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|  | **Call for inputs: Re-Imagining Services in the 21st Century to give effect to the right to live independently and be included in the community for persons with disabilities** |
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|  | Government of Guyana Submission to RequestMinistry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance10/1/22 |



**Call for inputs: Re-Imagining Services in the 21st Century to give effect to the right to live independently and be included in the community for persons with disabilities**

**Government of Guyana, October 1, 2022**

A: Policy Goals and Principles

1. **What are the primary principles and goals that govern the provision of services to people with disabilities in your State?**

The Guyana **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010), Cap 36:05 Laws of Guyana** sets out the principles and goals that govern the provision of services to people with disabilities in Guyana. Section 4 clearly specifies that “*the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities shall inform decisions taken in the administration of this Act*”, thereby indicating that the articles of the Convention form the primary guiding principles governing policymaking regarding persons with disabilities in Guyana.

In addition, the **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010)** **Cap 36:05** was created to, inter alia:

* promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of rights for persons with disabilities,
* facilitate the enforcement of those rights,
* eliminate discrimination based on disability,
* provide for the welfare and rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities,
* provide for the registration of Persons with Disabilities, and
* establish the National Commission on Disabilities.

The Act further sets out the responsibilities of employers to ensure equal opportunities for employment without discrimination; the responsibilities of the Government with respect to vocational training; the promotion of the education of children with disabilities in regular schools or special schools as appropriate, the training of teachers in special education, and financial support for PWDs in post-secondary and tertiary education.

It also sets out the responsibilities of Government regarding prevention of disability, free rehabilitation services and affordable health services; housing and water; social services such as provision of prosthetic devices; family care and substitute family care services; day care services for pre-school age children with disabilities; and opportunities for these children to participate in sports and cultural activities.

1. **Have these principles and goals been modified to take explicit account of Article 19 of the CRPD on the right to live independently and be included in the community (e.g., personalization of services, personal and human support, assistive technology, accessible transport, access to housing, expansion of community-based services, emphasis on personal empowerment and choice).**

The **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010)** **Cap 36:05** was enacted to facilitate the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Act outlines principles taken from Article 19 of the CRPD on the right for Persons with Disabilities to live independently, have equal opportunity for employment, access to education in an inclusive manner, have equal access to required health care services, housing and water, sports and recreation, political and accessibility rights.

Further, **Section 34 (1) of the Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) Cap 36:05** makes it an offence for a parent, guardian or next of kin to conceal a person with a disability in such a manner as to deny them any opportunities or services under the Act. If convicted summarily, a person who contravenes this section is liable to a fine of up to $50,000.

**The Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) Cap 36:05 section 24** also requires the Minister of Human Services and Social Security to ensure that persons with disabilities who are in vulnerable situations are provided for by facilitating the provision of substitute family care for those who are abandoned, neglected, abused and unattached persons with disabilities who need an alternative form of care, based on their individual needs.

1. **Are these goals linked directly to broader policy imperatives to ensure people with disabilities can take meaningful advantage of being in the community – such as the opportunity for employment and education, access to health care, promotion of natural or unpaid supports or community assets available to citizens without disabilities? If so, how?**

Goals to achieve the rights listed at (2) above are defined in the Act to be implemented by subject Ministers of Ministries through required collaborations with the National Commission on Disability (NCD). Additionally, clauses specify collaborations with not only government agencies but also with private sector/non-governmental agencies/organizations for required implementation of clauses.

Moreover, the Government of Guyana has taken concrete steps to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, including women and girls, and ensure that they are empowered to meaningfully participate in our society.

As tangible evidence of the Government of Guyan’s commitment to realizing the goals outlined in the Act, budgetary allocations to the National Commission on Disability (NCD), the Disability and Rehabilitation Services of the Ministry of Health and the Council of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities have been increased in 2021 and 2022.[[1]](#footnote-2) Fifty Million dollars ($50M) was allocated to the NCD in 2021, representing an increase of 265 percent above the $13,690,000 allocation the agency received in 2020. In 2022, the allocation to the NCD was increased to $70M.

