

PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

MARCH 30TH, 2022, 1:30PM TO 3:30PM

ZOOM VIRTUAL PEER GROUP MEETING NOTES

Pathways To Independence was created for peers to come together and share information and updates on current issues facing people with disabilities. More than ever, people with disabilities must come together as a unified group. Living independently is a choice and comes with challenges; through unification people with disabilities make a difference; each voice is important and strengthens us as a community and as individuals.

Hosted By:

Paul Gauthier,

Executive Director

Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society

Ruth Marzetti

Executive Director

Technology for Living

Special Guests

Google

Crisis Centre BC

The March 30th, 2022, meeting was attended by approximately 75 people.

Table of Contents

Technology for Living Updates with Taylor Danielson, Community Coordinator	2
Simon Cox Student Design Competition	2
Google Accessibility Trusted Tester (TT) Program with Jennifer Nelson, UX Research Project Manager	2
What is the Accessibility Trusted Tester Program?	2
Program Background	2
Who is right for the program?	3
Trusted Tester Extended Program	4
Success Story	4
Translink Updates with Laura Mackenrot	5
Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee with Laura Mackenrot	5
Homebound Voting	5
COVID Rapid Test kits shipments to CSIL Employers with Paul Gauthier	7
Association of CSIL Employers (ACE) Updates with Paul Gauthier	7
CSIL Policy Exceptions	7
Staffing	8
Minister of Health Orders for Mandatory Vaccination	8
Masks	9
Sick Pay Reimbursement	9
Annual CSIL Hours Rate Increase	9
CSIL Contracts and Inconsistency between Health Authorities	9
Crisis Centre BC Workshop with Ms. Alex Bruce	11
Crisis Centre Programs for Adults	11
Resiliency and Wellness Six Session Course	12
Crisis Centre BC Contact Information	12
Accessible Nature Wellness Program Update with Kim Egger	12
Upcoming Pathway Meeting	13
Date & Time	13
Topics	13

Technology for Living Updates with Taylor Danielson, Community Coordinator

Simon Cox Student Design Competition

The award ceremony for the Simon Cox Student Design Competition will take place live on May 7th, 2022, at 10:00AM on Technology for Living's YouTube Channel.

[Click Here](#) to set your date to watch the award's ceremony live and to watch the event trailer!

Google Accessibility Trusted Tester (TT) Program with Jennifer Nelson, UX Research Project Manager

Are you a tech-savvy, frequent user of Google products? Are you passionate about improving software and hardware accessibility for everyone, including people with disabilities? If so, then you may be interested in joining [Google's Accessibility Trusted Tester program](#)!

We are building out a panel of Accessibility Trusted Testers in the United States and Canada (and soon more countries) to give us more accessibility and usability feedback on new and existing products and ideas. Potential Trusted Testers will go through a screening process to enter the program. To express interest in the program, you may [fill out this interest form](#), and someone from the Google Accessibility team will be in touch with you within two weeks.

Those who are accepted into the Trusted Tester Program can expect:

- Opportunities to try out new Google software and hardware before the general public
- Potential to receive hardware devices for testing
- Opportunities to participate in user research studies, dialoguing directly with Google teams via email, phone, surveys and/or video conferencing sessions
- After participating in user research studies, most Testers will receive thank-you gifts in the form of gift cards from Visa, Mastercard, PayPal, and a variety of large retailers

Note: you will not receive a thank-you gift just for filling out this questionnaire and expressing interest in the Trusted Tester program.

What is the Accessibility Trusted Tester Program?

The mission of the Accessibility Trusted Tester (TT) Program is to make it as easy as possible for product teams across Google to receive timely constructive feedback from external users with disabilities.

Google wants to create accessible products and the only way to accomplish that is through people, like trusted testers, with lived experience to help our researchers make the best product possible.

Program Background

The program was created in 2017 and has grown to over 300 users in the US and Canada. Google is focussing on many disabilities, such as;

- Vision impaired
- Hearing impaired
- Motor skills impairment
- Cognitive issues
- Speech Impairment
- Mobility
- And more

Who is right for the program?

