

Yellowknife Association for

COMMUNITY LIVING



# Inclusion 101

## A 'How To' Guide



**With Special Sections for:**

*customer service, community leaders, community groups, justice system, educators, health care workers, employers, recreation & sports programs, service providers, students & co-workers.*

## Introduction

YKACL produced this guide to encourage people to take action, to better include people with disabilities in our communities. Parts 1 and 2 of the Guide are for everyone, with basic information about inclusion, disabilities, and barriers; and general 'how to' tips for inclusion.

Part 3 has specific 'how to' tips for 10 different groups of people. Please focus your time and energy on the special section that applies to you.

We welcome feedback about this guide. And please share your stories – successes and challenges - about inclusion in your community.



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## Part **1**

## Basic Information

### What is inclusion?

Inclusion is belonging. People belong when others accept, welcome, and value them no matter their abilities. Inclusion is when all people can fully participate in all the programs, activities, and physical spaces in our community – at home, at work, at play.

Inclusion is when we all accept responsibility and do our part to remove the social and physical barriers in our communities.

### Who are people with disabilities?

Disabilities can affect people at any age or from any background. Some people have more than one disability. Having one or more disabilities is just one aspect of a person and their life. People with disabilities go to school, get married, work, have families, play, do laundry, go shopping, eat out, travel, volunteer, vote, pay taxes, laugh, cry, plan, have goals, dream, and want to be loved – just like everyone else.

Almost 15% of Canadians have a disability. And we expect the rate to increase as the Canadian population ages.

People with disabilities are much like other Canadians. They want to have financial security and feel good about themselves. They want to be active citizens who contribute their skills and talents to the social and financial wellbeing of their communities.

## **What is disability?**

Disability is a condition or limitation that causes a person to have some difficulty with the usual activities of daily living. It can affect the senses, the body, the mind, the emotions, or the way someone learns. In many cases a disability means that a person finds innovative ways to do certain activities or to reach certain goals.

### **Many disabilities are invisible**

We can't always tell that someone has a disability just by looking at them. For example, we can't see hearing loss or mental illness. And some physical disabilities are hidden from view.

### **The nature of disabilities**

Having a disability is not the same as being sick. Many people with disabilities are perfectly healthy - physically and mentally.

A disability may be present only some of the time. For example, arthritis may come and go; a person may experience long disability-free periods.

A disability may only be a problem in specific situations. For example, a back injury may limit people only when they lift something or sit for long periods of time.

A disability may be temporary. For example, a person may have a single episode of mental illness.

A disability can be mild, moderate, or severe. And the degree to which a disability affects a person's daily life and their ability to be independent can vary widely. These differences may stem from the disability itself; or from the level of support people receive and the circumstances throughout their lives; or from a combination of the two.

For example, a person with an intellectual disability, who has education and work opportunities, and a supportive network of family and friends, may be able to live more independently than someone who lacks these opportunities and support – even if their disability is less severe.

### **Disabilities and human rights**

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the NWT Human Rights Act are the laws that protect human rights. These laws protect people with disabilities from discrimination. This means they have the right to access programs, services, and buildings; and belong to, contribute to, and be valued in their community.

### **What is a barrier? What is barrier-free?**

A barrier is something that places people with disabilities at a disadvantage in relation to people without disabilities. Barriers can be part of the physical environment (stairs), attitudes (fear), or a system (rigid workplace structures).

### **What is barrier-free design?**

Barrier-free design provides specific solutions for a specific disability. For example, a building has a ramp as well as stairs. Barrier-free workplaces, stores, and programs help people with disabilities have similar opportunities as people without disabilities.

### **What is universal design?**

Universal design means that we design the physical environment, or programs or services for everyone. For example, a universal design building entrance means all people can use it, no matter their ability.

### **What is accessibility?**

Accessibility refers to homes, buildings, public spaces, and programs and support services that are free of barriers and open to all.

