Section 1: Introduction

About Our School Community

For over 40 years, Coquitlam College has been providing a quality education, allowing students direct entry to universities across Canada and North America. Our students have easily transitioned to studies at prestigious Canadian universities such as the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, the University of Northern British Columbia and the University of Toronto as well as other degree-granting post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

Our leadership team includes a Board, a President, Department Heads, teaching staff and support/non-teaching staff.

The Board of Coquitlam College approves policies and the direction of the school. Board meetings occur once a semester. The Board has also provided the President and the Senior Leadership Team with the ability to establish policies and procedures that are relevant and appropriate for a post-secondary program.

At Coquitlam College, we uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in all our business activities. We are committed to the principles of honesty, integrity, and responsible stewardship in every aspect of our institution. Our dedication to ethical business practice is guided by the following principles:

• Integrity: We conduct ourselves with unwavering honesty, transparency, and fairness in all our operations.
• Accountability: We are responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to us, and we are committed to efficient, ethical, and sustainable management.
• Respect: We value diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we treat all individuals with respect, dignity, and fairness.
• Compliance: We strictly adhere to all applicable laws, regulations, and industry standards, maintaining the highest standards of legal and ethical behavior.
• Confidentiality: We protect the privacy and confidentiality of sensitive information, both personal and institutional, and ensure the security of data.
• Sustainability: We are dedicated to environmentally responsible practices, promoting sustainability, and minimizing our ecological footprint.
• Community Engagement: We actively engage with our local and global communities, contributing positively to society through ethical and socially responsible initiatives.
• Continuous Improvement: We commit to ongoing self-assessment and improvement, regularly reviewing and enhancing our business practices.
• Ethical Leadership: We provide ethical leadership at all levels of our organization, setting a strong example by promoting ethical behavior and fostering a culture of accountability.
• Transparency: We provide clear and accessible information to our stakeholders about our operations, policies, and financial activities.

• Student Recruiting: We conduct student recruiting with utmost integrity, ensuring that all prospective students receive fair, accurate, and transparent information about our programs, admissions criteria, and financial considerations.

• International Students: We treat international students with fairness, respect, and cultural sensitivity. We strive to provide comprehensive support services to ensure their successful integration into our academic community, always prioritizing their well-being, academic progress, and unique needs.

• Duty of Care: We acknowledge our duty of care to all members of our college community, including students, faculty, staff, and partners. We are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment that promotes well-being and academic success.

At Coquitlam College, our commitment to ethical business practice is integral to our mission of providing quality education, fostering intellectual growth, and promoting values of integrity, respect, and responsibility. We believe that ethical conduct, including our duty of care, is not only a foundation of trust but also essential to the success and reputation of our institution.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Coquitlam College acknowledges that our campus is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn, work, and connect on this land.

A Message from the Board/Administrator

At Coquitlam College, we are committed to providing a learning and working environment that supports all students and staff and provides equitable opportunities to support our diverse community. A key element to supporting our community is the development of a Three-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan identifies system needs, priorities, and action plans, and draws on feedback from our school community and the work of the Accessibility Committee to enhance equity of access to programming and our facilities.

This committee keeps our school apprised as to the requirements of the Accessibly BC Act and shares resources to support the reduction of accessibility barriers within the independent school sector.

Coquitlam College has created a Three-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan identifies measurable actions across the pillars of the Accessibility Act, supporting equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access.

We recognize the importance of accessibility not only for those with disabilities, but also for the benefit of the entire community. We are committed to improving equity and ease of access to services, as well as

access to our facilities. Through the actions in this Three-Year Accessibility Plan, we commit to continuous improvements in developing an environment that supports all students, staff and the larger school community.

Definitions

Accessibility: The state of having programs, services and environments that allow all individuals to participate fully in society without encountering barriers.

Accessibility Committee: An official group formed by one or more organizations in collaboration with people with disabilities, to create an accessibility plan and feedback mechanism.

Accessibility Plan: A plan developed by an Accessibility Committee that identifies challenges and solutions for addressing accessibility barriers.

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. This includes architectural, attitudinal, information, communications, policy or practice, and technological barriers. Types of barriers:

1. Attitudinal – Behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions that discriminate against persons with disabilities. These barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, judge, or have misconceptions about a person with a disability.

2. Buildings or facilities – There are elements of buildings or outdoor spaces that create barriers to persons with disabilities. These barriers relate to elements such as the design of a building's stairs or doorways, the layout of rooms, or the width of halls and sidewalks.

