



**Access to Immigrant Settlement Services  
for Immigrants with Disabilities**

**Handouts for Management Staff  
Immigrant Settlement Services**

Sources listed on pages 4 to 14 and 22 to 38.



MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

## **Making Ontario Accessible**

Source: <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/accessibility/index.aspx>

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# Understanding Barriers to Accessibility

Barriers to accessibility are obstacles that make it difficult — sometimes impossible — for people with disabilities to do the things most of us take for granted. For example, going shopping, working, or taking public transit independently.

When we think of barriers to accessibility, most of us think of physical barriers — like a person who uses a wheelchair not being able to enter a public building because there is no ramp. The fact is, there are many kinds of barriers, some of which are visible (i.e. a building without a ramp or no curb cuts in the road) and others are invisible (e.g., assuming someone cannot fulfill the duties of a job because they have a disability).

Barriers to Accessibility	
Types of Barriers	Examples
<b>Attitudinal</b> barriers are those that discriminate against people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking that people with disabilities are inferior.</li> <li>Assuming that a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you.</li> </ul>
<b>Information or communications</b> barriers happen when a person can't easily understand information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Print is too small to read for a person with a visual impairment.</li> <li>Websites that can't be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse.</li> <li>Signs that are not clear or easily understood.</li> <li>Language that is too complex.</li> </ul>
<b>Technology</b> barriers occur when a technology can't be modified to support various assistive devices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites that don't support screen-reading software.</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational</b> barriers are an organization's policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Architectural and physical</b> barriers are features of buildings or spaces that cause problems for people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair, electric scooter or walker.</li> <li>Counters that are too high for a person of short stature.</li> <li>Poor lighting for people with low vision.</li> <li>Doorknobs that are difficult for people with arthritis to grasp.</li> <li>Parking spaces that are too narrow for a driver who uses a wheelchair.</li> <li>Telephones that are not equipped with telecommunications devices for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.</li> </ul>

# Understanding Disabilities

## Visual Disabilities

Visual disabilities reduce a person's ability to see clearly.

There are many degrees of vision loss. Few people with vision loss are completely blind. Many have limited vision.

Vision loss can restrict a person's ability to:

- Read signs clearly
- Locate landmarks
- Identify hazards

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the blind</li><li>• the visually impaired</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a person who is blind</li><li>• a person with vision loss</li></ul>

Some people with vision loss use a guide dog or a white cane. You may not always be able to tell if a person has vision loss.

### Tips on how to interact with people with visual disabilities

- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them.
- Speak normally and clearly.
- Never touch the person without asking permission, unless it's an emergency.
- If you offer assistance, wait until you have received permission to proceed.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Don't touch or address service animals — they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them.
  - If you're giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you're approaching a door or an obstacle, say so.
- Don't assume the person can't see you.
- Don't leave the person in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Don't walk away without saying good-bye.
- Be patient. Things may take a little longer.

# Hearing Loss

There are many degrees of hearing loss.

People who have hearing loss may be:

- Deaf (a person with profound hearing loss)
- Deafened (a person who has become deaf later in life)
- Hard of hearing (a person who has some hearing loss)

People with profound hearing loss may communicate using sign language. Other people may use assistive devices, such as hearing aids, to communicate.

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the deaf</li><li>• the hearing impaired</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a person who is deaf</li><li>• a person who is deafened</li><li>• a person who is hard of hearing</li></ul>

## Tips on how to interact with people with hearing loss

- Always ask how you can support. Don't shout.
- Attract the person's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Make sure you are in a well-lit area where the person can see your face.
- Look at and speak directly to the person. Don't put your hands in front of your face when speaking, as they may be able to read lips.
- Address them, not their interpreter (if present).
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example a pen and paper.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Don't touch or address service animals — they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Any personal (e.g., financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- Be patient. Communication for people who are deaf may be different because their first language may not be English. It may be American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ), British Sign Language (BSL) or another form of sign language from their country of origin.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in a quiet area. Background noise can be distracting.

# Deaf-Blind

A person who is deaf-blind has a combined loss of vision and hearing. This makes it difficult for people to access information.

Most people who are deaf-blind are sometimes accompanied by an intervenor, a professional who supports with communicating.

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• deaf and dumb</li><li>• deaf mute</li><li>• the deaf-blind</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a person who is deaf-blind</li></ul>

## Tips on how to interact with people who are deaf-blind

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A person who is deaf-blind will probably give you a card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Speak directly to the person, not to their intervenor.
- When you approach a person who is deaf-blind, make sure you identify yourself to the person and their intervenor.
- Don't touch or address service animals — they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch the person without asking permission, unless it's an emergency.

# Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities. Not all physical disabilities require a wheelchair.

People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting.

It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the cripple</li><li>• crippled</li><li>• lame</li><li>• physically challenged</li><li>• confined to a wheelchair</li><li>• wheelchair bound</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a person who has a disability</li><li>• a person with a physical disability</li><li>• a person with arthritis</li><li>• a person who uses a wheelchair (or a walker or a scooter)</li></ul>

## Tips on how to interact with people with physical disabilities

- Speak normally and directly to the person. Don't speak to anyone who may be with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you support.
- Be patient. People will tell you what they need.
- Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, unless it's an emergency.
- Tell the person about accessible features in the surrounding area (e.g., automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture so they have clear passage.



# Speech or Language Disabilities

Some people have problems communicating. It could be due to cerebral palsy, hearing loss or another condition. People with speech or language disabilities may find it hard to:

- Pronounce words
- Speak without slurring or stuttering
- Express themselves clearly through speech or writing

Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• stutterer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a person with a communication disability</li><li>• a person who stutters</li></ul>

## Tips on how to interact with people with speech or language disabilities

- Don't assume that a person with a speech or language disability has other disabilities. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking, don't assume they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well.
- If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- If possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no".
- Be patient and polite. Give the person time to communicate their point.
- Don't interrupt or finish the person's sentences. Wait for them to finish.
- Patience, respect, and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

# Mental Health Disabilities

Mental health disabilities are not as visible as many other types of disabilities.

Some people with mental health disabilities may have:

- Hallucinations (hearing voices or seeing things that aren't there)
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Acute mood swings

You may not know that a person has a mental health disability unless you are told.

Here are some examples of mental health disabilities:

- Schizophrenia
- Depression
- Phobias
- Bipolar, anxiety and other mood disorders

## Tips on how to interact with people who have mental health disabilities

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with the person to meet their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- Don't indulge delusions.
- Make eye contact.
- Don't dismiss ideas.
- Remain in a supportive stance.
- Show encouragement and empathy.

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• crazy</li> <li>• insane</li> <li>• lunatic</li> <li>• psycho</li> <li>• mental</li> <li>• mental patient</li> <li>• maniac</li> <li>• neurotic</li> <li>• psychotic</li> <li>• unsound mind</li> <li>• schizophrenic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person with a mental illness</li> <li>• a person living with mental illness</li> <li>• a person with a mental disability</li> <li>• a person with a mood disability (e.g., a person with a bipolar disorder)</li> <li>• a person with a personality disability ( e.g., a person with an antisocial personality disorder)</li> <li>• a person with an anxiety disability (e.g., a person with an obsessive-compulsive disorder)</li> <li>• a person with schizophrenia</li> </ul>

# Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are information processing disorders. They can affect how a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains, understands or uses verbal or non-verbal information.

Here are some examples:

- Dyslexia (problems in reading)
- Dyscalculia (problems in mathematics)
- Dysgraphia (problems in writing and fine motor skills)

People with learning difficulties may have problems communicating.

You may not know that a person has a learning disability unless you are told.

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learning disabled</li><li>• learning disordered</li><li>• dyslexic</li><li>• autistic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a person with a learning disability or people with learning disabilities</li><li>• a person with dyslexia</li><li>• a person with autism</li><li>• a person with Autism Spectrum Disorder</li></ul>

## Tips on how to interact with people who have learning disabilities

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Make sure the person understands what you've said.
- If you can't understand what's being said, don't pretend, ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs support, ask how you can best support.
- Use plain language; speak normally, clearly and directly to the person.
- Some people with learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand what you are saying and respond. Be patient and allow them to take their time.
- Find ways to provide information that is easy to understand for persons with learning disabilities. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- Ask the person how you can best provide services (in a way that works for to them).
- Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

# Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

An intellectual (or developmental) disability is a life-long condition, usually present at birth or originating in the early years of childhood, which interferes with a person's ability to learn at the same pace or to the same extent as those without this disability. Individuals may have difficulty understanding abstract concepts or adapting to some of the demands of daily life.

Using words	
Don't say	Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• mentally retarded</li><li>• idiot</li><li>• simple</li><li>• retarded</li><li>• feeble-minded</li><li>• imbecile</li><li>• mongoloid</li><li>• mongolism</li><li>• Downs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a person with an intellectual disability</li><li>• a person with a developmental disability</li><li>• a person with Down Syndrome</li></ul>

## Tips on how to interact with people who have an intellectual or developmental disability

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language and speak in short simple coherent sentences.
- Make sure the person understands what you've said.
- If you can't understand what's being said, don't pretend, ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Be supportive and patient.
- Speak directly to the person, not to their companion or attendant.
- Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

# Inclusive Communication and Practice

Language is very important for opening doors and welcoming everyone. We need to recognize that in the non-profit sector, we often use words that can keep the people we are trying to reach out! We need to use plain language to ensure our services are accessible and inclusive to as many people as possible.