### **What is an adaptation or accommodation?**

An adaptation is an assistive device or a change in the way we do something. It removes or reduces a barrier that people with a disability face. Examples: guide dogs, white canes, and flexible work hours.

Adaptations must be geared to the individual because people with a specific disability have unique needs. The adaptation(s) that people need can change with time, their age, and their life circumstances.

## **Benefits of inclusion**

Including people with disabilities in one area of their lives can help pave the way and open doors in other areas.

Inclusion benefits everyone and can:

- Increase your pool of customers, potential employees, volunteers, and friends.
- Change attitudes.
- Challenge the myths and stereotypes about people with disabilities; increase awareness about disabilities.
- Open doors for other minority groups; make things more accessible for everyone.
- Promote equality and human rights.



## Part 2

## 'How To' Tips for Inclusion

Common 'how to' tips to increase inclusion fall into four basic areas:

- Good manners.
- Respectful communication.
- Friendly physical environments.
- Welcoming policies and practices.

### Good manners

Respect and common sense are your best assets. People with disabilities want to be treated with dignity and courtesy – just like people without disabilities.

- Ask before you act and get the information you need. Ask what, if any, help a person needs. Individuals have their own abilities and experience their disability in their own way. Let them describe what they need. Then follow their instructions and wishes.
- Allow people to do things at their own pace and in their own way. People need to exercise their independence. Let them set the pace. Be patient. Intervene only if they ask or if you're concerned about someone's safety.
- Respect wheelchairs and other assistive devices such as a cane, service dog, or hearing aid. Get permission before you touch or move an assistive device. People with disabilities consider these devices as an extension of their personal space.
- Be considerate and aware of barriers in restaurants and other public spaces when you choose places to socialize. For example,

choose an accessible restaurant for a person who uses a wheelchair. Or a quiet place to make it easier for someone who is hard of hearing.

- Treat adults as adults. Adults with disabilities are still adults.
- Treat people as unique, diverse individuals; avoid stereotypes. You may have a friend with a visual impairment – but people with a similar disability may have different needs.
- Sit down and talk at eye level with a person in a wheelchair, where possible and when appropriate. If your neck hurts from looking down, chances are the other person’s neck hurts too from looking up.
- Shake hands. Greet people with disabilities as you would anyone else. If people can’t shake hands they’ll tell you.
- Focus on ability and strengths, not disability. We all have different abilities, talents, interests, and personalities.
- Allow children to ask questions and get the answers they’re looking for. Children are naturally curious. Most people with disabilities don’t mind answering questions or educating the public. Adults can ask too if they have a personal relationship or they’re trying to meet the person’s needs.
- Leave accessible parking places and washrooms available for the people who need them.

## **Respectful communication**

Communication is what we say and write, and how we say and write it. Both are important. Consider your audience when you speak and write. Respectful, clear communication paves the way for positive relationships and avoids misunderstandings.

### **What we communicate**

The words we use reflect our attitudes and how we understand people, places, and things. The language around disability continues to evolve. Ask people directly about the terms they prefer. Listen to how people refer to themselves.

- Talk about the person first and the disability second. A disability is only one characteristic. Say 'person with a disability' instead of 'disabled person'.
- Use language that recognizes the power people have. Challenge stereotypes. Avoid describing people as unfortunate, suffering from, afflicted with, or victim. Use the name of a disability - hard of hearing or intellectual disability.
- Avoid jargon. Many people with disabilities dislike jargon such as 'differently abled'.
- Avoid generic labels. Use 'people with disabilities' rather than 'the disabled' or 'the handicapped'.
- Say 'accessible' not 'handicapped'. For example, refer to accessible parking spots. The word handicapped comes from 19<sup>th</sup> century London, England when people with visible disabilities begged on the streets 'cap in hand'.
- Know that it's okay to use everyday terminology that may relate to a person's disability, such as 'I see', 'I hear what you're saying', or 'I've got to run now'.
- Mention a person's disability only if it is relevant.

