

Accessibility and Episodic Disabilities

Accessibility

ESDC - Employment and Social Development Canada states that, “Accessibility in Canada is about creating places and services that enable everyone to participate fully in society without barriers.”

[Making an accessible Canada for people with disabilities - Canada.ca](#)

“Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities. Ontario has laws to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, including the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Ontario Building Code.”

[Definitions – Accessibility Services Canada \(accessibilitycanada.ca\)](#)

Episodic Disabilities

Episodic disabilities are life-long conditions or diseases, such as diabetes, HIV, cancer, lupus, lyme and other tick borne illnesses, fibromyalgia, other diseases, mental health challenges, and learning disabilities for which there is no cure and some days are better than others.

People living with episodic disabilities experience periods of fluctuating degrees of wellness/good health and disability/ill health and rely on proper care, monitoring and treatment.

A person can simultaneously live with both permanent episodic disability; however, there are clear distinctions. Periods of wellness in episodic disability are unpredictable. Information:

[What is Episodic Disability? – Realize \(realizecanada.org\)](#)

[Episodic Disabilities Network - About](#)



Accessibility Terminology

The Federal Translation Bureau developed an [Accessibility Glossary](#) where you can find preferred designations and definitions, including:

Disability: A physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, sensory, learning or communication impairment, or a functional limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that hinders a person's full and equal participation in society when facing a barrier.

Barrier: A physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal obstacle, based on information or communications or resulting from a policy or a practice, that hinders the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

Invisible Disabilities: Looks can be deceiving. Not all disabilities are visible.

Accessibility and Episodic Disabilities

Invisible disabilities range from minor challenges to severe limitations, vary from person to person and may limit daily activities.

Remember that many disabilities are invisible. *Please think before you judge!*

Words to Describe People With Disabilities

Don't say "handicapped, physically challenged, invalid, or physically impaired". **You should say a person with a disability.**

Don't say "handicapped parking or handicapped washroom". **You should say accessible parking or accessible washroom.**

Don't say the "blind". **You should say the person who is blind.**

If you are not sure about the type, or the category, of a person's disability, you should use the term **person with a disability**.

Accessible Canada Act

The purpose of the Bill C-81 the [Accessible Canada Act](#) is an act to make Canada barrier-free.

Under the act, "**disability** means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 \(ontario.ca\)](#)

"barrier" means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice;

"disability" means,

(a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech

Some disabilities look like this



Some look like this



Accessibility and Episodic Disabilities

impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
(b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
(c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
(d) a mental disorder, or
(e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997;

Service Animals

Fact: 1 in 5 Canadians qualifies for a service/support animal.

Fact: Airlines are imposing more requirements to make traveling with a service/support animal more difficult.

Fact: Service/Support animals do not need to have a harness or vest that identifies “Service Animal” or “ESA”.

Fact: There are many kinds of service animals: dogs, cats, birds, horses and others.

Fact: Not all types of service animals have the same legal rights in each jurisdiction in Canada. Other countries have their own definitions and rights for service animals.



Service Animals and the Canada Health Act

The Canada Health Act is the federal legislation that provides the foundation for the Canadian health care system. [Canada Health Act - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-health-act)

Provincial laws relating to **service animals**:

- Alberta • Service Animals Act
- British Columbia • Guide Animal Act
- Manitoba • The Service Animals Protection Act
- New Brunswick • Human Rights Act
- Newfoundland & Labrador • Human Rights Act
- Northwest Territories • Human Rights Act
- Nova Scotia • Human Rights Act
- Nunavut • Human Rights Act
- Ontario • Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities
- Prince Edward Island • Human Rights Act
- Quebec • Individuals with Disabilities Act
- Saskatchewan • Human Rights Code
- Yukon • Human Rights Act



Tips for Interacting With People With Disabilities

- Don't make assumptions about people or their disabilities.
- Speak directly to the person, not to the interpreter or attendant.
- Speak normally and use common language including “see you later”, “let's walk to the meeting” or “have you heard the news”, regardless of their disability.
- Respect their personal space.

Accessibility and Episodic Disabilities

- Don't touch, move, or lean on assistive devices such as a wheelchair, scooter, or cane.
- When in doubt, be honest. Communicate calmly and professionally.
- Ask the person: "Can I help?"

The Accommodation Process

Accommodation is achieved through individual assessment; therefore a case-by-case approach must be used in any environment.

This can be accommodation at home, work, school, places of worship, community buildings, public spaces, retail stores, office environments, etc.

The responsibility for accommodation lies with the person or organization who owns and manages the space. This could be a building owner or operator, homeowner, municipality, landlord, company/business, federal government department, provincial ministry, individual or an employer depending on the space.



Many modalities can be involved in assessments including doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, ergonomic specialist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, diagnostic tests, etc.

Some people may also require accommodation related to their service animal regardless of the animal's specialty for example diabetic alert, canine vision, hearing, seizure response, service(formerly known as Special Skills), autism assistance, facility support, emotional support and others.

Some businesses, school boards, places of worship, charities and employers have an accessibility coordinator or program.

For episodic disabilities, the type of accommodation required can vary with the person's limitations during a specific episode.

