

Social and Recreational Inclusion

A How To Guide



Yellowknife Association for Community Living



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March 2007

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4912 - 53rd Street,
P.O. Box 981,
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2N7
Phone: (867) 920-2644
Fax: (867) 920-2348
E-mail: info@ykacl.ca
Website: www.ykacl.ca

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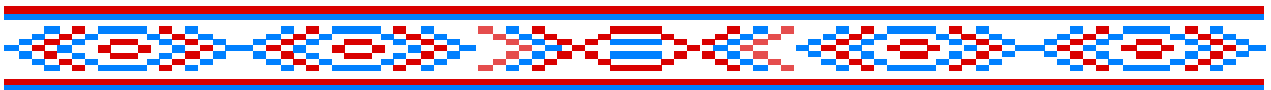
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City of Yellowknife Bush Gear Contest 2007



Introduction

We know through research and personal experiences that people with disabilities benefit greatly when they participate in community recreation programs and activities. Like their peers, who may not have disability, they learn how to make choices, be a friend, follow rules and perform as a team. They learn the same leisure skills and behaviors, although maybe in a different way or at a different pace. People with disabilities want the same things as everyone else in the community—to be respected, have friends, and be valued for who they are. They want to participate in the same activities, hang out in the same places and have fun, as we all do.

We also know that people without disabilities benefit from these interactions. Myths and stereotypes are eliminated. People's awareness is heightened and attitudes change. When this happens in a social place like a recreation centre, bowling alley or movie theatre, new, more accepting and accommodating attitudes find their way into other areas of everyday life. Attitudes change at school, in the workplace and when a chance meeting happens at the neighborhood grocery store or playground. Providers of social and recreational activities also directly benefit by being welcoming to people with disabilities. Their market increases, their activities become more diverse and they show the community they are sensitive and that they promote equality.

Unfortunately, people with disabilities do not always feel welcome or included in mainstream social and recreational life. In September 2006, the Yellowknife Association held several community consultations and people with disabilities and their families told us that:

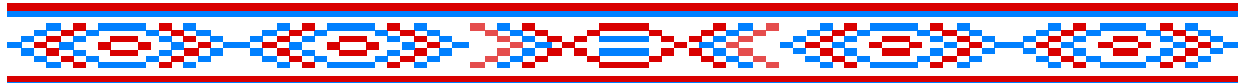
- people with disabilities do not feel included in mainstream social/recreational life
- there is a lack of support to promote inclusion in social/recreational activities and staff do not receive adequate training in supporting people with disabilities
- some facilities are not physically accessible or welcoming and do not meet the needs of those with disabilities
- there is a lack of social programs that actively promote inclusion

Another word for inclusion is belonging. Belonging means being accepted, welcomed and valued no matter what your abilities. To support social and recreational program providers to become more inclusive of people with disabilities, the Association has developed this guide. We sincerely hope that you find it a useful tool. Use the information we've included to make sure that everyone belongs. Help make inclusion the norm.



The Basics

1. It's okay to ask someone with a disability if they need help but wait for their answer and listen to what they have to say. Ask before you act.
2. Sometimes it may take extra time for a person with a disability to get things done or get their point across. Let them set the pace.
3. Don't forget that just because someone may look different or have different abilities, we are all the same. We all feel the same things and have the same rights and responsibilities.
4. Focus on ability not disability.
5. Don't park in places reserved for people with disabilities. Designated parking spots are designed specifically to meet the needs of people with disabilities and should be used only by them.
6. Adults with disabilities are adults. Treat them as such.
7. Don't make assumptions about people's abilities or goals. People with disabilities go to school, play sports, get married, work, have families, shop, laugh, cry, pay taxes, get angry, vote, plan and dream like everyone else.
8. Be aware that people may be affected by invisible disabilities. Not seeing it, doesn't mean it doesn't exist.
9. Talk **to** the person, not **about** them.
10. Above all, treat people with disabilities with dignity, respect and courtesy, just as you do everyone else.



Myths and Facts

Myth 1:

People with disabilities are objects of pity.

