenagers, two with disabilities reaching Adulthood within a year and a half of each other and with very different needs. Thank you!”

- “Excellent workshop. (FRC Staff) is excellent at explaining the program and what is required for families to have success....”
 - “Many thanks for the knowledge and fun today!”
 - “I am very thankful for the support and all information I have learned during the workshop.”
- ❖ Family support calls have nearly doubled since the beginning of the FRC. In total, the FRC received **838** inquiries.

Family Support Inquiries
2025: 952
2024: 729
2023: 574
2022: 500

- ❖ Throughout the year, there is often feedback that lingers with our team and speaks to the impact we make on families. One family recently captured this impact beautifully after speaking to our FRC Staff: “.....You are truly a wealth of knowledge and my son and I really appreciate the conversation we had yesterday! He asked about the zoom call and I explained it was to help him. His words ‘Yah! You love me so much!’ ...”. **This is making a difference.**
- ❖ There was another trend to both create, and increase our collaboration with various organizations, partners and community members throughout the years. We grew our partnerships exponentially over the past 5 years to build trustworthy, collaborative relationships from a handful of partnerships (in 2021/22) to 50 fruitful conversations (in 2025/26).

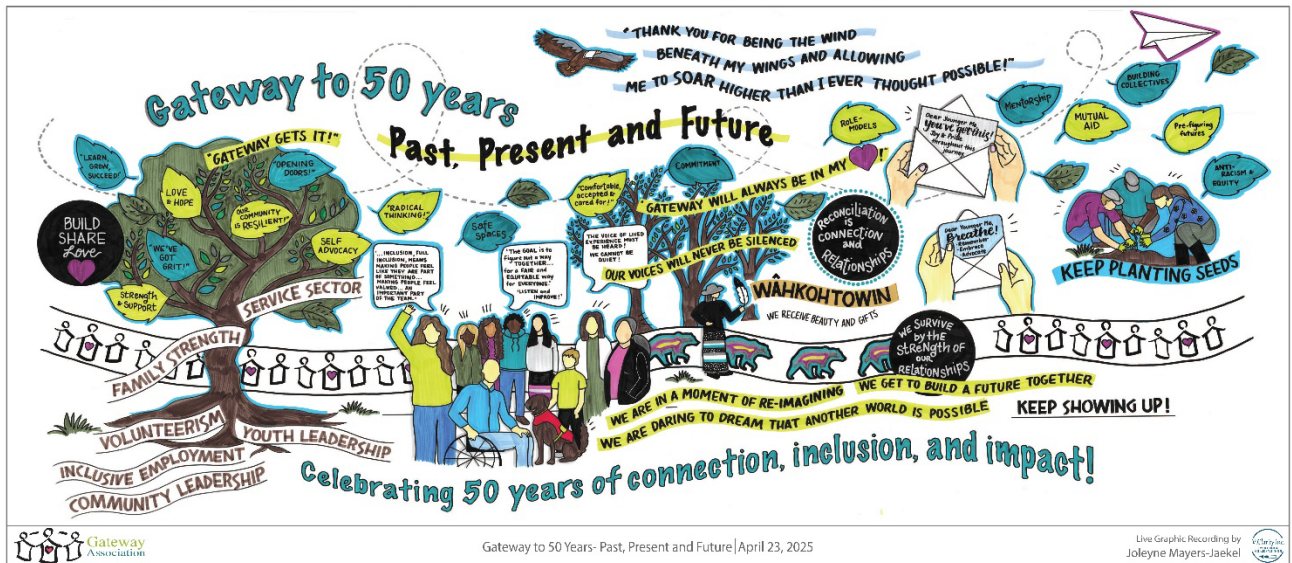
Partnerships/Collaborations
2026=49+
2025: N=45+
2024: N=45
2023: N=25
2022: N=18; (7 new Partnerships; 11 new Collaborations)