A Trusted Tester has a minimum age requirement of 18 at this point. It is possible that Google will include minors in the future. Participants must be tech savvy with Google knowledge of our platforms and our apps and various google products.

Google wants honest feedback. Our goal is to obtain honest feedback from engaged users, and have a tester say “this is not working for me and here is why”. We offer weekly office hours and even if a participant wants to hop on a call and just say, “I love the program”, that's totally fine with us.

Participants will require a Gmail email address because that is how we do all of our communications. If you decide you want to be a Trusted Tester, or you want to tell a friend about the program, just make sure that when they sign up that they do have Gmail.

[Click the Link](#) and complete an easy, five minute survey to tell us who you are and what you do

You will be asked to submit a five minute video of yourself where you can tell Google about yourself and tell us about a Google product you use; what you like about it and what you don't like about it.

Those who are chosen to participate will be required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA).

Participants are then invited to join the Google Group. Surveys and questionnaires are sent out on Tuesdays and Fridays for focus groups and people chosen for a particular group will be compensated as follows;

- \$75 for 30 minutes or less
- \$100 for 30 to 60 minutes
- \$125 for 61 to 85 minutes

Participants can choose how they want to be compensated and will be provided with a list of choices. i.e. Visa and Mastercard Gift Cards

Currently, the TT program is actively seeking participants who;

- Have a speech impairment
- Are 65 years of age or older
- Have Dyslexia

As thank you to being a Trusted Tester, we send out a list of products ranging from laptops such as a Chromebook to a Pixel phone; you can choose anything you want. That is our way of saying thank you for donating your time and your bandwidth, to take the time to be with us. You are not required to return the item.

Trusted Tester Extended Program

The Trusted Tester Extended Program is essentially a waitlist. Participants do not receive perks as a thank you for coming on board. Submissions of a video to us for consideration or sign an NDA is not required.

If you choose to join TT Extended, you must add yourselves to a Google groups link that we send. Then, they may receive notices to participate in studies.

We are always looking for all disabilities because if someone drops out of the TT Program, for whatever reason, we can go to the TTE to fill any gaps. If you transition to the TT program, you will receive the thank gifts for participating.

I encourage everyone to apply since the program is growing and evolving.

There are no prerequisites; you can participate as often as you want. We do ask that people commit to participating at least once a quarter, but we have people who participate every week. It's really up to you and what your schedule is.

Success Story

A heartwarming story about a tester is available on video to view on YouTube and can be found if you [Click Here](#)

For more information:

Contact Jennifer Nelson at jenniferne@google.com

[Google's Accessibility Trusted Tester program!](#)

[Fill out this interest form](#)

Taylor Danielson: I have been part of the Trusted Tester Program for roughly two years now. I joined as soon as it became available in Canada. I have been participating in almost all of the studies that I qualify for, with a physical disability.

Something to note is that you are not going to qualify for all the studies. You do the ones that you feel that you have some input for. I think that it has been working great for me. The free gift which you receive from Google is always nice. Google that sent me a pixel and they send me the latest version for pixel each year, which is awesome. A great way to be rewarded for participating.

It's really great to see such a huge organization put an emphasis on accessibility and then actually work with the people who are using their products, which is something we really believe in at Technology for Living.

Living. It's working with the end users to see how they are actually going to use the devices because if you don't consult with people with disabilities there's a good chance it's not going to work.

I really like the Trusted Tester initiative and if you're kind of tech savvy and looking to contribute to the accessibility of the Android and Google platforms, I would encourage you to check it out.

Ean Price: I have only been part of the program for a couple of months and I have been very pleasantly surprised at how receptive Google is. It's not just speaking, through chat or email, even though that is an option, but having a virtual face to face with some of the key players who are involved in making these changes for accessibility was a great surprise and really refreshing. I am really happy to be part of the program



Q. I use Google at the Recreation centre. I sometimes stutter, and I don't talk clearly. Is there a plan so that when people don't talk clearly enough does Google have technology that can listen to people with my speech challenges?