How to be an Accessibility Ally

7 suggestions you can do to support people with disabilities:

- Listen to people with disabilities.
- Speak up about barriers in the home, school, workplace, community.
- Organize accessible meetings and events.
- Create accessible documents.
- Remember that disability is not inability.
- Build an inclusive school or workplace.
- Hire and promote people with disabilities including volunteers.

How to Organize Accessible Meetings or Events

You can organize accessible meetings or events in 3 easy steps:

Accessibility and Episodic Disabilities

1. Find the most accessible venue.
2. Plan to leverage accessibility products and services (e.g. sign language interpreters, captioning services).
3. Communicate accessibility requirements in your invitation.
 - **Scent-free environment:** some participants may have environmental sensitivities, please refrain from using fragranced products.
 - **Accommodation:** if you have a requirement for accommodation, please advise us by email or phone no later than XX date.

How to Create Accessible Documents

- Choose fonts and styles that are easy to read. Sans serif styles such as Arial or Verdana are recommended. Font should always be 12 or larger.
- Ensure a good color contrast for text (e.g. black text on a white background).
- Ensure hyperlinks have context and write the name as link text, for example [Accessible Canada Act \(justice.gc.ca\)](https://www.justice.gc.ca)
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 \(ontario.ca\)](https://www.ontario.ca)
- Describe pictures using “Alt Text”. Right click on the image and select “Edit ALT TEXT”.
- Create a heading structure.
- Use built-in functions for table of contents, bullets, headers, footers and page numbers.
- If your data is best presented in a table, keep the table simple.
- Use plain language. Keep it short and simple

How to Write in Plain Language

Plain language makes it easier to read, understand and use various types of communications. It helps readers understand the information you share the first time. It also helps your family, friends, coworkers or classmates with visual impairment, dyslexia, autism or other disabilities. Writing in plain language ensures everyone can understand your message.

What you can do:

- Make it clear.
- Organize the information.
- Write simple words.
- Use visual information for print documents.
- Make it accessible.

Run the readability checker using Microsoft.

Adaptive Technology Hardware and Software

This includes both hardware and software.

Accessibility and Episodic Disabilities

- **Hardware**
 - Ergonomic mouses
 - Adjustable keyboards
 - Adjustable desks
- **Software**
 - Magnifiers and readers
 - Speech recognition
 - Voice dictation
 - CART Services
 - Captioning



2017 Canadian Survey on Disability

- In 2017, one in five (22%) of the Canadian population aged 15 years and over – or about 6.2 million individuals – had one or more disabilities.
- The prevalence of disability increased with age, from 13% for those aged 15 to 24 years to 47% for those aged 75 years and over.
- Women (24%) were more likely to have a disability than men (20%).
- The prevalence of type of disabilities were in the following order: pain (15%), flexibility (10%), mobility (10%), mental health (7%), seeing (5%), hearing (5%), dexterity (5%), learning (4%) and memory (4%).
- Among youth, mental health-related disabilities were the most prevalent type of disability (8%).
- Among those aged 25 to 64 years, persons with disabilities were less likely to be employed (59%) than those without (80%).
- As the level of severity increased, the likelihood of being employed decreased. Among individuals aged 25 to 64 years, 76% of those with mild disabilities were employed, whereas 31% of those with very severe disabilities were employed.
- Among those with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years who were not employed and not currently in school, two in five (39%) had potential to work. This represents nearly 645,000 individuals with disabilities.
- Persons with more severe disabilities (28%) aged 25 to 64 years were more likely to be living in poverty than their counterparts without disabilities (10%) or with milder disabilities (14%).

Unconscious Bias Toward People With Disabilities

Unconscious biases are attitudes and beliefs about people with disabilities. They can be either positive or negative. We all have biases. This is not our fault.

While it is normal to have unconscious biases, it is our responsibility to be more aware. We need to recognize and try to avoid them to create a positive, respectful and inclusive places for people with disabilities.

What you can do:

- Use self-reflection to be more aware about your potential biases.
- Try to identify your unconscious biases.
- Listen to others to understand their perspective.

Accessibility and Episodic Disabilities

- Use rational rather than intuitive thinking. Use facts and data to challenge your assumptions.

How to Create An Inclusive Space

Think of inclusivity as the next step to successfully supporting a diverse community. It's about creating a place where all people can speak up, be heard, and feel welcome.

To create an inclusive space, we need to be:

- Open
- Welcoming
- Flexible
- Respectful
- Considerate
- Accommodating
- Engaging

How To Be More Inclusive By Design

The best way to be more inclusive is to follow the universal design which helps to create products or services that can be understood, accessed and used by all people, regardless of their ability.

- Equitable use
- Flexibility in use
- Simple and intuitive use
- Perceptible information
- Tolerance for error
- Low physical effort
- Size and space for approach and use

“A very common example of universal design is the access ramp. Although it is essential for a person in a wheelchair, it's also beneficial for someone with a broken leg, or a parent pushing a stroller. Other examples include: automatic doors, sidewalk ramps, flexible work spaces, automatic closed captioning, volume controls on auditory output, plain languages, etc.” From PSPC intranet

[conception-design-eng.pdf \(tpsqc-pwgsc.qc.ca\)](#)

Summary

Disabilities can be permanent or episodic, physical, psychological, or perceptual.

Not all disabilities are visible. Many are invisible.

Be aware of your own bias, assumptions and get the facts.

Treat everyone with respect and kindness, including yourself.