In addition to the budgetary allocation to the NCD, budgetary provisions have also been made for the construction of a technical/vocational centre to provide job-ready training for persons with disabilities[[2]](#footnote-3), while the government, through the Ministry of Labour, is currently in talks with various private sector entities to secure job opportunities for persons with disabilities with the aid of available technology.[[3]](#footnote-4)

Moreover, the Ministry of Housing and Water has incorporated the Guyana Council of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities into its Community-Based Employment Stimulation Project (CESP)[[4]](#footnote-5). CESP is a cement block-making project launched in 2021 by the Central Housing and Planning Authority to foster economic opportunities among vulnerable groups. The project scope includes start-up support, market sourcing for the blocks, project management and training.

More recently, in August 2022 construction commenced of a Business Centre for persons with disabilities. The centre will comprise five workstations allowing beneficiaries to manufacture products, a retail space for the created products to be sold, a boardroom for meetings and training, a therapy room, a cafeteria, and washrooms.[[5]](#footnote-6) The objective is to have those persons with disabilities who already make products manufacture them here and then supply to the local and even regional markets[[6]](#footnote-7). The beneficiaries will also receive business development training and will be able to train other persons with disabilities, thereby increasing the opportunities for employment creation and entrepreneurship.

These measures are intended to ensure that persons with disabilities are enabled to participate meaningfully in national development, while enjoying an enhanced quality of life.

Special emphasis on Children with Disabilities

In the first quarter of 2022, a total of six hundred and ninety-seven (697) children[[7]](#footnote-8) with disabilities were registered by the NCD.

As a result of the GY$100,000 cash grant for each disabled child in Guyana, announced by His Excellency Dr Irfaan Ali in August 2022, a community by community check of and for children with a disability in Guyana, has resulted in approximately 5,700 children with disabilities now benefitting from the cash grant as well as being permanently being added to the Public Assistance Programme where they will receive a monthly stipend. These two initiatives are intended to

provide relief to parents and caregivers, enabling them to provide the best level of care to children with disabilities.[[8]](#footnote-9)

 The Ministry of Human Services also recently resuscitated the automatic permanent public assistance for children and adults with permanent disabilities along with cancer patients and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The NCD also disseminates information on these programmes to persons with disabilities and facilitates their registration and access to these programmes.

B: Service Delivery

1. **Who primarily *delivers* services to people with disabilities (State, local government, private providers commissioned by the State, religious organizations, other, or a mix?). How do you see this mix changing if at all as a result of the UN CRPD in your country?**

Services are delivered to Persons with Disabilities in Guyana primarily by the state:-

* **Health**

The **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) Cap 36:05** **section 20** requires the Minister of Health, in consultation with the Commission, to formulate and implement a national health programme that addresses the specific issues related to persons with disabilities outlined in subsections (a) to (g).

**Section 21** further requires the Minister to ensure that the special requirements of persons with disabilities are addressed in the formulation of rehabilitation and other health policies. To this end, the Ministry of Health’s Strategy defines strategic interventions to promote health throughout the life stages. The following actions

are included to support prevention and minimisation of further disabilities *through early actions and improved system responsiveness*.

* Contribute to the development of collaborative and inter-sectoral Early Childhood Development (ECD) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders.
* Contribute to the development of a comprehensive plan for growth monitoring that addresses physical as well as psycho-social development
* Establish data collection mechanisms to gather information in the areas of birth injuries and the impact of violence of all forms on neonates, infants and children under 5 years, and congenital malformations.
* Develop a pre-service training course for health professionals (CHWs, Midwives and Public Health Nurses), at the Primary Health Care levels that emphasises Early Childhood and Development and promotes early detection and management of disabilities.
* Advocate for improved capacity for trauma care of PWDs
* Collaborate with Emergency services to improve service responsiveness to PWD in Emergencies.
* **Education**

**Section 14** of the **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010)** **Cap 36:05**  requires the Minister of Education to collaborate with the National Commission on Disability to formulate and implement the national education policy to ensure that (a) persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and specifically that children with disabilities are not excluded from the free and compulsory primary and secondary education ( to the age of 15 years) ,

(b) training programmes for teachers are developed and implemented, and (c) special education is made a compulsory part of the teachers training programme.