A. I can send information about some products I think would be good for you. As far as the Trusted Tester Program itself 100% you are exactly what we are looking for right now. Which is why I wanted to speak to this group. We really do need people with different speech patterns.

Q. What about those of us that would possibly like to be on a waitlist that don't qualify under your speech or age?

A. I encourage everybody to fill out the survey if you are interested, because we are getting new products all the time.

Translink Updates with Laura Mackenrot

For the TransLink, HandyDART users Advisory Committee; Tim Lewis was previously the Chair, and I was the Vice Chair. We have switched roles now. I am the Chair and Tim is the Vice Chair. We will still be advocating for everybody who uses HandyDART going forward.

TransLink and HandyDART usage still has an unofficial mask mandate for users. Dr. Bonnie Henry listed the mandate for masks for regular Sky Train or bus users. TransLink also made the announcement that on the regular transit you are not required to use masks. However, it is still very much recommended.

I wouldn't say 100% mandated but you are still requested to use it on HandyDART vehicles and that would be through TransLink for the Metro Vancouver area, just in recognition of the users who tend to be older than 75 years, seniors and people with disabilities who are immunocompromised.

Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee with Laura Mackenrot

Homebound Voting

Paul Gauthier and I have been volunteering at the City of Vancouver on the Person with Disabilities Advisory Committee for over four or five years now. We have been trying to advocate for telephone

voting or the municipal elections in Vancouver, which is not really legally a possibility at this point and might not be for another four or more years. However, the staff has come back to us and propose that they “might” be able to do something that was piloted in Toronto in 2018, called Homebound Voting.

Paul and I moved and seconded a motion for Homebound Voting in March, and they might go to Council to see if they can get the approval for it. I just wanted to check for people in general. It would be to keep in mind that for people with severe disabilities who would not be able to go to a voting place.

Homebound voting would need to provide privacy and independence and that has to be figured out because mail in ballots for the City of Vancouver is coming for the October elections. There might be a lot of people who have a disability which prevents them from travelling to a ballot location in the community and really do want to keep their vote private.

To give an example myself; I did not vote for a large portion of my 20’s because my arthritis was so bad. I could barely walk to the toilet and back, let alone consider leaving my apartment. Homebound voting would have greatly helped me when my arthritis is really severe, and I could barely walk without assistance. As well, for the last 15 years or more, I have kept my vote completely private. No parent, no friend, and no care aide or assistant has ever known the way I vote. That is the way that I prefer to keep it.

Can anybody make a comment about that, if they think that would be supremely helpful to themselves or to the community so that Paul and I have an idea because I might have to make a speech or write a letter about it in the next month.



I do agree, I know that lots of people have come to me and said, I wish there's a way for us to figure this out, just for your reason alone. That they want to keep their vote private, and they don't even want a caregiver to know about their choice in voting. It would be great if you can put that forward.



It’s great for those that will be helped out by it but not being able to push buttons on a phone, I would rather have computer voting personally. That is what I would like to see.

Laura Mackenrot: To clarify the telephone voting, it requires permissions from the province and would have to come in throughout all municipalities and many laws that would need to be put into place to protect it. The City of Vancouver has found a way to “potentially” do Homebound voting and that is where they would send two people to your home for security reasons.

One volunteer would mark down your vote, the other person would check it. Volunteers would come to your actual home, on appointment, on a specified voting days leading up to the date.

That is for people again, who do not have the ability to leave and do not have that ability to use their arms or hands to be able to do a mail in ballot themselves. It would be something like we would have to figure out the parameters still. The city would have to approve it.

This was put into place four years ago in Toronto, Ontario. Just to be very clear, it would likely be three or four weeks before you would call in and make that request. Somebody would then work with you to determine the appointment details and then those two volunteers would come to your home. Protocols for identification and Protective Personal Equipment (masks etc) would be in place.

COVID Rapid Test kits shipments to CSIL Employers with Paul Gauthier

- The Ministry of Health have been shipping test kits directly to CSIL Employers
- The text kit being sent out has 25 tests in it
- If you haven't received your kit, contact your case manager

I received many emails with your feedback on how the Ministry should distribute the kits and based upon that information received, they determined that shipping the kits by mail was the best way to do it.