## Using plain language when speaking:

- Use language that is more universal in nature, is accessible to most communities, e.g., people with a variety of disabilities, people whose first language isn't English, or people with lower literacy levels.
- Use direct or literal language.
- Avoid jargon, academic or policy language, idioms, etc.
- Break down ideas, don't present too many ideas at once.
- Use shorter sentences or paragraphs.
- Use lots of examples.
- Talk in the first person (use "I").
- Avoid big words! Simple words can break down "big" ideas.
- Be concise.
- Avoid terminology like:
  - "differently-abled"
  - "physically or mentally challenged"
  - "mentally retarded"
  - "wheelchair bound" or "confined to a wheelchair"
  - "handicapped"

## **Ensure that Information is Accessible**

Any information that is distributed, discussed, and shared should be accessible to newcomers with disabilities and others. This means ensuring information is:

- ✓ In different language.
- ✓ In plain language. If you are translating a document to plain language, you may have to decide what information is the most important to include and what can be left out.
- ✓ Layout and presentation are important. It is helpful to use headings that are straightforward. They will lead the reader through the logic of the document.
- ✓ Be sensitive to design issues, e.g., use pictures, but don't clutter it with too many confusing images and don't put too much text on a page, etc.
- ✓ Check your work. One useful exercise in attempting to see if you are using accessible language is to keep asking yourselves: "*What do I really mean to say here?*" or "*How can I say that more literally and in a more direct way?*"
- ✓ Available in alternative formats<sup>1</sup>, i.e. audio tapes or CDs, large print, electronic or E-Text or PDF, Braille

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<sup>1</sup> More information on types of alternative formats is available on pages 16-18 of this document.

## **Communicating with Newcomers with Disabilities on the Phone <sup>2</sup>**

- ✓ Speak normally, clearly, and directly.
- ✓ Don't worry about how their voice sounds. Concentrate on what's being said.
- ✓ Be patient, don't interrupt and don't finish their sentences. Give them time to explain themselves.
- ✓ Don't try to guess what they are saying. If you don't understand, don't pretend; ask again or repeat or rephrase what you've heard.
- ✓ If a client is using an interpreter or a TTY line, speak normally to the client, not to the interpreter.
- ✓ If your client has great difficulty communicating, ask them if they prefer another way to communicate or if they would like to call back when it's convenient.

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<sup>2</sup> Achieving Accessibility in the Home and Community Support Services Sector TIPS AND TOOL KIT. Ontario Community Support Association. 2009.

# Making Information Accessible

Everyone has the right to access public information. This right is denied if a person cannot access the information because of their impairment.

## What are alternative formats?

Alternative formats are other ways of publishing or sharing the same information. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

## Why do we need to provide information in alternative formats?

Some people cannot read because of their impairment. This can include people who:

- Are blind or have low vision
- Have a learning disability that affects reading (sometimes called *dyslexia*)
- Have an intellectual or other cognitive disability
- Cannot hold publications or turn pages because of a physical disability
- Have difficulties accessing information on the Internet
- Have difficulties watching or hearing video presentations

By providing information in alternative formats, more people can access it.

## Examples of Alternative Formats

### Large Print

This helps people who have low vision. Large print materials should be prepared with a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

### Screen Readers

This software converts text that is displayed on a computer monitor to voice (using a speech-synthesizer) or to Braille.

### Braille

This is an alternative format for people who are blind or deaf-blind. Braille is a tactile system of raised dots representing letters or a combination of letters of the alphabet. Braille is produced using Braille transcription software.



## **Descriptive Video Service (DVS)**

DVS provides descriptive narration of key visual elements — the action, characters, locations, costumes and sets — without interfering with dialogue or sound effects. This makes television programs, films, home videos and other visual media accessible for people with visual impairments.

## **Audio Format**

This is an alternative format for people with a vision, intellectual/developmental, or learning impairment who are unable to read print.

## **Captioning**

Captioning displays the audio portion of a video presentation as subtitles or captions. They usually appear on the bottom of the screen.

Captioning may be closed or open. Closed captions can only be seen on a television screen that has a device called a closed caption decoder. Open captions are "burned on" a video and appear whenever the video is shown.

Captioning makes television programs, films, and other visual media with sound accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

## **Windowing**

Windowing allows people who are deaf to gain access to information by means of an interpreter who explains what is being said during a video presentation or broadcast using sign language.

The interpreter appears in a corner or "window" in the screen translating spoken word to sign language. Windowing may include open or closed captioning.