To this end, the Ministry of Education has stated in its last three education plans, and in other key documents, that it is "*dedicated to ensuring that all citizens of Guyana, regardless of age, race, or creed, physical or mental disability are given the best possible opportunity to achieve their full potential through equal access to quality education as defined by the standards and norms outlined by the Ministry*."

Notably, the Ministry of Education is utilizing the Regional Special Education Needs/Disability Diagnostic and Treatment Centre, attached to the Cyril Potter College of Education (the teacher training institute) to specifically diagnose learners’ disabilities, allowing the students to be provided with appropriate education delivery tailored to their individual needs.[[9]](#footnote-10). This intervention was timely and marked a significant step by the Ministry towards making provisions for Special Education Needs within the mainstream education system. Through this initiative, all teachers at mainstream and Special Education Needs (SEN) schools are trained in the delivery of SEN content and approaches, enabling the Ministry to make strides to ensure all learners have equal access to educational opportunities.
While children with disabilities previously had recognisable needs, they were not given an official assessment but with the Regional Special Education Needs/Disability Diagnostic and Treatment Centre students are now able to be assessed and diagnosed, so that they can be provided with the right treatment with the right educational plans to support those needs[[10]](#footnote-11).

Currently, there are 10 SEN Schools and 3 SEN classrooms across Guyana. The SEN classrooms are in Administrative Region No. 3 at the Wales Primary School, in Administrative Region No. 5 at Number 8 Primary School and in Administrative Region No. 4 at the Beterverwagting Primary School. Administrative Regions Nos. 4, 6, and 10 have several SEN schools catering to the needs of all learners with special needs. Private schools also benefit from partnership with the Ministry of Education, in relation to SEN programmes. There are also SEN Officers in the Administrative Regions Nos. 3, 4, 6, 10 and the Capital city, Georgetown.

The Guyana Society for the Blind (GSB) and the Ministry of Education facilitate children that are visually impaired and blind to write the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Examination (2013 to present).

* **Housing**

The **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) Cap 36:05** requires the Ministry of Housing and Water to formulate programmes, in collaboration with the Commission to provide for accommodation and water supply for persons with disabilities.

Thus far, the following initiatives were specifically implemented by the Central Housing and Planning Agency to improve the lives of low-income families paying special attention to households, single parent households, the elderly and persons with disabilities:

* Construction of homes especially suited for persons with disabilities.
* Special provision for the persons with disabilities in the IDB funded projects which provide low-income households with core home support and home improvement subsidies.
* Collaboration with the Ministry of Human and Social Services on cases where the CH&PA can aid in the form of a housing unit or house lot allocation.
* **Work**

The Guyana **Persons with Disability Act (2010) Cap 36:05** guides reasonable accommodation and universal design for the working environment of persons with disabilities. The Act clearly outlines the essential components needed, and the Secretariat of the National Commission on the Disability continues to conduct inspections of public and private buildings and make recommendations for ramps, and rails, among others.

Secondly, in meeting with stakeholders, NCD promote access for persons with disabilities and encourages Ministries, Organisations, and the Private Sector to build their physical, learning, and work environments usable by a wide range of people.

Building Inspections are also carried out by the National Commission on Disability to promote accessibility compliance by both government and non-governmental institutions.

1. **Who primarily *pays for* services to people with disabilities (State, local government, private providers commissioned by the State, religious organizations, other, or a mix?). How do you see this mix changing if at all.**

Public services for Persons with Disabilities in Guyana are funded through budgetary allocations to the respective Ministries and agencies. For example, the allocations to the Ministry of Health facilitate the subsidization of payment for medical treatment for Persons with Disabilities once they meet the required criteria. Provision of prosthetic devices is also subsidized by the Government through the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Disabilities.

