

Guidelines to Address Pandemic Health Disparities Experienced by Racialized Families with Developmental Disabilities



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What is a developmental disability?

A developmental disability is present at birth or develops before 18 years of age affecting a person's ability to learn. It can be mild or severe but is permanent. People with **developmental disabilities** (DDs) often require help with daily life as well as other assistance to be as independent and successful as possible (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2023).

Policy Context/Problem

Racialized people - Black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC) - with intellectual and developmental disabilities bear a disproportionate burden of health and other systemic inequities (Johnson, Bogenschutz & Peak, 2021); Ocasio-Stoutenburg & Farkas, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns increased accessibility barriers to prevention and response measures. The dearth of pandemic-related data on underserved segments of the population limits comprehensive assessment of its impact on individuals with DDs. To address this gap, a Virtual Community Workshop was conducted, engaging racialized families with DDs in knowledge translation and mobilization in the context of **COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery periods**.

Stakeholders participating in the Workshop identified the following **barriers to social support** experienced by racialized families with DDs: 1) *Access to social services*: language barriers, lack of language specific interpretation services; 2) *Healthcare*: long wait times to mental health care, systemic racism and discrimination, lack of interprofessional collaboration, lack of coordination with racialized families; 3) *Education*: limited support for online learning transition, schools not well equipped for children/ youth with DDs; and 4) *Financial*: insufficient government support for recreation and wellness activities and respite for families with DDs.

Recommendations for Policy Sectors and Agencies

Area	Guidelines
Service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure support services are inclusive and accessible in multiple languages ✓ Implement equity-informed policies and programs that are culturally and linguistically relevant ✓ Tailor support services to match the needs of racialized families and their children/ youth ✓ Provide timely access to mental health care and social work services ✓ Provide support in navigating complicated and excessive administration and documentation processes
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promote diversity training for healthcare professional that is rooted in nonbiased, non-stigmatized, culturally safe and equity-informed practices ✓ Promote interprofessional collaboration and coordination with families
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Expand funding for disability related income subsidies, recreation support, wellness activities, respite and additional home care hours
Policy approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase/ hire more diverse, bicultural/ bilingual/ racialized professionals ✓ Implement inclusive policies that are sensitive to interlocking system of inequities



Address systemic racism and discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Address institutional and societal stigma to reduce social isolation of racialized families with DDs ✓ Implement policies and practices to address discrimination against Black families with DDs ✓ Implement educational strategies within health, education, and organizational settings to address structures of racial domination, and engage in ongoing and transparent dialogue on racism and its intersection with other systems of domination
Education system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implement alternative in-person/ online Individual education plans (IEP) and teaching support, and improve schools' existing resources to meet the needs of racialized children/ youth with DDs ✓ Integrate universal design for learning and assistive technology to meet racialized students' with DDs strengths and needs ✓ Address bullying in the school system, and stereotyping of racialized children and youth

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For more information please visit:

Community based research: <https://nkhanlou.info.yorku.ca/research/community-based/>

Project information sheet: <https://nkhanlou.info.yorku.ca/files/2023/06/Info-Sheet-19.June-2023.pdf?x46752>

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