<b>Vocabulary Summary</b>	
<b>Use</b>	<b>Avoid</b>
Person with a disability	Disabled person
People with disabilities	The disabled
Person who uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
People with physical disabilities	Crippled, lame, handicapped
Woman with an intellectual disability	Retarded, idiot, moron, Down's person
Person with Down Syndrome	Mongoloid
Person with a mental health disorder	Crazy, mental, psycho
Man with cerebral palsy	Victim of/suffering from cerebral palsy
People without a disability	Normal, able-bodied, whole people
Boy with a brain injury	Brain damaged boy

### **How we communicate**

- Listen carefully. Pay attention to what people say - verbally and non-verbally.
- Make sure you understand. Ask questions to clarify and gather the information you need. Do not assume.
- Speak directly to people – not through a friend or other person who may be there.
- Consider a person's disability when you give directions. For example, consider steep hills or stairs for people who use a

wheelchair. Or be specific for a person with a visual impairment. Say, “The ladder to the pool is about three steps directly to your right.”

- Make sure that people can clearly see your face when you’re speaking. This helps people with hearing difficulties, who lip read, to increase their understanding.
- Apply plain language principles in print and online materials. Be aware of your audience and meet their needs.
- Use the person’s name, eye contact, or touch (if appropriate) to get their attention.
- Speak clearly in a respectful tone and volume.
- Pause often in stressful situations to give people the chance to process what you’re saying.
- Ask one question at a time and give people time to reply. Be patient. Do not finish their sentences.
- Use pictures, diagrams, signs, and gestures to get your point across and to help you understand. Try different strategies. Repeat the process if needed.
- Ask people what communication style and techniques you can use to make things easier for them.
- Listen and watch carefully for signs that the person understands. It’s not enough to ask ‘do you understand?’
- Take responsibility for breakdowns in communication. Say you’re sorry, you don’t understand. You do not need to pretend to understand.

## **Friendly physical environments**

Physical environments include the places we live, work, play, and learn. They include our homes, businesses, and public places (including trails and playgrounds). Friendly environments consider the needs of all people:

- People who use wheelchairs.
- People who have trouble seeing and hearing.
- Older people.
- People with injuries or other health issues, who may not see themselves as people with a disability.
- People pushing baby strollers and/or who have one or more small children in tow.
- People carrying heavy items.
- Tourists - who need clear, visible signs.

When we build accessible environments we can avoid expensive retrofits.

- Do good research. Building codes contain minimum requirements; they may not achieve accessibility for everyone.
- Ask people with disabilities to help plan new spaces or retrofit existing ones.
- Contact your local disability organization for information on universal design and barrier-free environments.

## **Welcoming policies and practices**

An organization's policies and practices have the power to either limit or increase the inclusion of people with disabilities. Inclusive policies and practices mean we consider the needs of people with disabilities in

all mainstream programs and services. At the same time we supplement mainstream programs, where needed, with adaptations and accommodations that remove barriers and support children and adults with disabilities.

### **Welcoming policies**

Welcoming policies help make expectations clear and your organization fair for everyone. Here are some examples:

- Welcome people with disabilities.  
Example: Our community values diversity and works always to make our facilities, programs, and services accessible for everyone.
- Say what adaptations you have available and under what circumstances.  
Example: We welcome service animals. We post information about their benefits and guidelines for their use – in a visible place for staff and customers.
- Outline the training you provide.  
Example: All new employees receive diversity training, aimed at improving our services to people with disabilities.
- Require accessible communications.  
Example: We produce all written documents in plain language. We offer information in large print or audio tape when people need or ask for it.
- Designate someone to coordinate inclusion efforts.  
Example: The director of human resources is responsible to review and develop policies and procedures that relate to how we employ and serve people with disabilities.

## **Welcoming practices**

Inclusive policies lead to inclusive practices.

One example is inclusive meetings:

- Remove any obstacles in entrances, hallways, and around the table.
- Find a room with smooth, level flooring; with any carpet secured in place.
- Ensure the room has good lighting.
- Use contrasting colours at the edges of stairs and for sharp corners of walls.
- Avoid environmental noise such as fans and air conditioners.
- Provide clear, easy-to-read, and well-lit signs.
- Tell people, before the meeting, what materials and accommodations they can access, and where and how to get them.