The National Commission on Disability and the Council of Organizations of Persons with disabilities are also funded through annual subventions in the national budget.

This mix may change over time with increased support for programmes targeting persons with disabilities and increased participation from the private sector and civil society organizations.

1. **Describe generally *how* community-based providers are paid for the services they deliver (e.g., through general grants, through per capita funding, based on specific services rendered, other means?). What changes, if any, are anticipated regarding the present payment methodology?**

Activities undertaken at the community level also form part of public programmes, funded by the Government of Guyana. An example of this is the Community Based Rehabilitation Programme undertaken by the Ministry of Health, through the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Community Based Rehabilitation programmes provide a critical connection between Persons with Disabilities, their families and communities and social services. It builds a grassroot, community-based network that promotes social inclusion, raises awareness, advocates for improved services, and empowers individuals and families. Community Based Rehabilitation also works with individuals and their families to facilitate their access to health services and to work with other sectors to ensure that all aspects of health are addressed.

1. **In what ways are principles and service goals communicated to the service system (e.g., in laws, service standards, staff training, funding incentives, means for compensating/penalizing service providers, and/or for assessing the quality of services?). Please describe.**

Principles and service goals are communicated to the service system through specified Standard Operating Procedures in legislations such as the **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010),** and requisite sensitization sessions and training of service providers/staff training. Further, penalties and required implementation of recommendations are done through inspections and assessments, in keeping with the content of the main legislation, that is, the **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) Cap 36:05**. The National Commission on Disability conducts “Inspections for Accessibility” with the aim of ensuring a barrier-free environment for people with disabilities in Guyana. These are done with both private and public entities. Upon completion of these inspections, a time frame is fixed for the implementation of required recommendations provided by the Commission. For example, during the period August to September 2021 a total of thirteen outlets of The Guyana Telephone & Telegraph Company (GTT+) were inspected by Officers of the National Commission on Disability. Inclusive in the outlined recommendations are installation of ramps for wheelchair users to access outlets, setting up of Disability Parking and provision of accessible washrooms.

1. **What new services, including those to support families, have been added to the available service array to advance principles consistent with Article 19?**

New programmes and initiatives are outlined in response to Questions 3 and 4 above, support families advance principles consistent with Article 19 include.

1. **Tax Exemption on the purchase of accessible vehicles by Persons with Disabilities *(Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) Policy, 2019:***

Pursuant to the **Tax Exemption Policy No. 2 (2019)**, the **Customs Act Cap 82:01** was amended to allow for the removal of duty on the importation of vehicles that are designed or can be modified with retrofitted equipment to assist persons with disabilities, as defined under the Act, in their mobility.

Specifically, the following legislative amendments have been enacted to allow for the importation of motor vehicles for use by persons with disabilities:

 **a.** The **First Schedule Part 111 B (11) Item 49 (b) of the Customs Act, Chapter 82:01** exempts import duty on motor vehicles whose date of manufacture is four years or more than four years before the date of importation of such vehicles. However, if a motor vehicle less than four years is imported, import duty at the rate of 10% (goods carrying) or 45% (passenger-type) would apply.

* + 1. **b.** **Table A-21 contained in the Excise Tax Regulations 2005** exempts excise tax
		2. on motor vehicles designed for use by differently abled persons, or that will be
		3. converted for use by such persons.
		4. **c.** **Schedule 11 paragraph 10 sub-paragraph (h) of the Value-Added Tax Act,**
		5. **Chapter 81:05** exempts VAT on motor vehicles designed for use by differently
		6. abled persons or converted for use by such persons.
1. **What practices, if any, have been adopted/encouraged to promote greater use of technology to personalize support to persons with disabilities (e.g., telehealth, remote monitoring, adaptive communication, artificial intelligence, etc.)?**

Several initiatives have been undertaken by both the Government of Guyana and private sector partners to boost access to technology for persons with disabilities. Examples of these initiatives include:

