

Woodlands Parents' Group

In the mid-1970s, family members of people with disability living in the Woodlands institution in New Westminster, BC became increasingly dissatisfied with the quality of life provided to their loved ones. A core group of 12 family members (the Woodlands Parents' Group) started meeting regularly to discuss their concerns.

Inspired and driven by the vision of creating a better life for their children, the Woodlands Parents' Group developed a set of foundations, values and principles that outlined the rights of people with disability to live with dignity; to live in their communities; and to have the same opportunities as other citizens. It was obvious that the institutional model conflicted with this vision.

Two sub-groups of the Woodlands Parents' Group were formed. The first worked to make the institution more accountable to families, while the second sub-group began planning for an alternative service delivery system.

- In 1976, at the request of the Woodlands Parents' Group, the Regional Planning Council was formed, with representation from government, service agencies, education and health.
- In 1977, after meetings with the Minister of Human Resources, the Woodland Parents' Group issued a Position Paper^[1] that proposed a plan of action to enable people with disability living in Woodlands to return to, and receive services in, their communities.
- In 1978, the Woodlands Parents' Group formed the Community Living Society, which was mandated to help people moving out of Woodlands and their families secure the right community-based supports. A service model was developed that would be responsive and accountable directly to the individuals, their families and other advocates. A critical piece of the plan was the introduction of a service brokerage - a body that would assist the person with disability and their family in using the individualized funding allocated to them to purchase services in the community.
- In 1979, the British Columbia government endorsed the families' plan and agreed to begin moving people out of Woodlands.

^[1] Development of a Comprehensive Community-Based System of Service as an alternative to Woodlands. February 1977.