3. Classroom environment – There are physical barriers accessing or using a classroom. examples: spaces between tables being too narrow for a student in a wheelchair to navigate easily, room acoustics, or inaccessible washrooms.

4. Course materials – example: Videos, technology, platforms, or resources that are not accessible or cannot be used with an assistive device.

5. Course design – example: use of inaccessible systems, learning experiences, or assessments.

6. eTextbooks and associated courseware – example: technology, platforms, or resources that are not accessible or cannot be used with an assistive device.

7. IT/technology – Technological barriers occur when a device or technological platform is not accessible to its intended audience and cannot be used with an assistive device.

8. Information or communications – Information or communications barriers occur when sensory disabilities, such as hearing, seeing, or learning disabilities, have not been considered. These barriers related to both the sending and receiving of information.

9. Library and library materials – example: the ability to use the library spaces (building) or access and use physical, electronic, or digital library resources and materials.

10. Registrar services – example: policies, procedures, or practices that can prevent individuals from participating fully at the College.

11. Recruitment/employment opportunities process – example: policies, procedures, or practices that can prevent individuals from participating fully at the College.
12. Signage (Facilities) – example: physical or digital signage and wayfinding across the physical campus.
13. Other student service or support – example: policies, procedures, or practices that can prevent individuals from participating fully at the College.

Other barriers beyond those listed above.

Disability: The state of being unable to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction between an impairment and a barrier. (For more information about disability and types of disability and support, refer to Appendix A: Disabilities.)

Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

Section 2: Framework Guiding Our Work

The Coquitlam College – Brookmere Accessibility Plan builds on global, national, provincial and school specific actions to promote and support accessibility.

Global Context – United Nations

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion within the workplace and within the larger community. The United Nations has been instrumental in leading the importance of disability as a global health issue. In 2006, the United Nations led efforts to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In 2010, Canada ratified the CRPD and described the CPRD as follows:

"The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human right treaty aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the Convention of the rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law."

Canadian Context and Legislation – Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canada-wide, around one in five people had some form of disability in 2017. Nationally, Canadian accessibility legislation started in 1985 where disability was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in 1986, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were included in the new federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force in 2019, with the overarching goal to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This act applies to federally regulated entities. The ACA has seven focus areas, and was developed based on the following guiding principles:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities.
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.

4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
5. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.
6. PWDs must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures.
7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for PWDs.

B.C. Context and Legislation - Accessible B.C. Act

The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June 2021, and initially the accessibility planning requirements only applied to provincial government organizations.

The Accessible British Columbia Regulation, under the Accessible British Columbia Act, came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations, and school districts and independent schools will be required to have an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a tool to receive feedback on accessibility by September 1, 2023:

The goal of the act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and involve them in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

Principles in the Accessible B.C. Act:

The Accessible B.C. Act includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop an accessibility plan. The Definitions are adapted from the foundational document [BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation](#).

1. Adaptability: Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

2. Collaboration: Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for Organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.

3. Diversity: Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience greatly inform the experiences of individuals. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.

4. Inclusion: All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.

5. Self-Determination: Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

6. Universal Design: The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as "the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability." An accessibility plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who interact with the Organization.

Our Commitment to Accessibility:

Accessibility refers to the degree of ease with which people with disabilities can use and enjoy something such as a device, service, or place. At Coquitlam College, we are committed to providing an environment that is accessible and practical for all members of our diverse community. We recognize the importance of conscious planning, design, and effort in ensuring that barriers are removed and accessibility is increased.

Our school is committed to working collaboratively with the community to provide equitable treatment to people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity. To achieve this goal, we have outlined the following commitments:

- Engage with staff, community members and people with disabilities in the development and review of its accessibility plan.
- Ensure that our school board policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility.
- Improve access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and community members.
- Continually improve accessibility for people with disabilities in our school community.

Our Approach:

At Coquitlam College, we believe that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an opportunity to participate, and provided with access to learning and community. Our approach is grounded in the core provincial principles of accessibility, including adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination and universal design.

In 2023, we began the process of establishing an accessibility committee and identifying barriers to accessibility in our school community. This process involved:

- Calling for applications for members of the Accessibility Committee
- Assessing the current physical and architectural accessibility of our school.
- Conducting surveys and interviews to understand the issues, challenges, and priorities of stakeholders within our school community
- Holding key discussions to identify barriers to accessibility
- Developing a school feedback tool
- Prioritization of actions to be taken
- Establishing a monitoring and evaluation process

Our approach is designed to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility in our school community. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action, we aim to deliver lasting accessibility improvements for all members of our community.