1. The Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Robotics training for Children with Disabilities that was facilitated by the Guyana Council of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (GCOPD) in partnership with ExxonMobil Guyana (2021). This four-month programme saw twenty-seven people with disabilities being educated in STEM subjects using robotic technology. Critical-thinking and problem solving-skills were also taught to participants during this period.
2. The **Tax Exemption Policy No. 2 of 2019** also provides for the exemption of import duty on smartphones and handsets with special applications and accessibility features for differently abled persons, under the **First Schedule Part 111 B (11) Item 52 of the Customs Act Cap 82:01[[11]](#footnote-12)**. The applications for the devices must be certified by the National Commission on Disability and provided to the Commissioner General of the Guyana Revenue Authority. **Schedule 11 paragraph 23 of the Value-Added Tax Act, Cap 81:05** also provides for the exemption of VAT on the categories of smartphones and handsets described above[[12]](#footnote-13).
3. Collaboration with new call centers to supportstreamlining programmes to enhance the efficiency of the available technology will help develop working opportunities for persons living with disabilities.
4. The government is also working on moving several of its services to an online, ICT platform; high on the agenda is an effective 911 system and the development of an online government query system, with the capability to improve access by all persons, especially persons with disabilities.
5. **In what ways are caregivers (e.g., family members, other informal caregivers) recognized and supported?**

Caregivers of Persons with Disabilities are recognized and supported through various programmes such as:

1. The National Insurance Scheme (NIS) – Constant Attendance Benefit. This is used for the payment of professional caregivers for people with disabilities within the household.
2. Public Assistance for Persons with Disabilities. This is a monthly financial income given to Persons with Disabilities (through the Ministry of Human Services & Social Security MHS&SS) once they meet required criteria.
3. **Do you have a policy of personalizing/tailoring services to individual needs? How is the policy implemented? (e.g., through individual planning requirements? etc.).**

The National Commission on Disability currently does not developed a policy of personalizing / tailoring services to individual needs.

1. **Describe how much control people with disabilities have regarding the services that they receive (e.g., choice of who provides support, choice of where they live and with whom they live, control over budgets).**

Persons with disabilities have the freedom to choose who they live with and which services they receive.

For example, **Section 34 (1) of the Persons with Disabilities Act Cap 36:05** makes it an offence for a parent, guardian or next of kin to conceal a person with a disability in such a manner as to deny them any opportunities or services under the Act. If convicted summarily, a person who contravenes this section is liable to a fine of up to $50,000.

**The Persons with Disabilities Act Cap 36:05 section 24** also requires the Minister of Human Services and Social Security to ensure that persons with disabilities who are in vulnerable situations are provided with substitute family care for those who are abandoned, neglected, abused and unattached persons with disabilities who need an alternative form of care, based on their individual needs.

1. **In some disability support structures, service users or families have an allocated budget which is devolved so they have control over how the funds are used to purchase eligible disability support. Do you have or anticipate a policy of devolving budgets to the service user? Describe.**

The National Commission on Disability (NCD) does not have a policy of developing

budgets for the service user or families. However, families receive benefits from various programmes such as the Public Assistance programme and the cash grant for children with disabilities and are free to manage the monies themselves.

1. **If budgets are devolved to the user, what kinds of support are available to assist them, how are the administrative tasks minimized and is the individual given wide discretion on how the funds are spent?**

Not applicable. Recipients have the freedom to use the funds received as they determine.

1. **Have you adopted any positive “wealth accumulation strategies” (e.g., innovative trust funds) to complement social provision? Describe.**

The National Commission on Disability has not adopted any positive ‘wealth accumulation strategies’ to complement social provision. However, as outlined above, several programmes have been initiated by the Government of Guyana to provide training, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities for persons with disabilities.