## **Assistive Technologies**

People with disabilities may use one or more of the following assistive technologies when communicating with others or in getting information:

- Speech input and synthesized speech output
- Screen readers, screen magnifiers, screen projectors
- Audio recorded information
- Text telephones
- Adjustable signal level and tone on audio devices
- Volume control
- Hands-free data entry and response selection
- Intelligent word prediction software

- Alternative pointing devices, such as mouth sticks
- Keyboard controllers
- Book holders and page turners
- Touchscreens
- Standardized icons

## **Telecommunications**

Although many people who are deaf or hard of hearing use wireless or hand-held communications devices to send and receive text messages, TTY (teletypewriter) is still widely used.

Bell Canada Relay Service lets TTY users and people who can hear talk to one another by phone with the help of specially-trained operators. Here is how it works:

- The TTY user communicates the conversation to the operator.
- The operator relays the conversation to the other party using the TTY phone.

This service is confidential and free for local calls. Regular long-distance rates apply.

## **Accessible Websites**

Providing easy access to information through accessible websites benefits everyone, including:

- People with disabilities
- Seniors
- Consumers living in areas that do not have access to high-speed Internet
- People who have difficulty reading and writing
- People whose first language is not English

## 10 Inclusive Practice Tips<sup>3</sup>

1. Speak directly to the person (even if they are non-verbal) rather than through their companion, family member, intervenor or interpreter.
2. Offer to shake hands when introduced, as you would with any other client, and if culturally appropriate.
3. Place yourself at eye level when speaking to someone; be respectful and mindful of the person's culture.
4. When speaking with people who are hard of hearing or deaf, directly face them in case they lip read. Speak clearly and slowly but normally and with the appropriate expressiveness. Face a light source and keep hands, pens or food away from your mouth when speaking. To get the attention of someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, wave your hand or make a gesture. Never shout. Speak in your normal tone of voice OR if you think they are struggling to hear you, ask: *"Would you like me to speak a little louder?"*
5. Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting with someone with a visual impairment. Further, when discussing things in a group, always say your name before you begin – i.e. *"This is Ayshia ...."* and also identify the person to whom you are speaking.
6. Listen carefully when talking to people who have difficulty speaking and wait patiently for them to finish. It might be useful to ask questions that require short answers or a simple verbal response – like 'yes' or 'no'. Never pretend to understand – instead repeat what you think you understood and ask the person to confirm.
7. If you want to help someone, offer your assistance, wait until it is accepted and then ask for instructions. For example:
  - a. *"Would you like to hold my arm?"* If they respond with a yes, then ask, *"Which side is best for you?"*
  - b. *"Do you want me to walk with you to the exit?"* If they say yes, use your own judgement, i.e. if the person uses a wheelchair, open doors for them and press the elevator buttons.

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<sup>3</sup> This section uses and adapts the work of Tara Geraghty Power Point presentation entitled, "Helping Newcomers with Disabilities Settle and Succeed". Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre. Date?

8. Treat adults as adults. Address people with disabilities as you would anyone else, e.g., by their last name or first name if that is the type of familiarity you are accustomed to using and if it is culturally appropriate. Never pat a person who uses a wheelchair on the head or shoulders as this can be viewed as disrespectful.
9. Respect peoples' personal space, e.g., wheelchairs, crutches or canes – do not rest on them, tap, or lean against them, etc. Often people may regard their personal devices as extensions of their bodies. Do not touch them without their permission or request.
10. Don't pet or play with guide dogs. When their harnesses are on they are working and shouldn't be distracted.

# Making Buildings and Spaces Accessible

You may be able to make buildings, spaces and products accessible with simple or low-cost solutions. The best solutions will follow the rules of universal design. This means designing products and environments that most people will be able to use without having to make modifications.

As a first step, evaluate your premises for physical accessibility.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you own or lease your premises?
  - This may affect how, when and at what cost accessibility changes can be made.
- Can your building accommodate physical changes?
- Can any necessary renovation work be done as part of scheduled maintenance or update work?
- Do you need to hire an architect or engineer, or can a contractor do the job?
- What are your priorities based on your assessment?
- What are immediate, lower-cost and simple things you can do to improve accessibility?

Remember to make your premises accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities, including physical, sensory, learning, intellectual and psychosocial. This means paying attention to more than just ramps and accessible washrooms. It also means looking at:

- Lighting
- Audible and visual alarm systems
- Signage with high contrast lettering
- Easy-to-find directories
- Accessible parking

When you have finished your evaluation, use our checklists to help you develop a plan to make your premises accessible.