Use common sense when you put policy into practice.

- Adapt when necessary. Many people with disabilities don't need any accommodations.
- Adapt for individuals. A 'one size fits all' approach may not suit everyone, even people with the same or similar disability.
- Be flexible. Adaptations may be temporary. For example, a person with an intellectual disability may need a job coach only until they can work independently.

And sometimes accessibility measures break down. It could be an elevator in an office or apartment building, or an FM system in a school or local theatre. When there is a breakdown do your best to inform the people who need these adaptations.



## **15 Things Everyone Can Do for Inclusion**

1. Be flexible when people make noise such as clapping off beat or shouting, or when you hear the sound of a medical device.
2. Ask for permission and instructions before you help someone.
3. Consider how your church or other group can help pay for costly adaptations, for an adult or child who needs them.
4. Offer respite care to a spouse or parent of someone with a disability or long-term illness.
5. Offer a smile and help to a parent or caregiver when a child has a tantrum in a public place.
6. Invite an adult or child with disabilities to your home or on an outing. Ask in advance about the person's preferences and needs.
7. Explore a website or read a book that deals with disability issues.
8. Interact with people with disabilities during community, school, or sporting events.
9. Offer a ride to church, medical appointments, or other places to someone with a disability.
10. Just say 'hi'.
11. Become someone's partner or buddy, and provide what help is needed so they can participate fully in a group or activity.
12. Educate your children about ways to interact with people in their lives who have a disability.
13. Avoid gossip about someone who is socially awkward or different.
14. Offer to pick up supplies or prescriptions for someone with a disability or their family.
15. Label foods at potlucks, especially if they contain nuts or gluten.

Adapted from a list from the Christian Reformed Church in North America  
[www.crcna.org/disability](http://www.crcna.org/disability)

## Part 3

## More 'How To' Inclusion Tips

### Customer service

Customer service includes people in retail, restaurants, and other service businesses. People with disabilities in Canada represent \$25 billion in spending power. So it is well worth your while to attract people with disabilities to your business.

#### What you can do

- Make people with disabilities feel welcome - from the moment they enter the door. Treat them with respect, dignity, courtesy, and professionalism.
- Create an atmosphere where people feel comfortable asking for help. Ask customers if you can help or clarify anything. Respond to requests for help in respectful ways; make people feel glad they asked.
- Offer people with disabilities the same products and services you offer people without disabilities. Avoid excluding or segregating people. Minimize the need for special accommodations or 'disability only' services. If you have concerns that people with disabilities may have problems with a product or service, find ways to support them to use the service as it exists.
- Ask people with disabilities for their feedback – formal and informal.
- Think about the physical environment. Can customers easily find the front door? Is your sign easy to see and read?
- Use all the 'inclusion tips' from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When customer service people and businesses meet the needs of people with disabilities you also:

- Help other customers who appreciate convenience and ease – seniors, people with children.
- Make life easier for the friends and family of people with disabilities, and gain their appreciation.



## Community leaders

Community leaders include people from municipal and Aboriginal governments, school boards, and other community-based agencies. You have a unique opportunity to help make your community socially inclusive and physically accessible to residents and visitors.

### What you can do

- Be a role model. Use inclusive actions, language, and attitudes in your everyday life. Challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes.
- Develop and implement inclusive policies, practices, and laws. Seek the advice of people with disabilities and the groups that support them. Value their expertise and time; pay their expenses and offer a wage-replacement honorarium.
- Actively recruit and accommodate employees with disabilities.
- Promote universal design. Show how it saves overall costs and removes barriers. Provide incentives to developers and groups that use universal design in buildings, programs, and services.
- Set customer service standards for internal services and for contracts with outside service providers.
- Provide public information in different formats.
- Enforce accessible parking bylaws.
- Do an audit or self-assessment questionnaire to identify barriers.
- Develop an accessibility plan to outline how and when your community will remove barriers and become more inclusive. Involve people with disabilities in an advisory committee.
- Keep up-to-date on the issues. Example: Are there barriers to technology that marginalize people with disabilities? Can they afford the internet or the adaptations that allow them easy access?