Section 3: The Accessibility Committee

Purpose of the Accessibility Committee
Under the Accessible B.C. Act, organizations must establish an Accessibility Committee to assist with identifying and preventing barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization. The purpose of the accessibility committee is to work collaboratively to assess and improve community accessibility, focusing on the experiences of individuals with disabilities while encompassing the whole community. The Accessibility Committee also advises the Board on strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory and other barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all aspects of school community life.

Recruitment to the Accessibility Committee
Under the Accessible B.C. Act, the selection of accessibility committee members must, to the extent possible, align with the following goals:

- At least half the members are persons with disabilities (PWD), or individuals who support or are from organizations that support PWDs;
- At least one member is an Indigenous person; and
- Members reflect the diversity of persons in B.C.

A callout for applications to the Accessibility Committee was conducted in November 2023 to recruit a diverse representation as outlined above. The Accessibility Committee was formally constituted in December 2023. Current members of the Accessibility Coordinating Committee are listed below.

Section 3: The Accessibility Committee (12)

Committee Member	Position/ Representation
Nicole Baxter	Chair
Becca Dougherty	Secretary
Audrey McDougall	Indigenous Rep
Marina Chekunova	Member
Sonya Plater	Member
Sonia Chhabra	Member
Ian Heckman	Member
Franco Acosta Teleg	Member
Jade Robinson	Member
Meghan Belcher	Member
Catherine Carnrite	Member

Section 4: Consultation Conducted

Barrier-identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Committee used the following barrier-identification methods:

Methodology	Description	Status
Audit of policies and practices	A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion was conducted by key staff members.	March **Complete**
Survey to Staff	An accessibility and inclusion survey was developed and distributed to staff.	April
Survey to Parents/Guardians	An accessibility and inclusion survey was developed and distributed to parents/guardians.	April **Complete**
School Physical Accessibility Audit	An Assessment of School Physical Accessibility was developed. An audit team was identified, and they conducted the School Physical Accessibility Audit.	April **Complete**
Accessibility Feedback Tool	A feedback tool was developed and posted to the school website. Information about the tool was shared with school stakeholders (i.e., students, staff, outside professionals and parents/guardians).	April **Complete**
Accessibility Committee	The Accessible Committee reviewed the input and feedback from the survey, assessment, and feedback tool. The Committee collaborated to suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan. This was shared with administrators and the Board, who gave the final approval of priority areas for the plan.	**Ongoing 2023-2026**

Section 5: Accessibility Feedback Tool

Coquitlam College developed an online feedback tool that included a series of questions about accessibility experiences that students, staff and members of the school community could complete. The tool was posted to the main page of the school website and an information announcement about the tool was provided to students, staff and parents/guardians. Feedback could be anonymous, or people could add their name and contact information if they wished to be contacted. There was also an option for people to upload a video, voice recording or photo(s).

The following are the contents of the online Accessibility Feedback Tool.

Report an Accessibility Barrier or Support

We want to learn about specific barriers that people face when they are trying to:

- Access a school program, building or school information
- Receive a service or support

The Coquitlam College Accessibility Committee will review your responses to the questions below for their consideration. This information can be submitted anonymously, or you can provide your contact details at the bottom of accessibility feedback form if you wish to be contacted.

1. Please provide the date the barrier or support was experienced.
2. Please select the location where the barrier or support was experienced.
3. What were you or someone you know trying to access?
4. Accessibility barrier or support details (be as specific as possible).
5. Do you have any recommendations for what would make it better?
6. Attach files if you wish to provide additional information (e.g., video, voice recording, photos).
7. Please provide your name and email or phone number if you would like to be contacted. (optional)

Thank you for providing your valuable feedback! You will be contacted shortly if you provide your contact details.

Section 6: Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers

Key Discussion Themes – Accessibility Accomplishments Identified

The guiding principles of inclusive practice inform school programs, policies, practices, and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. We strive to create an environment that is accessible and to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

There are a number of initiatives at the school to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The following is a synopsis of some of the major achievements noted in the feedback:

Learning

1. Students with diverse needs and disabilities are included in regular classes.
2. Teachers regularly use some key universal supports, including access to audiobooks, computers with voice to text technology, use of visual schedules in all classes

Equity
   1. Shared information on the accessibility act with school staff, students and parents/guardians.
   2. Updated Anti-discrimination Policy, and staff are trained and equipped to deal with discrimination and equity issues that arise.