We also communicated with the Ministry of Health, how disappointed we were with regards to the delay in getting them out to us.

Anyone thirty years of age and older, can get them at the pharmacy.

Association of CSIL Employers (ACE) Updates with Paul Gauthier

Please note, that not all information was covered in the meeting due to time restrictions. The information is included in this document.

CSIL Policy Exceptions

The payment to family member temporary policy, and other CSIL temporary policy exceptions, officially ended on April 1st, 2022, with three months to transition to regular policy.

ACE has been in communication with the Ministry of Health, and I am hoping that next month we are going to have more information about the family member extension.

As you will remember, Ken Kramer, one of the Executives from the ACE team now meets with the Ministry of Health approximately every three weeks. This topic will be discussed one more time, in hopes to move this issue for it.

Obviously, there's a systemic problem in regard to people finding caregivers and the payment to family members piece is an important piece; it's also a band aid approach. There are many components related to finding caregivers that need to be dealt with. I hope to have more information soon around an extension of the family member policy exception.

Just to remind everybody, you still have three months to transition, which ends on July 1st so until we learn otherwise from the Ministry of Health, please be mindful of recruitment for caregivers.

You can still apply for the Payment to Family Member with your health authority

Staffing

The Ministry of Health wanted to strategize on how to support CSIL Employers with their staffing crisis.

- The Ministry requested we provide them with the issues in each health authority, so a detailed report on the issues CSIL Employers deal with within each health authority has been submitted to the health authority.
- The reasons vary but are consistent across the province and I hope they will enlighten the Ministry of Health.
- The report demonstrated that people are encountering the same problems, as a result of the same reasons, in each health authority.
 - Having to stretching the hours to obtain coverage, but then unable to pay reasonable wages
 - Cannot compete with Agencies and the Health Authorities pay scales.
 - Cannot offer full employee benefits.

ACE will be following up with the Ministry to learn when we can review this information with them and learn their thoughts on how to address the issues and get some positive outcomes.

Minister of Health Orders for Mandatory Vaccination

1. Some people have been asking if there is any information on relaxing the vaccination mandate for health care workers.
2. They are relaxing the vaccinations for family doctors, dentists, Chiro practitioners, physiotherapists and pharmacists.
3. The move will not eliminate the vaccine requirement for staff in acute or long term care, CSIL Employers, nor will it guarantee all workers in other sectors don't need to be vaccinated.
4. We confirmed this with the BC Centre for Disease Control this morning [March 30th, 2022], but will continue to monitor the changes going forward.
5. On April 8th, some restrictions are being relaxed.
6. Proof of vaccination will no longer be required under public health order to access businesses, events and services.
7. Individual businesses and event organizers can choose to continue requiring proof of vaccination for entry.
8. Businesses will no longer need a COVID-19 safety plan. They must follow communicable disease guidance from WorkSafe BC.

Masks

1. Masks are required in all health care settings.
2. Wearing masks in public indoor settings is not required by public health. Wearing a mask is a personal choice.
3. Masks are encouraged on public transit and BC Ferries, but not required.
4. Individual businesses and event organizers can choose to continue requiring masks on their premises.
5. It's important that we respect the choices of people, businesses, and one another.

Sick Pay Reimbursement

1. You should have received a letter in the mail, or by email, from your Health Authority advising you that sick pay will be reimbursed. You should have been provided with the reporting document with instructions.
2. If you require assistance with the sick pay reimbursement protocols from your Health Authority, please contact Paul Gauthier.

Annual CSIL Hours Rate Increase

ACE will be meeting with the Ministry to discuss the annual rate increase;

1. The last increases were done on a 3 year term and that term has expired
2. We hadn't heard anything, so we have made a request for information and discussion around parity
3. There are several reasons why we would not have heard anything
 - Health Authorities contracts are currently in negotiation and haven't been resolved yet.
 - They have resolved it with the union, but they haven't signed off on it.

We hope to find out soon and will relay back any information as we learn it.

