

AIM Program Backgrounder

What Is AIM?

AIM stands for Ability In Me. It is a non-profit, charitable organization based in Saskatoon. AIM provides specialized therapy and other programs to help children with Down Syndrome.

The goal is to allow these children to meet their full potential and integrate more successfully into their homes and schools. It began offering programs January 19th, 2015. AIM provides programs for children from infancy to the age of 21.

The Move:

Since opening just over a year ago, AIM has been operating in the basement of Grosvenor Park United Church. It was a one-year agreement. The new space on Miller Avenue provides more parking, easy access into the building, a more welcoming space for families to meet and more space for group programs.

With the move complete, the emphasis now is on marketing the program in Saskatchewan, making sure that everyone who needs these services know that AIM exists.

How Many People Have They Helped?

78 families have signed up. 69 use programs on a regular basis. On an average program day, between 8-15 children come through the doors.

Sources of Funding:

AIM receives money from the province, donations from corporations and local businesses as well as smaller individual donations. AIM has also held three fundraising dinners.

Support from Province of Saskatchewan:

Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education has signed a contract with AIM, covering April 1st 2015 to March 31st, 2017. The government's maximum contribution is set at \$720,000.

Rationale (from the website: www.aimprogram.ca):

"There has never been a better time to create a facility in Saskatchewan where teachers, speech therapists and occupational therapists can come to develop an expertise within their chosen professions while at the same time our families will receive the best for their child right here at home. AIM is a solution that ensures children with Down syndrome will have access to the services they require, but cannot be provided by an already stressed health and education system. AIM programming will not duplicate services, but rather our goal is collaboration to fill the gap."

Programs:

The Bridge Program:

- Enriched early-learning classes for children between the ages of 2 and 5.
- Draws on the services of a Speech Language Pathologist, a Music Therapist and an Occupational Therapist.

Discovery Group:

- Designed for children under the age of 2, it introduces parents and caregivers to techniques that aid in the development of children with Down Syndrome.
- Includes work on speech, language, sensory processing, social skills and motor skills.

Everyone A Reader

- Individualized 30 to 45 min sessions for children of all ages to build on short term memory, sight word acquisition and iPad applications.

Speech and Language Skills

- Individual or small group programs with speech and language pathologists.
- Focus on articulation, expressive language and social communication.

The SaskParty government's record:

Support for the AIM Program is part of a much broader effort by Saskatchewan to significantly increase support for persons with disabilities. Overall funding to assist persons with disabilities has doubled since 2007, totaling over \$2.7 billion.

Last year's provincial budget included \$29.5 million more in this category than the previous year and double the amount in the 2007-08 budget.

In 2009, the Saskatchewan Party created the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program. SAID currently has 14,000 people enrolled. Last year's budget included almost \$185 million for SAID - a \$14 million increase over the year before.

Enhancements to the Disability Tax Credit have provided an additional \$27 million in tax relief to persons with disabilities since 2007.

Over \$62 million was allocated to address a 440 person wait list for services for people with intellectual disabilities. That wait list was a legacy of the former NDP government in our province.