C. Monitoring and Oversight

1. **Describe the types of data you collect on people with disabilities receiving services (e.g., numbers of service users, types of disability, service utilization, costs per person, quality of life outcomes, health outcomes, incidence of abuse, neglect and exploitation).**

**Are these data gathered and reported in aggregate only or may it be disaggregated per person?**

The types of data the Commission collects on people with disabilities receiving services include but are not limited to:

1. the prevalence of disability types,
2. living situations,
3. special needs,
4. educational opportunities,
5. utilization of health care and social services,
6. resource availability, and
7. demographic information.

This data is inputted in the Commission’s Database and is shared with government and non-governmental organizations upon request. Additionally, such data is used for planning of required policies and programmes to cater for the needs of Persosns with Disabilities in Guyana. This data can also be generated in reports that can be captured in an aggregated format or be disaggregated per person.

1. **How do you enforce standards as they apply to service delivery providers (law, standards, incentives)? What do these standards focus on in the main? How are they measured?**

The **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010)** at section 28 (1) requires the Commission to collaborate with public and private sector agencies to ensure that a barrier-free environment can be provided for persons with disabilities. Sub-section (2) requires the Central Housing and Planning Authority to publish and enforce building codes and guidelines for the construction and renovation of buildings, institutions and establishments, or public utilities to allow for barrier-free access by persons with disabilities. In this regard, the Central Housing and Planning Authority has already commenced the development of standards and guidelines as part of their single-window initiative to improve the “ease of doing” business. As part of this process, codes and regulations in respect of access and mobility by persons with disabilities will also be developed.

In addition, The National Commission on Disability conducts inspections to enforce standards as they apply to service delivery providers, pursuant to the Persons with Disabilities Act (2010).

Standards are focused on the following from *NCD’s Accessible Building Checklist*:

1. Building Exterior
2. Building Interior
3. Building Entrance
4. Signage
5. Washroom

Upon completion of Inspections, NCD provides recommendations to service providers and implementation of these are expected to be done in the shortest possible time. To date, implemented recommendations included Disability Parking Signs, accessible Washrooms and ramps.

1. **Do your compliance rules make it possible to disqualify those providers in breach of the standards from competing for future State support?**

Compliance rules in accordance with penalties in the **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010)** do not make it possible to disqualify service providers who are in breach of standards from competing for future State support. However, there are provisions for penalties instead, for example **Sub-Part VII Communications, clause (2) “*A person who fails to comply with subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of one hundred thousand dollars and imprisonment for six months”.***

The aforementioned speaks directly to the provision of accessible telephone services to enable the hearing-impaired to communicate through the telephone system in Guyana.

D. Re-Shaping the Market/Challenges and Opportunities

1. **Describe the major challenges you face in endeavoring to reform your system of services and support for people with disabilities. Barriers might include workforce shortages, inadequate resources, lack of knowledge and training, weak infrastructure, and/ history of institutionalization.**

Challenges to providing public services to persons with disabilities in Guyana are many, and include the following:

* Need for more specialized skilled personnel, availability of modern technological devises and equipment for persons with disabilities as well as more financial resources within the agencies responsible for providing services;
* costs and transportation difficulties to reach remote communities;
* the centralization of key specialized services in Georgetown and the coastal regions.
1. **How is the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath reshaping the service delivery market? Explain in terms of changes in service expectations among service recipients and regarding impacts on the services available.**

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath have undoubtedly re-shaped the service delivery market for People with Disabilities in a major way, both positively and negatively. Access to and use of the internet, and increases provision of online services and communications has eased challenges such as mobility and costs that persons with disabilities face. However, due to anti-covid measures, it also in some cases increased their isolation. Persons with disabilities in Guyana have experienced economic re-adjustments to fulfil their needs such as the increased use of private taxis as a safe mode of transportation, the dependency of sanitary and food hampers from government and non-government organizations. However, the new programmes and initiatives developed and being rolled out over in the last 2 years have provided greater opportunities for accessing training and employment, and housing.