Fact

People with disabilities work hard to overcome challenges to be able to have quality of life and be able to participate in their community. Admiring and acknowledging their strength is much more appreciated and productive.

Myth 2:

People with disabilities are weak, sickly or ill.

Fact

Like any other citizen, a person with a disability can become ill, but chances are high there is no lingering illness associated with their disability.

Myth 3:

People who use wheelchairs are “wheelchair bound”.

Fact

A wheelchair is a personal tool used to help a person get around. It’s a form of transportation like a bike or a car. A wheelchair can be liberating, not confining.

Myth 4:

We should never allow a child to ask someone about their disability.

Fact

Curiosity is normal but adults may be embarrassed by kids asking a person questions about their disability. Instead of “shushing” them, allow them to get the answers they’re looking for. Most people with disabilities don’t mind answering questions or educating the public. Adults shouldn’t ask unless they have a personal relationship with the person or they are attempting to meet their needs.

Myth 5

The life of a person with a disability is totally different from mine.

Fact

We all have the same needs and desires. Having or not having a disability doesn’t change the fact that we’re all human beings with human feelings. The only difference is that people with disabilities may have more barriers and obstacles to overcome to reach the same goal.



Tips for Communication Words

Words are important because they carry messages, convey attitudes, create images, reinforce stereotypes and cause emotional responses. When it comes to words used to refer to or describe people with disabilities, all of the above applies. Sometimes it's a challenge to know what words we should be using. It's important to remember that positive language empowers. There are no definite rules on terminology because people have their own preferences and acceptable terms change, but here are a few suggestions to guide you.

1. Use the “person first” rule. When referring to a person with a disability, talk about the person first and the disability second.
2. Unless it's relevant to the conversation, leave out reference to the disability altogether.
3. If in doubt about an individual's preference, listen for clues as to how he or she prefers to refer to themselves. In some situations it may even be appropriate to ask, but this will depend on the person and the type of relationship you have with them.
4. Avoid outdated terms like “handicapped”, “retarded” or “crippled”. Also be aware that many people with disabilities also dislike jargony terms like “differently abled”.
5. Avoid disempowering words like “victim”, “sufferer” or “afflicted by”.
6. Do not use generic labels for groups of people with disabilities, such as “the retarded” or “the handicapped”.

Here are some examples of both positive and negative ways to convey the same message:

Positive	Negative
children affected by autism	autistic children
person who uses a wheelchair	wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
people with physical disabilities	crippled, lame, the disabled, handicapped
woman with an intellectual disability	retarded, idiot, moron, Down's person
person with a mental health disorder	crazy, mental, psycho
boy with a brain injury	brain damaged boy
person with a visual impairment	blind person
man with cerebral palsy	victim of/suffering with cerebral palsy
people without a disability	able-bodied, whole, normal



Tips for Communication Actions

Etiquette considered appropriate when interacting with people with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Listed below are tips to help you communicate with people with disabilities.

1. Listen attentively to what the person is saying, both verbally and non-verbally.
2. Do not assume you understand without making sure that you do.
3. Listen actively, be patient, and if necessary, review.
4. Ask questions to clarify certain needs.
5. Gather all information that could help you.
6. Don't worry about using everyday terminology that seems to relate to a person's disability like "I see", "I hear what you're saying", or "I've got to run now".
7. Give your whole, unhurried attention when talking to a person who has speech difficulties. Patience is a virtue!
8. When talking to a person with a disability, speak directly to him or her, rather than "through" a companion that may be along.
9. When giving directions to a person who uses a wheelchair or has mobility limitations, consider distance, weather, steep hills, stairs, etc.
10. When directing a person with a visual impairment, be fairly specific. For example: "The ladder leading to the pool is about 3 steps directly to your right."
11. When speaking with a person with a hearing impairment, face them directly, speak clearly, avoid standing in shadows, and make sure to keep your hands and other objects away from your mouth.
12. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair, stand far enough back that the person you're talking to doesn't get a sore neck from looking up at you. If appropriate, pull up a chair so your eye level is equal.
13. It's okay to ask people to repeat themselves if you don't understand the first time. Remember, they may be as frustrated about not being able to make themselves understood as you are at not being able to understand. Try another way of communicating, like pictures or written words.