## Checklist

Entrances	Yes	No
Entrances are accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters.		
Revolving door openings move slowly and safely to accommodate people using mobility aids.		
<p>If there is no accessible revolving door, there is an adjacent accessible door:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opens automatically;</li> <li>• Has power assisted door operators; or</li> <li>• Can be easily opened with one hand.</li> </ul>		
Mats are level with the floor and door thresholds are sloping so they do not create a tripping hazard.		
People can easily find information, a reception counter, an accessible call bell or information phone for persons requiring assistance.		
Elevators	Yes	No
Elevator doorways are wide enough and stay open long enough to allow persons using wheelchairs to pass through easily.		
In accessible elevators, Braille signage and controls can be easily reached and a two-way emergency call system or telephone is provided.		
Audible signals announce floors and up/down direction of elevator cars.		

## Checklist

Exteriors	Yes	No
Accessible pedestrian route(s) or path(s) are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices.		
Curb cuts or ramps are wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters, have a non-slip finish and are kept clear of snow and ice in the winter.		
Routes are not obstructed by poles, plants, bicycle racks, etc.		
Accessible entrances are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Access.		
Building and route signage is provided in large, high contrast lettering.		
Accessible passenger loading zone accommodates taxis, buses, or accessible vehicles.		
On exterior steps, forward edges are highly colour contrasted for easy visibility.		
On both sides of ramps or exterior stairs, continuous handrails are a bright contrasting colour and have horizontal or vertical rails to prevent people from slipping through.		

<b>Checklist</b>		
<b>Fire and Life Safety</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Fire policy and fire safety plans are in place for the evacuation of people with disabilities.		
Main exit routes and exit doors are easily accessed by people using mobility aids.		
Exit instructions are printed in large text, and mounted in an accessible, highly visible location.		
Fire alarms have both visual and audible signals.		
<b>General Layout and Services</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Queuing areas and serving aisles are wide enough for people using mobility aids, including electric wheelchairs and scooters.		
Service counters or counters/tables in eating areas are accessible and useable by people using wheelchairs or scooters.		
Public telephones, coat racks or display shelves are accessible and useable by people with various disabilities e.g., wheelchair users, persons with low vision or hearing loss.		
Appropriate lighting is installed to ensure that people with visual impairments may clearly identify colours, patterns and signage.		



<b>Checklist</b>		
<b>Interiors</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Floor finishes have non-slip surfaces under wet and dry conditions.		
Open-concept, accessible routes are marked by bright colour or textural changes at floor level, to provide directional cues for people with visual impairment.		
There are no protruding objects or tripping hazards in accessible routes, and if so, they are clearly marked with a bright colour, a cane-detectable floor finish, or a guard.		
Where floors are carpeted, the carpet is of firm, dense construction and easy for a person using a wheelchair to roll over without difficulty.		
Thresholds are sloping to accommodate different floor materials.		
<b>Parking Areas</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Access.		
In accessible underground parking areas, a call bell or two-way communication system is located near parking spaces reserved for persons who may require assistance.		
There is a safe, clearly marked, accessible pedestrian route from the designated parking area to an accessible building entrance or elevator lobby.		
Accessible pedestrian route is made of firm, level material.		

## Checklist

<b>Public Washrooms</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
An accessible stall is integrated into regular washrooms or an accessible stand-alone unisex washroom is located nearby.		
<p>The following washroom features are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grab bars</li> <li>• Coat hooks</li> <li>• Flush controls</li> <li>• Wash basins</li> <li>• Toilet paper dispensers</li> <li>• Call button for emergencies</li> <li>• Mounted automatic hand-dryers or paper towel holders</li> <li>• Lever-handled faucets or automatic faucet</li> </ul>		
<b>Signage and Information Systems</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Display the International Symbol of Access.		
Display universal hearing disability symbols where equipment is available, e.g. TTY.		
Include information in Braille.		
Include appropriate pictograms, wherever possible (e.g., on washroom doors).		
Include large high contrast text, clear, light-coloured lettering or symbols on a dark background, or dark characters on a light background.		
Are mounted at a convenient height for both wheelchair users and people with visual impairments.		

## Checklist

Wall Finishes	Yes	No
Walls in busy areas, corridors, ramps or staircases are finished in smooth, non-glossy, non-abrasive finishes.		
Colour of doors or door frames in hallways contrast with surrounding wall colours.		
Fire exit doors are consistently coloured throughout the building, so that they are easily distinguishable from other doors.		
Fire hose cabinets and fire extinguishers are in highly contrasting colours to their surroundings.		
Wall mirrors are limited in size, to prevent visual confusion.		
Mirrors that cover a wall (e.g., in a restaurant) are clearly marked for people with low vision.		