2026 Partnerships & Collaborations				
Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital	Edmonton Food Bank	Children's Link/Easter Seals	Ethiopian and Eritrean (Autism Parent Group)	Edmonton Region Candora Society
Kids Included [formerly known as GRIT (Getty Ready for Inclusion Today)]	Stollery Children's Hospital	Regional Provincial Advisory Committee (RPAC)	Autism Alberta FRC	Childrens Autism Collab Team (CACT); Under 18 Interagency HUB
Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA)	Edmonton Catholic Schools	Canadian Mental Health Association	CHIMO Youth Retreat Center	Norquest College
Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB)	St. Albert Mental Health Youth HUB	Edmonton Public Library	CASA Mental Health	IG Wealth Management
Africa Center	Centre for Autism Services	Bissell Centre	EISA (Edmonton Immigration Services Association)	ASSIST Community Services
Alberta Center for Sexuality	Society for Autism Support & Services	Cerebral Palsy Alberta	Under 18 Interagency HUB	Newcomer Center [formerly known as Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers]
Family Futures Family and Community Support Services Fort Saskatchewan	Ron Burrows Accounting	Good will Industries of Alberta	Jasper Place FRC	Two Pillars Financial Solutions Inc
MultilingualAbilities	Prosper Place-CMHA Edmonton Region	Parkland & West Family Resource Network	Voices of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD)	Speech Matters
Self Advocacy Federation (SAF)	Slinntax	Skills Society	IG Wealth Management Sheldon Pickering (Financial Advisor)	Action for Healthy Communities (A4HC)
Dragonfly	Interagency Committee on Inclusive Recreation	Medically Complex Fragility Inclusive Support Parent Working Group	Parkland School Division	

- ❖ We **hosted 10** Families Forward (FF) meetings and events were held and brought various families together monthly across the lifespan. We hosted 2 celebrations in person with families. One event was the AGM that was in conjunction with all of Gateway and the second event was our annual Christmas dinner (**n=115**) that provided families a space to come together and reconnect.
- ❖ The FRC began asking families during workshops and presentations what was the most common language their family chose to speak at home. The majority of participants/families indicated English, however, many families indicated a variety of other languages including: American Sign Language (ASL), Kurdish, Chinese, Visayan dialect, Japanese, Tagalog. This speaks to the necessity for a diverse team as well as a diversity in what is offered by Gateway Association and how it is offered.
- ❖ Funding for interpreters, translators and cultural brokers are necessary and non negotiable to ensure that Gateway is not only providing supports to families but is also impacting capacity of organizations that serve diverse families. Through collaboration with MCHB, there are currently translations of Gateway workshops in a few languages as well as a cultural understanding of Gateway's role. Collectively the two organizations have jointly assisted families access FSCD and PDD, thus exemplifying the bridging of a very big gap that currently exists within the DS system.
- ❖ The FRC also asked workshop participants if there was anything that the FRC could have done to help them feel more comfortable and included with respect to race, disability, culture, gender, religion, age and/or sexual orientation. As found in past report years, respondents that chose to answer this question continue to state that they felt welcomed, heard, respected, encouraged, accepted, accommodated, comfortable. Apocopes included "(FRC Staff) was an excellent instructor and she used strength based language throughout."; "The host of this workshop really encouraging everyone to share or speak..."; "(FRC Staff) made it a very relaxed, welcoming and respectful workshop."; "(I'm) glad you ask this question!".
- ❖ In 2023, Gateway Association began its journey through Anti-Racism Organizational Change (AROC), making meaningful strides toward growth and deepening its commitment particularly within the Family Resource Centre programs. This work has continued into 2025–2026 through intentional application in our daily practices, ongoing reflection, and organization-wide monthly discussions that foster continued learning, awareness, and understanding.
- ❖ Our continued collaborations with community organizations such as Multicultural Health Brokers, Metis Nation of Alberta, ASSIST Community Services Centre, Multilingual Abilities, and Newcomer Centre have been pivotal. These alliances have

broadened our understanding, enabling us to customize our services to meet the nuanced needs of our community and build enduring inclusive support networks.