- Make a list of the features that make your community accessible and inclusive. Use this information to promote your community to new families, businesses, and tourists.
- Consider the physical environment. Example: Apply universal design to playgrounds, trails, and bathrooms for outdoor events.
- Use all the ‘inclusion tips’ from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When community leaders actively promote and work for inclusion, you and your community will:

- Experience social and economic benefits into the future.
- Give all residents equal opportunity to live, work, and contribute to their community.



## Community groups

Churches, book clubs, arts and cultural organizations, service clubs, craft groups, and friendship centres can take decisive steps to increase accessibility - for staff, volunteers, patrons, members, program participants, and leaders.

### What you can do

- Gather information and develop a plan with inclusive policies and training for staff and volunteers.
- Take a proactive approach to outreach. Make it personal. Encourage current members or participants to personally ask people with disabilities to join your group or participate in activities. There is a big difference between an ad and a personal invitation.
- Set an example and be a role model. Diversify your membership and program participants. Develop relationships with agencies and programs that support people with disabilities. Make sure they know about your group's efforts.
- Design welcoming outreach materials. Ask for feedback from people with disabilities, their family, and advocacy groups. Include images of people with disabilities or accessibility symbols. Outline the inclusion features of your group's services and environment.
- Connect with other groups and share your commitment. If your group can't offer wheelchair access or some other support, offer to connect people with other groups who can.
- Write newsletter or newspaper articles about accessibility. Discuss how your group works to become more inclusive. Create awareness among current group members and the wider community.
- Include people with disabilities in your regular programs and services, rather than creating special ones. Consider partnering members with different abilities so everyone can meaningfully participate.

- Share information about your inclusion efforts, with your regional or national office, if you're part of a larger organization.
- Use all the 'inclusion tips' from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When community groups take concrete steps to include people with disabilities they:

- Expose everyone to a wider range of perspectives and talents, and enrich their lives.
- Pave the way for current members who might acquire a disability. Disabilities can happen to anyone!



## Justice system

People with disabilities come in contact with the justice system as victims, perpetrators, and witnesses. Lawyers, victim services workers, police, court officials, and corrections staff can work proactively to better meet the needs of people with disabilities.

### What you can do

- Develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure workers respect and accommodate the rights of people with disabilities.
- Establish links with groups that work with and advocate for people with disabilities.
- Develop and implement guidelines for the accommodations that people need to overcome barriers to inclusion. Example: Develop a protocol for how police and agencies share information. Or when and how to divert people with disabilities from the court system.
- Provide clear public information, in various formats, about how you include and accommodate people with disabilities. Example: Clear guidelines for when someone may have a support person with them in the interview room.
- Provide training. Help workers recognize disabilities and work more effectively with victims, witnesses, and offenders. Example: People with intellectual disabilities may answer a lawyer's question in a way they think will please the lawyer, rather than saying the truth as they know it.
- Be aware of the extent that people with disabilities become victims of crime and are re-victimized.
- Be familiar with assistive devices, such as telecommunications devices for the deaf (TTY).



- Know the common characteristics of different disabilities and their implications on behaviour. Example: A person with cerebral palsy may appear to be under the influence of drugs and alcohol.
- Use all the ‘inclusion tips’ from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When people in the justice system increase inclusion they will:

- Allow people with disabilities equal opportunity to have their complaints dealt with fairly. People with disabilities are among the most vulnerable in society. They are at higher risk of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation than people without disabilities.
- Build trust and increase the reporting of crimes against people with disabilities, and encourage them to come forward. Research shows people with intellectual disabilities are reliable witnesses.
- Prevent crime and avoid tragedies. Many homeless or otherwise vulnerable people have disabilities. Properly trained workers can calm down crisis situations.
- Protect human rights and understand that some people have to be treated differently for that to happen. Example: A properly trained police officer ensures that suspects with disabilities understand their right to remain silent, even though this may take time, several attempts to explain, or the help of a support person.