# Making your Workplace Accessible

People with disabilities have skills, abilities and experience that can add value to your workplace. By opening up your search for talented employees and making your workplace accessible, you create a win-win situation. You find the right person for the job. You create a place where anyone can work and be productive — and you allow employees of all abilities to compete in the marketplace.

You may have to provide workplace accommodations for some employees. Many options are available to you as an employer at low-cost or no-cost. You may have to make some changes to workstations or provide an assistive device or assistive technology, but many changes are simple.

Here are some things to consider as you get ready to make your workplace accessible:

## Job advertisements

- # Clearly state that your organization has an equal opportunity policy.
- # Use a simple typeface that is easy and large enough to read.
- # Provide the job ad in alternative formats such as large high contrast print, HTML and plain language.
- # Consider using other methods of advertising such as web-based listings and radio ads.
- # Look beyond mainstream sources for candidates. Contact agencies that provide employment support services to people with disabilities, local agencies and campus placement offices.
- # Remember that people with disabilities may not have acquired formative work experience that employers seek, but they may have other valuable experience and skills that will make them productive employees.
- # Focus on skills, abilities, expectations and desired outcomes. Ask for credentials only when necessary to do the job such as a degree in law or medicine.

## Job descriptions and requirements

- # Separately identify what skills and experience are needed to do the job and what desirable qualities the candidate can bring to the job.
- # On application forms, ask for information that is relevant to the job.
- # Make the application form available in alternative formats.

## Recruitment and selection

- # Make your selection process consistent for all applicants. This includes interviews, tests and other screening tools. By using the same criteria for everyone, you will be able to assess each person's skills and be able to make fair, informed decisions.

- # When you contact candidates for an interview, ask if they have any accommodation needs. They may need to use a computer to do a test, materials in large high contrast print, or a sign language interpreter.
- # Train front-line staff greeting job candidates on how to interact with people with disabilities.
- # Be clear about what you can and cannot ask during an interview. The Ontario and Canadian Human Rights Commissions can provide you with questions that can and cannot be asked, along with ways to phrase questions.
- # Ask only questions that are job-related. For example, you cannot ask about health problems. However, you may ask about the person's physical abilities if they have to move heavy objects as part of their job.
- # Ask how candidates will fulfill job requirements instead of asking if they can fulfill them.

### **Applicant testing**

- # Give tests that will show you if the candidate can do the job.
- # Make sure you give the same test and clear instructions to all candidates.
- # You may have to give the test verbally, or provide a computer for candidates to do the test.

### **Starting work**

- # Provide training for supervisors and managers so they understand how to support employees to do their jobs well.
- # Ask employees what job-related support they need and follow up later to see if something needs to be changed.
  - Meet with staff, if needed, before a new employee with disabilities starts work. Your team may be worried if they don't know how to interact with a colleague with disabilities.
- # Assess your workplace to make sure it meets occupational health and safety standards.

### **Training**

- # Allow enough time for carrying out training tasks.
- # Train all employees in general accessibility awareness. You may want to consider more training for the workgroup the new employee is joining.

### **Doing the job**

- # Work with employees with disabilities to adapt tasks as needed.
- # You may have to look at the workload and job tasks of the group to see if tasks need to be reassigned to or from employees in your group.

## **Keeping matters confidential**

- # Let employees know that their personal matters will be kept confidential.
- # Employees may choose not to disclose a disability. You should tell them that you are ready to work with them, if they choose to tell you about it. You can help reduce personal stress and can look into other ways to support them in doing their job well.

## **Retaining employees**

- # Policies and practices should be the same for all employees.
- # Retain and promote staff using the same criteria for all employees.
- # Make sure all employees have the chance for learning and personal development.
- # You may have to change the work that employees do or how they do it. Anyone may acquire a disability during their lifetime, or a disability may become more limiting.
- # Identify training needs when you regularly assess the work performance of all employees, and when an employee's job responsibilities change.
- # Focus on achievements and how well someone does their job when you are assessing performance. Don't focus on any disabilities employees may have.
- # Make sure all employees know about opportunities for transfers and promotions. Provide information in accessible formats. Avoid informal contacts so that you don't exclude anyone who may be interested.

## **Dismissal/termination**

- # Document your actions and make sure you can back them up, based on existing legislation.
- # Keep records, have employees discuss concerns and document responses.
- # Make sure you thought of all options in looking for ways to support employees.
- # Consult with legal advisors to get information about laws that apply to you and your workplace.

## **Monitoring results**

- # Keep track of positive changes for making your workplace accessible. Here are some examples:
  - ⇒ People's attitudes — create a survey or hold a focus group.
  - ⇒ Improved accessibility — conduct an accessibility audit and try to fill in any gaps.
  - ⇒ Access to job candidates — find out how your efforts to widen the search for candidates have paid off.