Barriers to Inclusion

By being creative and finding ways to overcome barriers that prevent inclusion, people with disabilities are more able to participate in recreational activities. Social and recreational providers can help by being aware of these barriers and taking pro-active steps to ensure that they are not limiting anyone's participation.

Physical Barriers

Any structure or construction that physically prevents a person from gaining access to an area or service, or that causes a person difficulty.

Examples of how people with disabilities have encountered physical barriers:

- stairs for people who use wheelchairs or other assistive transportation
- reception desks that are too high for people of short stature or who use a wheelchair to reach
- restrooms or change rooms that are too small for people who use wheelchairs, have mobility issues or require assistance

Communication Barriers

Any barrier that results in difficulties gaining access to information in a way that can be interpreted by the individual, or that prevents access altogether.

Examples of how people with disabilities have encountered communication barriers:

- font size used in forms or brochures that is too small for people with visual impairments to read
- a staff that speaks too quickly or unclearly for a people who reads lips
- stringing too many instructions together for a person who has an intellectual disability to understand

Systemic Barriers

A barrier in the sense that certain policies or practices may, without necessarily intending to, exclude certain groups from participation.

Examples of how people with disabilities have encountered systemic barriers:

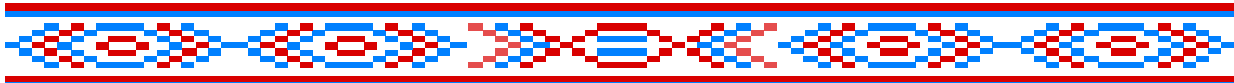
- the implementation of "special programs" for people with disabilities, instead of providing adequate support for all people to participate in the mainstream program.
- lack of sufficiently trained staff to provide instruction or support to participate
- policies that prohibit animals may prevent people who use assistive dogs from participating

Behavioral Barriers

Negative beliefs or ideas concerning the abilities of others, often lead to unfair treatment.

Examples of how people with disabilities have encountered behavioral barriers:

- disallowing a person labeled with an intellectual disability to register for a recreational program because of an assumption that they will require too much help
- parents of a child registered in a recreation program protesting the participation of a child who has a disability because it will "take away" from their own child
- refusal to allow a person with a disability to register in a program because there is an assumption that they couldn't keep up



Benefits of Inclusion

Inclusion doesn't just benefit the person with the disability who is participating in social/recreational programs or activities. It benefits the other participants, the organization sponsoring the program, and society as a whole. Here are just a few answers to the question "What's in it for us?".

Benefits to People with Disabilities

- Participants can have opportunities to increase skills, improve communication and experience new things.
- Quality of life may be improved. This can include aspects of life such as health, social connections, support networks and self esteem.
- Opportunities for choice and independence are increased.

Benefits to Other Participants

- People are educated - myths and assumptions are put to rest.
- Participants have the opportunity to make social connections and friends.
- Encourages the development of positive values and attitudes.

Benefits to Your Organization

- There are approximately 3 million Canadians who have disabilities. That person with the disability who paid the registration fee to participate in your program, may also bring their friends or family along. This represents a considerable amount of purchasing power.
- Keep in mind that any improvements making your facility more physically accessible for people with disabilities will also improve accessibility for others: parents with children in strollers, seniors, delivery services, etc. Increasing accessibility could increase your clientele.
- Sensitivity to the diversity of the community is evident and it reflects well on your organization.

Benefits to the Community

- A more accepting community, that sees value in everyone, regardless of any differences or abilities.
- Inclusion of people with disabilities paves the way for acknowledging the rights of all people to be included, regardless of race, gender, financial status, color, sexual orientation, religion, etc.
- Inclusion helps increase tolerance of differences while teaching that we are all more the same than we are different.



Organizational Policies

The policies and practices of an organization have the power to limit or increase the inclusion of people with disabilities. Policies are the rules and regulations that the organization operates by. Practices mean what an organization regularly does, even if it's not written in the form of a policy.

All organizations serving the public should develop policies that promote the inclusion of people with disabilities so we can all enjoy the same opportunities and benefits. The implementation of policies also prevents your staff from having to make on-the-spot decisions. When policies are clear for staff, decisions are easy to make.