- ❖ We have witnessed substantial development in several key areas:
 - **Responding to Changing Community Needs:** As we welcome an increasing number of newcomer families accessing our services, our efforts have expanded to better address their unique needs. This includes navigating systems, reducing barriers to access, and ensuring culturally responsive, inclusive supports that reflect diverse experiences and realities.
 - **Centering Lived Experience and Diverse Perspectives:** By centering the voices of individuals impacted by intersectionalities such as race, sexuality, disability, and migration status, we ensure that our initiatives are responsive, relevant, and grounded in the lived experiences and expertise of those we serve.
 - **Shifting Systems and Shared Power:** We remain committed to examining and reshaping power structures within our team and community engagement practices, with the goal of fostering equitable access to resources, decision-making, and support for all community members.
- ❖ Gateway's FRC proudly served over 3593 families through general inquiries and support over the past 5 years of the inception of the FRC (in addition to supporting families through workshops and ISPs). It was an honor and a privilege to be recognized as the Edmonton and area Family Resource Center that solidified the work Gateway has done for 50 years. We will continue to provide support to families and assist them in accessing services, navigating difficult times and celebrating their successes.
- ❖ The ultimate goal of our Family Resource Centre was to enhance each family's expertise on their own children and provide concrete resources that could ease the journey as the family navigated the next steps. Our FRC team was made up of families, neurodiverse individuals, and multiple ethnicities that had varied experiences. The team partnered with various organizations to continually increase our diversity of thought and capacity to work with all families successfully. We were the roots that provided a home to many families. We will continue to extend our branches and deepen our roots for the next 50 years and maintain the soft-landing space we've been for so many families.



In closing, the impact of the FRC can be summarized by words from a Parent that attended a workshop: “10/10!. I was told that if I was going to take a workshop; this was the one to take, but I feel like they didn't hype it up as much as they should have. It was amazing/awesome! I used (FRC Staff) suggestions last week and it was really helpful!”

Gateway's FRC Over the Past 5 Years

2021/2022



When I stumbled upon Gateway as the new Family Resource Centre for Edmonton Region, I wasn't sure what to expect... But what I found was someone who listened, empathized & UNDERSTOOD how I was feeling, as a mom with a child with exceptional needs. Someone who could relate to my concerns about my child & understand my struggle to keep myself healthy, as well.

The 4 session Visioning for the Future, was of great assistance in bringing a few of us caregivers together, to discuss & work on our own individual family's goals, while making connections with others. It made me feel less isolated & alone, to know that other Moms were going through, or had already been through, similar struggles. Since that seminar, I have also really enjoyed other Gateway sessions, on topics such as Speech & Activities & Resources available for our families at EPL.

Gateway as an FRC has provided me with the knowledge & confidence to know that our family's vision for our child is possible!

With heartfelt thanks,
Mom to a 4 yr old with exceptional needs

2022/2023



Thank you for tonight's [workshop]. It's always so amazing and needed...Looking forward to next week, I've been learning and growing so much since I've found Gateway and I really feel I'm ready to pour back into myself to best support my family, wherever that brings me!

I wanted to mention as well. I've come to the realization that I may be out growing my role...After much self-focused thought, I decided to branch out to see where my education and skill set would take me.

Especially with this new outlook on life and wanting to rise to the occasion... and because you have helped me so much, I have found that confidence again to look for more...options that may better suite my little family. And to thank you for these session again, they really leave me with some thought provoking things. Regardless of where my careers may take me, I know with support like Gateway, and you, I'll always be preparing for the best life we can have.

Thanks again,
Mom to a 10 month old and 6 year old

2023/2024



I recently had the pleasure of working with the Gateway Association for my Disability Tax Credit (DTC) application, and I can't thank them enough for their incredible support. [Gateway staff] were lifesavers during the process. They took the time to sit down with me for a long meeting, where we went through a comprehensive toolkit that made the entire application clear and manageable.

What really stood out was their genuine care and patience. They gave me the comfort to express the challenges I face daily and ensured that every detail was communicated effectively to my doctor. Their follow-ups were timely and compassionate, making me feel supported every step of the way.

[Gateway staff] went above and beyond by helping me connect with a healthcare professional to complete my DTC form. Honestly, without Gateway's guidance, I doubt I would have applied for the DTC, let alone get approved. I am deeply grateful to the Gateway Association for their invaluable help and would highly recommend them to anyone navigating similar processes.

- Individual living with a disability



2024/2025



A Parent's Journey: Navigating Support in Alberta for a Child with a Neurodevelopmental Disability

When a parent's five-year-old was diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disability, they felt an overwhelming mix of emotions—relief at finally having answers, but also deep uncertainty about what came next. Referred to us by a community organization in British Columbia, they reached out to the FRC with a common question: What do I do now?

