

People with Intellectual disabilities disproportionately Impacted by COVID 19

54%



of Inclusion International members surveyed said that their government's response to COVID-19 was not inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

The exclusion, marginalization and discrimination faced by people with intellectual disabilities has compounded the impact of COVID 19.

The pandemic has resulted in increased deaths of people in institutions and other segregated settings, isolation and decreased access to: supports; information and social protection measures.

The Inclusion International network has responded by creating and sharing accessible resources; building virtual communities for self-advocates and families; and advocating for inclusion in government pandemic responses.

We heard from our members:

Through a series of 18 webinars, members from every region of the world shared their stories and reported on the situation in their countries and communities.

We surveyed our membership, collecting experiences from 68 organizations across 48 countries with representation from all 5 of our global regions.





Institutions

While it is clear that people in congregate settings are at increased risk of infection and death, little or no attention has been paid to people with intellectual disabilities. Data in the UK shows that people with intellectual disabilities have 3 to 6 times higher death rate than the general population. (Public Health England)



Education

44% of members surveyed said that learning options provided for school aged children during the pandemic were not accessible.



Access to Information

51% of members surveyed said that their government did not release information about the pandemic or lockdown in plain language, easy read, or other accessible formats.



“I haven’t seen many pictograms or any or guides around the city or on the news that explains to us what is really happening [...] It is very important for TV broadcasts and radio to give information to everyone in simple language, so all intellectually disabled people can understand.”

– Fernande, Self-Advocate, Mexico



Impact on Families

COVID-19 has increased family caregiving responsibilities while limiting their support services. Single parents, parents who have an intellectual disability, and family members of people with high support needs have been particularly hard hit.



Access to Support

87% of members surveyed said that essential formal support services were stopped or reduced, and 89% that informal support was stopped or reduced.

“[I had] challenges around online schooling understanding information sent by the school. Needed to find new ways of doing things, online shopping, get medications delivered using zoom for support and meetings, and relying on more technology [with] limited support from other parent due to concerns around the pandemic.”

– Sonia Hume, Self-Advocate, Australia



Social Protection

42% of members surveyed said that families were unable to access these programs (like cash benefits). Many II members were forced to respond by providing food or material aid (including health and hygiene products) directly to families.

“Women are having double burden of care, now the [pandemic] has even increased the burden to women due to child caring. And if you’re looking at a woman with children with intellectual disability, this burden has become even tripled”

– Fauzia Haji, Parent, Zanzibar



Governments Must Take Decisive Action to Ensure Pandemic Response is Inclusive

COVID-19 has amplified existing rights violations and increased the risk of further violations for people with intellectual disabilities. These violations include lack of access to information, education and services, and denial of social protection measures.

Governments must ensure their response to the pandemic includes people with intellectual disabilities and their families, and that policies do not further disadvantage them.

Key Recommendations for Governments:



Access to Information

Government produced public information must be available in accessible formats, including plain language and easy read. Plain language should be a core accessibility requirement for all government publications and information.



Access to Support

Governments must recognize as essential any services that support independent living, families, and people with high support needs.



Health

Health services must be inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities. Triage schemes should not consider disability as a criteria to prevent people with intellectual disabilities from accessing health services.



Education

The policy imperative is bigger than just addressing inclusion in virtual lessons. Education systems must be re-built to be inclusive and to safeguard support for learners with disabilities. National education plans designed during the pandemic must include learners with disabilities.



Institutions

Governments must work towards deinstitutionalization - it is urgently needed to keep people safe and to protect their human rights during the pandemic and beyond.

Deinstitutionalization must be accompanied by systemic changes to ensure support for independent living. This includes introducing inclusive community services, support services for families, in-home services, inclusive education and inclusive social protection schemes.



Social Protection

Emergency social protection systems must be accessible to all. They should include provisions to support families who are unable to work due to caregiving responsibilities.

As many workers are being made redundant and losing their income, governments should ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against in the workforce



Consultation

Consultation is the most effective way to ensure the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in the pandemic response. They and their representative groups (OPDs) are the experts on their own needs and inclusion. They must be empowered to participate in policymaking and emergency response planning.