1. **Do you pro-actively seek out new kinds of service providers with new business models that emphasize person-centered practices?**

The new programmes and initiatives described in responses to Questions 3 and 4, indicate the Government of Guyana readiness to support new models that will improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

1. **Do you encourage service providers to adopt a ‘business and human rights approach’ to their endeavours?**

All service providers are encouraged to conduct their business in accordance with the requirements in the Persons with Disabilities Act (2010). The Act was developed using a human rights-based approach to ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities are protected, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

An example of this can be seen in **section 26 (1)** of the **Act** whichrequires that the person in charge of every national television station to provide a sign language inset or subtitles in at least one newscast programme daily and special programmes covering events of national significance. Sub-section (2) creates an offence for failing to comply with the requirements above, for which the penalty on summary conviction is a fine of $100,000 or imprisonment for six months.

The Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA) has issued advisories and reminders to media houses regarding the requirements of the Act and their obligations for ensuring that their programmes are accessible to persons with disabilities. The GNBA has also embarked on the development of a policy which is intended to create a level playing field through equal access to information and/or broadcast content on radio and television.[[13]](#footnote-14) Thus far, the state-run National Communications Network, using its budgetary allocation for 2021, has begun testing the use of closed captions and sign language insets as part of its productions as it

moves towards compliance with the Persons with Disabilities Act[[14]](#footnote-15). NCN, which has national coverage, will utilize its budgetary allocation to develop a satellite link

which connects its remote stations with the primary station in Georgetown. This will enable remote stations to access daily programmes from the main national broadcaster in Georgetown, covering news, current affairs, national cultural and social events including sports and entertainment, live broadcasts from Parliament and key national events as well as special educational and health programmes produced by NCN[[15]](#footnote-16). The use of sign language interpreters has also been incorporated during the reading of the national budget[[16]](#footnote-17).

1. **How do you incentivize innovative person-centered new providers to enter the market? Describe.**

Currently, new service providers desirous of entering the market to meet specific needs of persons with disabilities are encouraged to submit their proposal to the National Commission on Disability. The Commission incentivizes new service providers by providing minimal financial assistance (GY$50,000) whenever to new initiatives that meet the required criteria. Charitable and special service providers in health and education can apply for special concession for the importation of equipment to the Guyana Revenue Authority.

1. **Do minimum wage laws apply in this sector? Is there a career advancement structure for workers in the sector?**

The National Minimum Wage is applied to all sectors, including service providers for the needs of persons with disabilities. Moreover, since the majority of these services are provided by government agencies or public corporations, employees are protected by the legal wage rates and all other labour laws for the country.

Career advancement for public employees is guided by the Public Service Rules. Moreover, employees are encouraged to advance academically by taking advantage of scholarships available through the Public Service Ministry and the Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL).

**E: Process of Reform**

1. **What lessons have been learned to build momentum, while minimizing resistance, for systems change consistent with Article 19?**

With the rapid advancement of technology and the increasing eminence of people with Disabilities in decision making within their communities, Article 19 has certainly impacted the sphere of development amongst this vulnerable population. There have been noticeable improvements in the housing, social and economic sectors in the direction of fostering independent living for people with Disabilities in Guyana. The ‘inclusive’ nature of programmes in the aforementioned sectors continues to build momentum for system changes pertinent to Article 19.

1. **Did you have an initiative to re-imagine services that includes service users (e.g., have you commissioned a Task Force?).**

No specific Task Force has been set up to have an initiative to re-imagine services that includes services users.

1. **In what ways do you solicit the input of people with disabilities and family members in policy making, program oversight, strategic planning, etc. (e.g., national advisory councils, regional/local forums, surveys, webinars, etc.).**

A National Policy on the Rights of People with Disabilities (1997) was developed and laid in the National Assembly prior to the promulgation of the **Persons with Disabilities Act (2010).** One of the fundamental principles of the Policy was the full participation of people with disabilities and their organizations in all areas and levels of decision-making affecting their lives and their well-being. The Policy further recognized the need for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and disability-related issues in the formulation of national development plans. Actions for achieving this includes inter-agency collaboration and consultation requiring inputs from all government agencies, employers and trade union organisations, and all organizations providing services for persons with disabilities as well organizations representing persons with disabilities.