The following are just a few policy suggestions that can help facilitate the participation of people with disabilities in your organization.

Policy Statement Welcoming People with Disabilities

Welcoming Statements are used to welcome participants to your facility or program and they provide information on accessibility features that you provide. Some Welcoming Statements may also include the contact information for the person in your organization who is responsible for facilitating effective participation. Another option is to list the accessibility or welcoming features within your organization in your promotional material.

Examples:

“The Aurora Drama Centre is dedicated to enriching our territory; reaching out to an ever-changing population through quality education programs, accessibility services and a diverse array of the finest performing arts presented at our state-of-the-art facilities that both compliment and enhance the patron experience.”

“In an effort to provide arts for all, the Aurora Arts Facility offers numerous programs for people of all abilities. Whether you take a class, attend a play or concert, visit our galleries, or help as a volunteer, we want you to feel comfortable here. If you're visiting for the first time, welcome and come on in!”

“The Aurora Recreation Club is committed to making its facility and programs accessible to all patrons. Each request is viewed on an individual basis, and we will do our best to make accommodations whenever possible.”

“We welcome the opportunity to assist residents with disabilities to enjoy all Aurora City's facilities, programs and services. For assistance and information on accessibility, contact John Doe at (555) 555-5555.”



Organizational Policies

Service Animals

Service animals are animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities such as guiding people who are visually impaired, alerting people who are hearing impaired, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, or performing other special tasks. Service animals are working animals, not pets. All organizations should allow the admittance of service animals in public places. Staff also need to know how to handle the situation if the animal happens to be disruptive or if another participant or patron complains.

Organizational Training

From front-line coaches and service staff all the way to the executive director and board members, training is an essential component for effectively serving people with disabilities. General training on disability awareness and appropriate terminology is beneficial to staff at all levels. Additionally, training should be tailored to job responsibilities. This is where programs can be more specific on procedures such as taking requests for accommodations at a reception desk, coaching strategies, greeting and/or seating patrons with disabilities, maintaining equipment like assistive listening devices, etc.

Personal Support Attendants

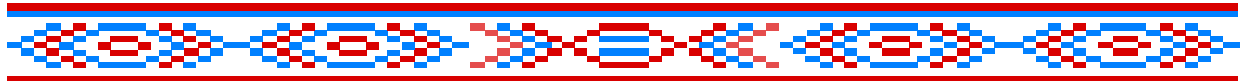
A Personal Support Attendant is someone who provides assistance to a person with a disability to help that person achieve maximum personal independence. The support person can provide assistance in the community or at home with every day tasks that a person without a disability would generally be doing without assistance. Many organizations have policies that waive admission fees for attendants of people with disabilities participating in social and recreational programs or events. This is because the organizations are aware that some people with disabilities require support to participate effectively and without the support they may not be able to participate at all.

Auxiliary Aids and Services

Auxiliary aids and services such as assistive listening devices, bowling ball ramps, accessible change rooms, etc. should be checked regularly to make sure they are working properly. Staff should know where assistive devices are kept and how to operate any special equipment. This includes testing wheelchair lifts. Also consider surveying patrons with disabilities periodically. Ask them how inclusive your organization is; if other auxiliary aids or services would be helpful; if your signage is clear and concise; if there are any suggestions for improving services for future performances, events or programs, etc.

Accessibility Coordinator

All organizations should have one employee that is responsible for coordinating inclusion and ensuring accessibility. This person would be responsible for finding out the information they need to ensure that programs and facilities are welcoming to all people. They should also play a part in the development of policies and contribute to staff training.



Accommodations or Adaptations

When providers of social, recreation or leisure activities think of accommodating or adapting programs or activities for people with disabilities, many think that it requires extensive and expensive man hours and equipment . Other obstacles may include a fear of the unknown and an uncertainty of how to include people with disabilities. Through working together, people with disabilities and service providers can change obstacles to opportunities. Attitudes and practices can shift dramatically and inclusive programs and settings can become the norm.