CSIL Contracts and Inconsistency between Health Authorities

1. There have been questions around this year's contracts, and we have been able to compare Vancouver Coastal, Vancouver Island, and Fraser Health.
2. We discovered discrepancies between them so are taking this information to the Ministry of Health.
3. We continue to press for consistency, and it is our opinion that the contracts for each health authority should be the same.

4. **The Health Authorities have pushed back about people signing under duress, so while we have issues with that, please do not jeopardize your funding.**
5. You can include a separate letter with your grievances if you want, but the priority right now is that your funding continues.

Contract Terms Examples based on the three samples we have received

1. **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority** Section 5.3 (g)

"In some cases, we may give you an opportunity to correct an issue before we terminate this agreement by providing you with written notice to comply with this agreement or address a health or safety risk within a specific time period and subject to any conditions, we may require you to meet. If you do not correct the issue within the stated time period, we will provide written notice of termination to you setting out the termination date. However, we may decide not to provide you with an opportunity to make a correction and terminate this agreement immediately by providing you with written notice."

 - a. **This term is also in the Fraser Health Authority Contract**
2. **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority** has removed the old 23 (amended from acting unreasonably),
 - a. **It still remains in Fraser Health Authority Contract**

"23. ACTING REASONABLY AND APPROVALS Where this agreement permits, allows or requires us to make a decision, provides us with an option to act or refrain from acting, approve or reject any request, submission or other item or any variation of those requirements, that decision, option or other action will be undertaken at our sole discretion. Further, nothing in this agreement operates as a permit, license, approval or other statutory authority which you may be required to obtain from us or any other agency to participate in the Program or otherwise purchase the Services."
3. 12.2 remains in the **Vancouver Coastal Health Authority** contracts, where they can have access to your workers during an audit if they feel it's necessary
 - a. This term remains in **Fraser Health** as well
4. **In the Vancouver Island Health Authority**, Section 5.3 is now a benign term;

"5.3 All funds provided by the HA to the Client/Employer under this Agreement shall only be used to obtain Home Support Services in accordance with the Assessed Needs of the Client/Employer."

 - a. Termination terms are covered under Section 10"

"Section 10.4 In addition to its rights under Subsection 10.1 and without restricting any other remedies available, the HA may, at its sole option, immediately terminate this Agreement by providing written notice if the Client/Employer has failed to comply with WorkSafeBC or Employment Standards Regulations."

*We did not see this term in either the VCHA contract or the FHA contract and believe this term is open to interpretation

5. Section 11 – General Provisions

"Section 11.8 The headings in this Agreement have been inserted for reference and as a matter of convenience and in no way define, limit or enlarge the scope of any provision of this Agreement."

We did not see this term in either the VCHA contract or the FHA contract and it is open to interpretation as to what is **not** in the agreement, that the health authority will use to enact their powers in the contract.

Terms of Vancouver Island Health Authority contract only go up to 11.11 so we are concerned what they have left out and how that relates to Section 11.8

To reiterate, do not jeopardize your funding by not signing.



Q. Once we transition away from hiring family members, does that mean we have to submit an official request at that point, or can we continue doing that and then your case manager would assess your situation?

A. I am really glad you asked that. At the next Pathways meeting we will briefly review how to apply for a Payment to Family Member Policy. There is a payment to family member policy that allows you to have an immediate family member to be hired by doing an application process.

We will give you some pointers in the next meeting. You still have three months to do that application. If people want that information, next meeting will focus some time on that because it's very important.

Crisis Centre BC Workshop with Ms. Alex Bruce

We would like to thank Ms. Bruce for attending the Pathways meeting, from Crisis Centre BC.

As we slowly emerged from the pandemic, and all the staffing problems it has caused for us, which are still continuing, we are now dealing with the news of war in Europe, and how it's impacting the daily lives as well with;

- Rising raising costs of food and gas
- Shortages of grocery products
- Perhaps some of you have family in Europe, or you know somebody who does, and you're coping with those worries.

Feelings and the reasons behind them can be varied and many. Alex led us through an interactive workshop about our minds, emotions, and hopefully we learned some coping skills on how to address them.