Further, as envisioned by the Policy and later incorporated into the Act, the National Commission on Disability was established to, inter alia, develop and implement policies to ensure the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Commission is governed by a Board, and the requirements for the appointment of members to the Commission are specified in the First Schedule to the **Persons with Disability Act (2010) Cap 36:05**, Laws of Guyana. The Act was informed by broad-based consultations with persons with disabilities, representative organizations,

public and private service providers, and other important stakeholders across the country. These consultations resulted in agreements on the categories of members who shall comprise the Commission.

Thus, **section one of the First Schedule** specifies that of the 12 members of the Commission:

* one each shall be nominated by the subject Ministries with responsibility for Health, Education, Labour, Human Services and Social Security, and Foreign Affairs
* Three members (two of whom must be persons with disabilities) are nominated from civil society organizations directly involved with the advancement and welfare of persons with disability,
* one member nominated by organizations working on human rights
* one member from organizations representing organized labor
* one member who has experience as a caregiver for persons with disabilities

Serving as Commissioners on the Board allows persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to be integrally involved in the decision-making process of the NCD. They have equal rights to vote and present their opinions as every other Board member.

1. **What are the two or three strategic objectives you have to enhance the quality, availability, and effectiveness of services to people with disabilities in your state?**

The National Commission on Disability has recently developed a new Strategic Plan

 for the period 2022-2026. Some objectives outlined in the new plan to enhance the quality, availability, and effectiveness of services to people with disabilities in Guyana are as follows: -

**General Objective: -**

To contribute to improved social inclusion, accessibility and mobility, and social protection for Persons with Disabilities through advocacy for increased access to education, employment, social and medical care, information, transportation, culture and sports, and participation and representation in local and national activities.

**Specific Objectives: -**

1. To improve policies and the regulatory and institutional framework which support the enforcement of the rights of PWDs.
2. To improve employment and development opportunities for PWDs.
3. To consistently monitor the PWD for compliance with and improve on the reporting mechanism to the Government, Parliament, and the general public.
4. By 2026 there is greater public awareness of disability issues and more support for PWDs.
1. https://guyanachronicle.com/2021/02/15/120m-to-support-persons-living-with-disabilities/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://guyanachronicle.com/2021/09/10/improved-living-conditions-welfare-for-persons-with-disabilities/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://mohw.gov.gy/2021/05/31/%F0%9D%97%A3%F0%9D%97%B2%F0%9D%97%BF%F0%9D%98%80%F0%9D%97%BC%F0%9D%97%BB%F0%9D%98%80-%F0%9D%97%9F%F0%9D%97%B6%F0%9D%98%83%F0%9D%97%B6%F0%9D%97%BB%F0%9D%97%B4-%F0%9D%98%84%F0%9D%97%B6%F0%9D%98%81h-disa/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2022/08/12/news/guyana/persons-with-disabilities-closer-to-having-their-own-business-centre/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. NCD (2022) The Enhancer Issue 2: < <https://www.ncdguyana.org/mdocuments-library/>> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://dpi.gov.gy/100000-disability-cash-grant-distribution-begins-next-week/#:~:text=Parents%20across%20Guyana%20of%20children,delivering%20support%20to%20vulnerable%20groups>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2019/06/11/education-ministry-can-now-diagnose-learners-with-special-needs/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. <https://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2019/06/11/education-ministry-can-now-diagnose-learners-with-special-needs/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. <https://www.gra.gov.gy/tax-exemption-policy-2-differently-abled-persons/> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. <https://www.inewsguyana.com/subtitles-sign-languages-required-on-newscasts-for-deaf-viewers-broadcasting-authority/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2021/03/06/news/guyana/ncn-to-test-subtitles-sign-language-insets-during-broadcasts/> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. <https://dpi.gov.gy/sign-language-interpreters-a-first-during-national-budget-presentation/> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)