## **Educators**

Our schools have embraced the concept of inclusion. Children and adults with disabilities have a right to an education in their local school, learning alongside other students of their age.

But inclusive education is more than this. It is about including people with disabilities in all school activities and giving them the opportunities available to students without disabilities - opportunities to explore and nurture interests, friendships, and talents in school and the community.

### **What you can do**

- Use instruction and adaptations to ensure that all students belong in classrooms. Share best practices.
- Increase the capacity and expertise of educators. Provide or seek professional development, mentoring, and technical resources.
- Speak positively about all students; present the positive aspects of each.
- Give students a sense of control over their own learning.
- Encourage students to support and build relationships with each other. Support social interaction through circles of friends, peer buddies, cross age tutoring, peer tutors, and cooperative learning.
- Set the tone and model behaviours that accept diversity. Immediately deal with bullying and labeling. Use age-appropriate methods to deal with issues that arise.
- Apply universal design principles to classroom assignments, presentations, and other tasks.
- Work with other teachers, students, and families to share information and ease transitions.

- Avoid triggers to minimize the risk of behaviours that work against people accepting all students.
- Integrate disability studies into other subjects. Explore issues related to disability in social studies, language arts, science, and other classes. As with gender, race, and ethnicity, disability allows students to explore culture, identity, power, oppression, and individual development.
- Check in with students and parents to make sure your efforts are working and that all students feel they belong.
- Use all the ‘inclusion tips’ from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

Inclusive education means that educators and students will:

- Have more positive and a greater diversity of experiences and relationships.
- Recognize the rights of all students to a full educational experience.
- Put into practice the idea that all individuals in society have inherent value and worth.
- Realize that all people bring their own strengths and areas of growth to all situations.
- Benefit from applying universal design principles that allow all students, not just those with disabilities, to display their strengths in ways not otherwise available.

## Health care workers

People with disabilities need information and the same opportunity as everyone else to be involved in their health and wellbeing. Reducing barriers for people with disabilities can help everyone access better health information and improved health outcomes.

### What you can do

- Be aware that communication issues may prevent people from accurately and reliably reporting their symptoms and medical history, and acting on the recommended follow-up. Pay close attention to the communication tips in Part 2.
- Schedule time for health and lifestyle information, and screening tests appropriate to the person's age. Do not let acute issues interfere with health promotion and disease prevention. Be aware that everyone may not understand the importance and long-term implications of lifestyle, diet, and other choices.
- Make sure people have the transportation they need to access medical services, healthy food, and other things they need for overall wellbeing.
- Make sure regular health checks and follow-up happen, and that you're getting the outcomes you expect. Example: Take time to make sure people are taking medications the way they should.
- Work with caregivers and support people: family members, support workers, and personal assistants. Examples: Keep in mind that family members may have the best information about a person's history. Do not assume that support workers have the training to interpret symptoms or to provide the required follow-up.
- Clearly state and write down follow-up recommendations, such as prescription dosage. Make sure caregivers and support people can share the information with other support people.

- Watch for turnover and changes in caregivers and support people, and the effects this may cause.
- Speak directly to the person, not the caregiver or support person. Ask permission to get information from a support person. Use eye contact and body language to maintain contact.
- Use all the 'inclusion tips' from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When health care workers reduce barriers to inclusion people will:

- Benefit from preventive care.
- Participate more actively in their overall wellbeing and promote their own health.
- Benefit from the reduced need for and costs of acute care.



## Recreation and sports programs

The report from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes a specific section about the importance of recreation and sport to people's development. It says that people with a disability have the right to participate on an equal basis with others in "recreational, leisure and sporting activities".