They had already applied for FSCD, but the wait for approval is too long, considering what we know and what the data shows: early intervention is critical. Without FSCD support, this lower-income family cannot afford the vital therapies and services that FSCD provides—services that are only accessible once a family is connected to a caseworker.

In the meantime, they are left trying to fill the gaps in their child's care. At school in BC, the child received speech therapy only twice a month, and even then, it was not one-on-one. In Alberta, SLP is no longer a common resource families can access in the education system. While verbal, the child struggles with conversational language, leaving the parent anxious about their child's ability to connect with others and express themselves.

The FRC discussed options beyond FSCD. While the family has some benefits that cover speech therapy, it's nowhere near enough. The FRC explored the DTC, a potential financial resource, but even that is a complicated process requiring time and guidance.

This parent's story is not unique. This family moved to Alberta specifically because of its reputation for supporting children with disabilities—only to find that the system is difficult to navigate, with critical delays that leave families struggling.

Every day, families across Alberta face these same challenges: long wait times, inadequate support, and financial barriers. Parents want to give their children the best possible start in life, but without timely access to services, they are left waiting—hoping for help that feels just out of reach.

This is a mere example of why systemic improvements matter. Families need better access to therapies, shorter wait times for assessments and funding approvals, and a system that truly supports them—not one that leaves them to figure it out alone.

To: Minister Jason Nixon

March 11, 2026

Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services

Office of the Minister

Assisted Living and Social Services

227 Legislature Building

10800 - 97 Avenue

Edmonton, AB

T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Nixon,

My name is Bala, and I work with the Government of Alberta [.....].

I wish to place on record my appreciation for the support and guidance I have received from the Gateway Association and in particular one of their key professionals, Ms. Stacy Grainger-Schatz. From an immigrant family which did not know what to do and was overwhelmed by the callousness we were dealt with, we are today a family which is happy to have set roots in Edmonton and are now proud Albertans.

Our association with Ms. Schatz began when we as a new immigrant family in Edmonton reached out to Gateway for support. We had been to many organisations since we arrived in Edmonton but due to a number of issues did not get the support which could have benefitted us. But all that changed when we serendipitously spoke to Ms. Schatz. We were at a loss on how to navigate the system and the child care bureaucracy. Our son had been diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum. No daycare was willing to take him on, and we were rejected very brusquely by several of them. In those dark days, where both me and my wife were unemployed, Ms. Schatz proved to be a beacon of hope. This enabled us to find Elves, where my son underwent both the pre-kindergarten as well as kindergarten programming. Today he is a student in the German bilingual program at the Edmonton Public Schools.

Ms. Schatz (Stacy) , as she encouraged her to call us, also was critical in helping us prepare for our assessment process with the FSCD, which our son qualified for. She has given us support and guidance in every way all these years. We would not be able to reach where we have today but for her positive approach, emphasis on advocacy, and faith and confidence in us as a family.

I can write reams to detail what else she did for us, but I would run out of pages to write but the list would not end. I want to appeal to you to recognise the great work done by Stacy in supporting so many families such as ours.

Such individuals are precious beyond measure, for they are the human face of the government's policies and unfailingly demonstrate that Alberta cares, its government cares and funds provided by Albertan taxpayers for the community's well being are achieving results way beyond expectations.

Recognition is also due to the leadership at Gateway, in particular their Executive Director, Ms. Sahana for ensuring that Stacy has been able to help us. Gateway should receive core funding for their family resource centre so that they can consistently and sustainably help families without having to worry about grants.

I would like to appeal to you to recognise and reward Stacy, the Gateway Association and its team for the great work they are doing. I do understand the current economic realities mean that all organisations cannot be supported in the same manner as before. But it is critical at such a time that those organisations and individuals who are doing work which is creating a real impact are rewarded in ample measure. Funding for such organisations should be prioritised and other non-performing organisations be funded on the basis of performance and actual client feedback.

I look forward to speaking to you whenever your schedule permits and lay out the case I have made above in person.

Warm Regards

Bala Vijayan Venkateshwaran