## **Making your workplace inclusive**

It is important for employees to feel they can disclose information and ask for assistance. Here are ways you can create an open environment:

- # Respect employees' confidentiality.
- # Find creative ways to solve problems.
- # Learn from others.
- # Let people know they are included, valued, and accepted.
- # Use language that focuses on people, not on impairments.

Listen to employees with impairments — they're the experts in what they need. You should:

- # Listen to what employees tell you about their impairments and what they think is needed.
- # Ask questions in a respectful manner, when you don't understand.
- # Get information to help you understand specific disability issues.
- # Be creative, flexible and look for new ways of doing things.
- # Get your employees to test any special equipment or device before you purchase it.

### **Making workplace accommodations**

Examples of accommodation include:

- # Voice input or speech recognition aids
- # Voice synthesizer
- # TTY telephone service
- # Computer screen magnifiers
- # Flexible scheduling and reduced or part-time hours
- # Quiet workspace
- # Written instructions
- # Self-paced workload
- # Frequent breaks
- # Extra time for training
- # Alternative methods of communication (telephone, tape recorder, verbal instructions)
- # Larger tasks divided into smaller ones

The employer has a duty to explore the most appropriate accommodations in collaboration with the employee who requires accommodation. A helpful guide can be found on the Ontario Human Rights Commission's website: *Policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate* at:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyDisAccom2>

# Planning an Accessible Meeting

When you are planning a meeting or event, you want to make sure that everyone can participate, including people with impairments. By planning ahead, you can build accessibility into every aspect of the meeting.

The two main areas you need to consider when planning an accessible meeting or event are:

- Physical access to the meeting space.
- Access to the meeting contents and proceedings.

Here are some general things to keep in mind:

- Make sure that at least one member of your staff is responsible for making the event accessible.
- A site visit can be helpful in determining appropriate space requirements and accessibility of washrooms.
- Respond to accommodation requests in the same manner that you respond to other requests and questions about the event.
- Make sure that the invitation or notice of meeting includes information about the accessibility of the event.
- Planning for a longer event, such as a conference that will take place over several days, takes more organizing. You'll want to find out ahead of time what resources are available locally, such as:
  - Sign language interpreters
  - Accessible transportation
  - Emergency veterinarians (for service animals)
  - Wheelchair repair services
- Before you confirm the date of the event, find out if other events are taking place in the area at the same time. This may have an impact on your event and the availability of service providers.
- As soon as you have confirmed the date of the event, book and schedule sign language interpreters and/or real time captioners.
- If the event's participants are responsible for their own meal arrangements, find out what local restaurants are accessible.



- # Look into the availability of installed or portable FM Listening Systems (a transmitter used by the speaker and a receiver used by the listener) in meeting facilities for people who have a hearing loss.
- # Find out if telephones with auditory adjustments for people who have hearing loss are available.
- # Check to determine whether there are visual fire alarms. If not, ask about the facility's evacuation plan or create your own.
- # Find out if a TTY (a device used by persons who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate by telephone) is available and make sure your staff knows how to use it.
- # Make sure there is at least one telephone that can be used by a person who is seated (e.g., someone who uses a wheelchair).
- # If you are promoting the event by means of a website, make sure the site is accessible for people who use assistive technologies (such as screen reading software).
- # Check to see if the customer service areas (e.g., counters, display tables, etc.) are low enough so that people who use wheelchairs or scooters can see over.
- # Make sure that any additional signs specific to the event are designed using large print.
- # Find a suitable area where service animals can relieve themselves.
- # Provide water bowls for service animals.

## **Practical and Sensitive Practice with People with Disabilities**

- ✓ Ask members what they need for meetings; e.g., materials in plain language, large print, advisors, and other accommodations, etc.
- ✓ Provide money for travel, (e.g., hotels, flights or bus fares), accommodation, and per diems in advance of meetings - in the form of cash advances.
- ✓ Provide honorariums for their participation, if possible. Many people with disabilities do not have full-time work and are not associated with organizations, beyond being volunteers.
- ✓ Recognize the importance of advisors as an accommodation cost for people with intellectual disabilities. The advisor is equivalent to a language interpreter such as ASL. They serve as “contextual interpreters” making it possible for people to understand language and procedures. Address the person with the disability, not their advisors. They are there as a support, not as full participants. Sometimes they may be asked by the person they are supporting to say something or help express something.
- ✓ Provide plain language note-takers and/or taping of the meetings.
- ✓ Use a sensitive facilitator.
- ✓ In-person meetings are the best. Telephone conference calls are not easy for people with intellectual disabilities. Video conferencing is a much more effective option.