Alex Bruce

Crisis Centre BC is currently offering a free six session course. The course work is preprepared and people can sign up for individual sessions or the group series.

Crisis Centre Programs for Adults

The Crisis Centre team of professional staff provides programs suitable for all roles and levels of education and experience. They work with 200+ organizations annually, including health care, emergency responders, mental health agencies, community and faith-based, K to 12 and higher education,

government and business. Visit the webpage, at the link provided below, to review the programs and book your own session.

Programming for Adults: [Click Here!](#)

Resiliency and Wellness Six Session Course

Discount: If you would like to participate in the six session Resiliency and Wellness course, free of charge, please email Mark Sheehan at the Crisis Centre BC with your name and email.

Email: msheehan@crisiscentre.bc.ca

Crisis Centre BC Contact Information

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing a crisis and would like support, you can reach out to Crisis Centre BC.

Get Help: [Click Here!](#)

Contact Telephone Numbers:

- Anywhere in BC 1-800-SUICIDE: 1-800-784-2433
- Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789
- Vancouver Coastal Regional Distress Line: 604-872-3311
- Sunshine Coast/Sea to Sky: 1-866-661-3311
- Seniors Distress Line: 604-872-1234
- Online Chat Service for Youth: www.YouthInBC.com (Noon to 1am)
- Online Chat Service for Adults: www.CrisisCentreChat.ca (Noon to 1am)

Crisis Centre Programming for Adults: [Click Here!](#)

Crisis Centre Home Page Website: [Click Here!](#)

Paul Gauthier: It's so great to have so many resources, I think it's very important. The Crisis Centre is another great resource. Technology for Living and The Individualized Funding Resource Centre, have been on a journey in supporting people in taking some time to take care of themselves. It's great because we also have the two and a half hour virtual programs for Accessible Nature Wellness Program. They are led by people who have disabilities and chronic illness, and including Kari Krogh, whom you have seen here a number of times. We also have Kim Egger, who's here and who's been involved in getting training and learning more about wellness.

Accessible Nature Wellness Program Update with Kim Egger

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all of you to try out for the Accessible Nature Wellness Program. There is absolutely no expectations of people who are attending; you can attend for as long as you want, where you want, whether it's indoors or outdoors; from your bed, camera on camera off, they make every attempt that I can imagine to make sure everyone is included.

The program offers a very welcoming, warm environment. It's also it's kind of piggybacks on April's topics being discussed, in that nature connection is a really fun and pleasant way to experience mindfulness and meditation. We saw some of that in the video earlier and the discussion. It is free, but we do need people to register in advance because of funding. Also, there is a limited number of spaces.

Please refer to the posters, emailed out from Paul Gauthier

The program has a positive effect on both mind and body. There is a lot of research supporting how nature wellness improves mood, helps with pain, lowers blood pressure, and more of what we all deal with on a daily basis, especially now when we really need more tools in our toolbox. That invitation is for all of you.

Paul Gauthier: Take advantage of the Nature Wellness Program's upcoming workshop that Kim was talking about, which is on May 14th. These are all free programs. There is no reason why we shouldn't take the time to take care of ourselves, that's what this is all about.

Upcoming Pathway Meeting

Date & Time

Wednesday, April 27th, 1:30pm until 3:30pm



Topics

- Technology for Living
 - Pathways Peers Voting for the Simon Cox Student Design Competition
 - Video Highlights of the projects
 - You will get to vote for your choice for the win at the meeting!
- Telus Internet for Good program
 - Significant Discounted Internet Services for People with Disabilities
- CSIL Updates & Reviews
 - How CSIL Employers can apply for Payment to Family Member Policy
 - Temporary CSIL Policy Exceptions Transition Period
 - Other updates
- Pathways Pets

Peers are reminded that if they have a topic idea, or a community update, for a future meeting, to please send an email to pathways@ifrcsociety.org

Pathways To Independence Peer Group Meeting Notes and pertinent documents are uploaded to <https://www.ifrcsociety.org/pathways>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE AND CONTINUED CONTRIBUTION TO THE MEETING!