People in sport and recreation have developed inclusive coaching and teaching resources, programs, and technologies - to help people with disabilities learn the same skills and behaviours as people without disabilities - though perhaps at a different pace.

Good coaching and good program management means including people with disabilities. Inclusive programs encourage everyone to participate.

### What you can do

- Outline the accommodations you provide; the accessibility features you offer. Examples: Provide assistive listening devices, accessible change rooms.
- Train staff and volunteers to work with people with disabilities, and to operate any assistive devices you have.
- Offer discounts for support workers or attendants that accompany people with disabilities.
- Treat people with disabilities as athletes. Focus on what they can do or have the potential to do.
- Adapt coaching style, rules, equipment, and the environment as needed to promote active participation from everyone.
- Ask people what they can do; how to modify specific tasks to suit their skills and ability.

- Be aware that a person's disability may affect their basic skills, whether it came about later in life or at birth.
- Use all the 'inclusion tips' from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When people with disabilities participate in recreation and sports programs they will:

- Gain new friends.
- Learn about team work, how to follow rules, and how to make choices.
- Have the chance to improve their health and fitness levels, and avoid the growing problem of obesity.



## Employers

Working for a living is important for most adults, including people with disabilities. We all like to see our education and skills put to good use. We want to be financially independent. And we want the chance to build relationships with co-workers. People with disabilities want to work and they are known to be loyal and effective employees.

### What you can do

- Make it clear that your workplace is disability friendly. Advertise your commitment to equity hiring practices; that people with disabilities are welcome to apply.
- In a job interview ask only job-related questions. If the person informs you they have a disability, you can ask if the person requires any adaptations or accommodations to perform the job.
- Change the structure or systems. Change job duties and create flexible schedules. Example: Break down job duties into smaller tasks, with a system of reminders, to pave the way for a person with an intellectual disability or acquired brain injury.
- Change the environment; remove barriers. Many job accommodations are inexpensive or cost nothing. Example: Clear clutter from a workplace for someone with a visual disability.
- Buy adaptive equipment or provide another support. These supports can pay for themselves over the period of employment. Examples: Lights to act as visual cues for a person who is hard of hearing. A temporary job coach or mentor.
- Help co-workers understand the advantages of hiring people with disabilities. Explain why they need an accommodation. Example: Provide a stool for someone who can't be on their feet for long periods of time.
- Become informed about disabilities and provide awareness training for staff.



- Be a role model. Communicate effectively orally and in writing. Give clear instructions. Speak directly to people with disabilities, not just to the job coach (if they have one).
- Welcome and include employees with disabilities in all aspects of the workplace – office celebrations, volunteer opportunities, employee committees, sports teams. Developing relationships with co-workers is an important aspect of everyone’s working life.
- Get information and advice about recruiting, hiring, and working with people with disabilities. Connect with agencies that work with people with disabilities. Look for programs that offer job supports and coaching for people who need it.
- Use all the ‘inclusion tips’ from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

Based on research (including with large corporations such as du Pont and the Royal Bank of Canada), employers who hire people with disabilities can experience several concrete benefits:

- Increase the pool of potential employees - an important consideration with current labour shortages.
- Increase staff retention rates and realize savings related to recruitment, training, and low staff morale.
- Decrease absenteeism.
- Realize average or better safety ratings.
- Increase revenue. A business that reflects the community is better able to serve its customers and improve customer loyalty.
- Achieve productivity as high as or higher than with other employees.
- Improve co-worker morale and teamwork.
- Become accessible for your customers too!

## Service providers

Service providers are those frontline people who manage various programs and services, usually through government offices or non-profit groups.