### **Pre-meeting Tips:**

- ✓ Ensure that the location, time and dates for meetings and events, work for all participants.
- ✓ If possible, take the event or meeting to where people are.
- ✓ Provide for skilled plain language note-takers and/or the taping of meetings.
- ✓ Arrange how people will get to and from meetings, e.g., will a support person bring them and pick them up, do they take transit, or need taxi money, are they comfortable with taking a taxi on their own, what will they do when they arrive at the location, how will they get to their room, etc.
- ✓ Provide for all costs.
- ✓ Post large signs directing people to the meeting room(s).

- ✓ Send agendas out ahead of time in plain language and alternate formats.
- ✓ Avoid last minute changes to the agenda.

#### Meeting Tips:

- ✓ Be sensitive to who facilitates meetings.
- ✓ Always have food to make the event enjoyable.
- ✓ Slow down meetings.
- ✓ Check for understanding throughout the meeting.

#### Post Meeting Tips:







- ✓ Follow-up and/or set time outside of meetings to discuss.
- ✓ Pursue ongoing dialogue.

#### **Notes on developing an inclusive agenda:**

- ✓ Fewer items - Ensure that there are fewer items on the agenda - It takes longer to deal with agenda items, because of the increased time it takes to explain the information, process, reflect, and comment.
- ✓ More discussion - Allow more time in the agenda for discussion. The process is different because it takes longer to get into the issues and to engage.
- ✓ Balance administrative and business objectives of meetings.
- ✓ Pay as much attention to process as you do to agenda items.
- ✓ Build in more breaks, time to stretch, or get up and walk around.
- ✓ Include a fun activity, i.e. an ice breaker, such as "Tell me what one of your favourite things to do is?"

# Understanding the Universal Symbols of Accessibility

The following symbols can be used to promote and publicize accessibility of places, programs and other activities for people with various disabilities.

<b>Universal Symbols of Accessibility</b>	
	<p><b>International Symbol of Accessibility (ISA)</b></p> <p>This is probably the most recognizable symbol of accessibility. The wheelchair symbol should only be used to indicate access for individuals with limited mobility, including wheelchair users. For example, the symbol is used to indicate an accessible entrance, bathroom or that a phone is lowered for wheelchair users.</p>
	<p><b>Braille Symbol</b></p> <p>This symbol indicates that printed materials are available in Braille, including exhibition labelling, publications and signage.</p>
	<p><b>Accessible Print</b></p> <p>The symbol for large print is 'Large Print' printed in 16-20 point font size. In addition to indicating that large print versions of books, pamphlets, museum guides and theatre programs are available, you may use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials may be provided in large print.</p>
	<p><b>Assistive Listening Systems</b></p> <p>This symbol is used to indicate that assistive listening systems are available for the event. The systems may include infrared, loop and FM systems.</p>
	<p><b>Sign Language Interpretation</b></p> <p>This symbol indicates that Sign Language Interpretation is provided for a lecture, meeting, performance, conference or other program.</p>
	<p><b>Closed Captioning (CC)</b></p> <p>This symbol indicates that a television program or videotape is closed captioned for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.</p>

## ACCESSIBILITY WORK-PLAN

TASK	BARRIERS BEING ADDRESSED	ACTIVITIES	PERSONS INVOLVED	TIMELINE
<b>Establish policies, practices and procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attitudinal</li> <li>▪ Organizational</li> <li>▪ Technological</li> <li>▪ Information or communications</li> </ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Budgeting for accessibility</li> <li>▪ Allowing service animals on premises</li> <li>▪ Staff training</li> <li>▪ Service expanded to include home visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Executive Director</li> <li>▪ Board of Directors</li> <li>▪ Staff</li> </ul>	
<b>Create a welcoming environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attitudinal</li> <li>▪ Architectural and physical</li> <li>▪ Technological</li> </ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Respectful communication</li> <li>▪ Accessible washroom</li> <li>▪ Adapted computers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IT Staff</li> </ul>	
<b>Do outreach - how you promote your service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attitudinal</li> <li>▪ Information or communications</li> </ul>	Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outreach materials in alternate formats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communication/marketing staff</li> </ul>	
<b>Partner and network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attitudinal</li> </ul>	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attend disability events</li> <li>▪ Disability organizational reps on Board of Directors</li> </ul>		

**ACCESSIBILITY WORK-PLAN**

<b>TASK</b>	<b>BARRIERS BEING ADDRESSED</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>PERSONS INVOLVED</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
<b>Establish policies, practices and procedures</b>				
<b>Create a welcoming environment</b>				
<b>Do outreach - how you promote your service</b>				
<b>Partner and network</b>				