

WHAT IS INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

Description

Inclusion is about “Including people with disabilities in everyday activities and encouraging them to have roles similar to their peers who do not have a disability [...]”. It requires understanding of what challenges people are facing “and making sure everybody has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires.”

Who should be involved in including people with disabilities?

- People with disabilities
- Caregivers, families, friends
- Community members
- Decision-makers and leaders

Everyone has a part to play in inclusion!

Why is inclusion important?

Increased earnings and labour productivity:

when workplaces are adapted to employees with disabilities, it creates opportunities to earn a salary and adds more workers to the workforce.

Improved individual and family well-being:

allows everyone to...

- Take on significant life roles (student, worker, spouse, parent, etc.).
- Participate in activities (cultural/social events, moving around, day-to-day activities).
- Break individual and family isolation.
- Increase feelings of worthiness, ability, self-determination (especially with work).

Accessible and inclusive environments benefit everyone:

- Everyone benefits from adaptations that improve mobility and communication (e.g., elders, pregnant women, parents with small children, and speakers of a second language).
- Making environments accessible and inclusive may encourage acceptance of diversity and increase tolerance, equity, and cohesion.

Barriers to inclusion

Attitudes: Some beliefs and attitudes towards people with disabilities may limit/reduce inclusion, (e.g., lack of awareness, discomfort, stereotyping, stigma and discrimination).

Communication: Messages may be shared in ways that prevent some people from receiving them. (e.g., use of small print only, text or video only (without other visual or audio supports), technical language, long sentences, complex words).

Physical environment: Structural obstacles limiting mobility or access, (e.g., steps blocking wheelchair access to a building, poor lighting affecting visibility, heavy doors requiring strength).

Policy barriers: Denying people with disabilities from accessing programs, services, jobs or other benefits despite existing laws enforcing their right to equity.

Programmatic barriers: Elements that limit the access to a program/event/activity (e.g., inconvenient scheduling, lack of accessible equipment/space, little or no communication with participants, organizer's attitudes, lack of knowledge and understanding of disabilities).

Social barriers: The conditions in which people live, grow and learn can affect how much they will develop their skills, talents and strengths to overcome challenges.

Transportation barriers: A lack of adapted transportation may interfere with a person's ability to function independently in their community.

Inaccurate concerns over regarding disability inclusion:

- Cost: The real cost of inclusion is much lower than perceived. For example, building an accessible house may cost only 0 to 2% more. This is much less than renovating an existing house.
- Perceptions that inclusion requires difficult/specialty changes or special programming: Many adaptations are simple, requiring some teamwork and creative solutions (e.g., taking extra time for longer breaks, sharing an existing adapted bus between different organizations).

How to include people with disabilities?

- Involve people with disabilities in all steps of projects/programs and events development.
- Give fair treatment to everyone.
- Make products and communications accessible to all.
- Build houses, streets, playgrounds, fitness/pool facilities, cultural/traditional sites and public buildings that are accessible to everyone.
- Modify items, procedures, or systems to enable everyone to use them as much as possible.
- Eliminate the belief that people with disabilities are unhealthy or less capable.

Tips

Persons with disabilities & caregivers:

You are the specialist of yourself. As much as possible, help your community, clinic, family, etc., understand your or your loved-one's needs. Advocate for what you need.

Families, friends, community members:

You can be part of the solution. Check with the person and their caregiver in how you can provide support. With their permission, advocate for them and help your community to put supports in place.

Program, event or activity organizers, Decision-makers:

Keep inclusion in mind from the start. Ask people with disabilities and their caregivers what they want/need. Here are a few ideas that can help:

- Share a detailed schedule of the activity beforehand so they can plan.
- Use pictures to describe your activities.
- Have a quiet space (hallway, area, etc.) available for people to take a break.
- Ensure someone with mobility issues can get to the site and move around the space.
- Call for volunteers to accompany the person in the event. They could speak with the person (or caregivers) beforehand to find out what the person wants/needs.

Breaking discomfort & stigma:

Get to know each other.

- Treat everyone as you would like to be treated.
- Ask the other person what they want or need, do not assume.
- Talk in the same way as you speak with anybody else.
- Involve people with disabilities in regular community decisions, gatherings, activities.

Where can clients and caregivers get more information?

Click on the links:

- [CDC – Communicating with and about people with disabilities](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control – Disability inclusion](#)
- [Quebec's Building Accessibility Guidelines](#)
- [Cree Nation Government – Apatisiwin Skills Development Program](#)