### What you can do

- Treat people with disabilities as contributors and collaborators, not as victims. Dignity and respect should be the hallmark of any service you provide.
- Make the effort and take the time to understand the situation of people with disabilities, and how their needs might be different from those of others you serve. Example: Understand that trust may be an issue if barriers and social stigma are everyday features of a person's experience. Consider a person's other identities such as race, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Take advantage of the insights and information that advocacy groups can provide.
- Communicate information in a variety of ways, orally and in writing. Don't assume that people will read written materials.
- Use plain language principles in all written materials. Example: Provide clear, plain language forms to reduce frustration and help people complete them accurately.
- Give all clients information about the programs and services available to people with disabilities, even if they haven't disclosed a disability. Many people are unwilling to disclose a disability due to legitimate concerns about the stigma around disabilities, particularly mental illness.
- Ask people how you can better serve them. Focus on how you can accommodate them, rather than the details of their disability. Example: It's more helpful for you to know that people may need time to take detailed notes of a meeting, so they can refer to the

notes later – rather than you knowing they have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder.

- Be flexible. Example: Be aware that a person might cancel a meeting at the last minute if they suddenly become unwell. Understand that levels of fatigue and endurance vary among people.
- Increase your knowledge and understanding of disabilities and related issues, and apply that knowledge. Examples: You may find it difficult – with some disabilities such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or acquired brain injury – to accurately distinguish between what someone cannot or will not do. People can experience the same disability in very different ways. Medications can affect behaviours and judgment, and create mood swings.
- Respect the self-knowledge, strengths, and capabilities of all people.
- Respect a person’s right to privacy. Example: Have a private area available to talk if a person has trouble filling out a form. People should not have to verbally respond, in a public area, to questions such as, “Do you have a disability?”
- Tell people – verbally and in writing - that disclosing information about the presence or nature of a disability is voluntary.
- Make it clear why you’re asking questions about disability. Example: To find out if a person is eligible for a service that they might not otherwise be entitled to.
- Use all the ‘inclusion tips’ from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When services providers increase inclusion they will:

- Save time, money, and effort.
- Get more accurate information when they need it.
- Experience fewer frustrations; provide clients with a more satisfying experience.

## **Students and co-workers**

Much more happens at school and work than learning and working. Most people depend on schools and workplaces to meet and interact with other people. And people with disabilities are no different than people without disabilities. They want to be part of the social aspects of work and school – not just simply present.

Inclusion means more than being open-minded and friendly. It means taking action – getting to know people with disabilities; sharing and exchanging interests, opinions, and goals.

### **What you can do**

- Talk with others about activities that everyone at school or work can take part in. It could be a games room in your school. Or once a month potluck lunches at work.
- Make your workplace inclusion policies and practices part of an advertising campaign or training event. Let others know what you're doing.
- Get to know people as individuals. Don't make assumptions about what they can or cannot do, or their financial situation.
- At school or work, make sure that the recreation, safety, and other committees include people with disabilities.
- Invite people with disabilities to school dances, sporting events, or other activities. Invite them to join you and others for lunch, to go to a movie or to yardsales.
- At school or work, link inclusion to other campaigns - such as bullying or harassment. Help find new ways to make schools and workplaces healthy and positive places for everyone.
- Use all the 'inclusion tips' from Part 2 of this guide.

### **Benefits**

When students and co-workers increase inclusion people will:

- Have a greater diversity of friendships, and richer experiences.
- Learn new things, challenge perceptions, and pave the way to be more open to other people.



## Resources

Abilities Magazine [www.abilities.ca](http://www.abilities.ca)

Active Living Alliance for Canadians with Disabilities [www.ala.ca](http://www.ala.ca)

Canadian Association for Community Living [www.cacl.ca](http://www.cacl.ca)

Council of Canadians with Disabilities <http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/>

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada – Disability Issues  
[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability\\_issues/index.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/index.shtml)

NWT Abilities Council [www.nwtability.ca](http://www.nwtability.ca)

NWT Literacy Council - plain language information and resources.  
<http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/plainlang.htm>

NWT Human Rights Commission <http://nwthumanrights.ca>

People First of Canada [www.peoplefirstcanada.ca](http://www.peoplefirstcanada.ca)

Yellowknife Association for Community Living [www.ykacl.ca](http://www.ykacl.ca)

Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority – Self-Help Groups  
<http://www.yhssa.org/resources/links/linkSelf.asp>