Historically, when a person with a disability registered for a recreation program, they would have been referred to a “special” (segregated) program where specifically trained staff would “know what to do”. Or perhaps the person with the disability wouldn’t have registered at all, because their communities weren’t inclusive or welcoming. Times have changed and the new reality is that all programs must be open and accessible. Along with assumptions about costly equipment and other resources, there are often assumptions that a person with a disability needs a full-time support person to accompany them. This is not necessarily the case. Something to keep in mind: when a person with a disability does have a support person accompanying them, the support person is not an activity leader. Their purpose is to respond to the needs of the person with the disability, work in a coordinated manner with the leader, but not organize or lead the activity.

Here are some principles to keep in mind when adapting an activity:

Adapt only when necessary

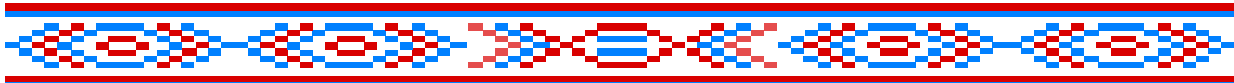
Many people with disabilities don’t require any modifications to participate effectively. Don’t make assumptions... ask first. Communication is key.

Adapt on an individual basis

The Northwest Territories is diverse and so are people’s needs. Do not design “special needs” programs or modifications that you think may be a “one size fits all” solution for all people with disabilities. Find out what adaptations, if any, people need before making changes to the regular program. Creativity is key.

View any adaptations as temporary

Consider any modifications as short-term, until the person can learn the skills and/or behaviours of a certain activity. Inflexible changes to programs can cause unnecessary reliance on the modification; limiting future options and opportunities. In some cases, modifications may be permanent, like in the case of the on-going use of a wheelchair. Flexibility is key.



Resources

EnableLink: Sports and Recreation Article Archives - Abilities Magazine

articles about sports and recreation by Canada's foremost cross-disability lifestyle magazine
www.enablelink.org/sports/sport_view_article.php?showsports=1

Active Living Alliance for Canadians with Disabilities

promotes, supports and enables Canadians with disabilities to lead active, healthy lives
www.ala.ca

Canadian Association for Community Living

a Canada-wide association of family members and others working for the benefit of persons of all ages who have an intellectual disability
www.cacl.ca

Human Resources Social Development Canada - Office of Disability Issues

the focal point within the Government of Canada for key partners working to promote the full participation of Canadians with disabilities in learning, work and community life
www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/gateways/nav/top_nav/program/odi.shtml

NWT Council of Person's with Disabilities

works to achieve self-determination and full citizenship for Persons with Disabilities by promoting awareness, opportunities, choices and participation in all aspects of life in the Northwest Territories.
www.nwtability.ca/

People First of Canada

is the national voice for people who have been labeled with an intellectual disability.
www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca



Gum Boot Rally 2006



Yellowknife Association for Community Living

**4912 - 53rd Street,
P.O. Box 981,
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2N7
Phone: (867) 873-3749
Fax: (867) 920-2348**

EmployABILITY - Phone: (867) 873-3560 E-mail: employability@ykacl.ca

Family Project - Phone: (867) 766-4294 E-mail: inclusion@ykacl.ca

Literacy Outreach Centre - Phone: (867) 920-3016 E-mail: programs@ykacl.ca

Living and Learning with FASD Project - Phone: (867) 873-9069 E-mail: fasd@ykacl.ca

Respite Service - Phone: (867) 766-4295 E-mail: respite@ykacl.ca

Skills Training & Inclusion Program - Phone: (867) 873-2218 E-mail: summercafe@ykacl.ca

Supported Living Programs - Phone: (867) 9873-9061 E-mail: sil@ykacl.ca

Guided by the statement of beliefs, our Board of Directors creates the mission and monitors how well the Association is working in its achievement. The board establishes goals and actions through strategic planning. At the monthly meetings board members provide insight and direction to the Executive Director of the Association, review the progress of programs, explore advocacy opportunities, and plan for the future.

If you are interested in volunteering for our Board, assisting with fundraising, participating on one of our committees or helping out with community inclusion activities, please contact us and let us know how you'd like to help.