Section 7: Our Three-Year Plan (2023-2026)

Overview:

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures Coquitlam College will take to remove and prevent barriers and to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in our school community. The plan is based on the Accessibility Principles of Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Inclusion, Self-Determination, and Universal Design, as set out in the Accessible B.C. Act.

Accessibility Priorities:

Based on the feedback gathered from staff, parents/guardians, and students, and the Physical and Architectural Environment Audit, the Accessibility Committee has identified the following areas as the top priority for improving accessibility in the school community.

Priority #1: Learning

The school will enhance the accessibility of information and communication for all individuals, including those with disabilities, through the following actions:

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Equip teachers to design lessons using UDL principles	- Provide professional development for educators on UDL - Provide collaboration time and coaching to increase teacher capacity to use UDL lesson planning	
Ensure that all communication to staff, students, and parents/guardians is written in plain language and is available in	- Survey parents/guardians to determine their preferred method of communication and format - Develop guidelines and examples for communication to all stakeholders	

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
alternate formats upon request		
Improve the number and type of accessible format resources for students	• Librarian provides accessible book and website suggestions for class units of study	
	• Subject area teachers and inclusive educators develop unit study menus of simplified alternate resources for students with disabilities	
Increase training in the use of accessible format materials.	• Provide staff training on the various types of accessible materials available and how to use them	
	• Librarian and class teachers train all students on the use of accessible book and website formats	
Develop a consistent method for teachers to convey information about homework	• Write homework instructions in a consistent place on the board in every classroom • Use a consistent format for outlining the instructions for assignments • Convey homework assignments digitally that is accessible to students, parents/guardians and inclusive education staff	
Develop and implement a clear and easy-to-navigate school website.	• Conduct a school website audit • Create a website improvement plan	

Priority #2: Physical and Architectural

The school will improve the accessibility of the physical and architectural environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities through the following actions:

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Develop a		

standard for both vision and hearing impairment related accessibility issues (including sound and light sensitivities)	• Assess noise issues and determine solutions in classrooms and other areas of the school	
Provide alternative learning spaces for students with diverse needs and disabilities	• Determine the current needs of students who may require alternate learning spaces from time to time	
	• Conduct an audit of current alternate learning spaces that can meet the identified needs	
	• Create a plan and budget for the provision of additional alternative learning spaces or accommodations to address the needs identified	

Priority #3: School Policy and Practice

The school will review and revise policies and practices to ensure they align with the principles of accessibility, and to address any identified gaps in staff training or knowledge on accessibility issues.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Summarize and celebrate current accessibility practices within the school.	• Conduct an audit of school accessibility practices and summarize the results	
	• Provide information to staff about current accessibility practices within the school and examples	
Identify areas needed for further staff training on	• Develop priorities for staff accessibility training and develop or identify training modules for staff	

accessibility issues	• Develop an implementation plan to provide the accessibility training needed for current staff and new staff induction	
Develop Emergency Plans for people with disabilities	• Develop evacuation procedures for students with mobility considerations, acquire EVAC chairs, provide staff training and practice the plans in emergency drills	
Improve transition planning for students with diverse needs and disabilities	• Collaborate with MCFD navigators to develop transition plans starting in grade 9 for students with developmental disabilities • Develop a transition planning process for all students in grades 9-12 • Develop a transition planning process for all students transitioning to a new school division	

Priority #4: Resources

The school will increase awareness and training on assistive technology for students with disabilities.

Objectives	Actions	Timeline
Increase awareness of specific assistive technology needs for students with disabilities	• Conduct class reviews of technology needs for students	
	• Provide training for staff on the various technology needs of students	
Provide access and training for the various technology tools	• Professional development for staff. • Technology implementation plan for training and supporting students in technology use	

needed		

Section 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Planning Committee meets once per semester to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. The committee will ensure the following steps are taken regarding the Three-Year Accessibility Plan:

1. Prepare an annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan.
2. Review and update the Three-Year Accessibility Plan every three years in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

Section 9: How to Give us Feedback

In addition to the public availability of the plan, the school will continue to post an annual status report on the progress of the Three-Year Accessibility Plan on the school's website. Accessible formats of the plan will be made available upon request. Questions, comments or feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to: Mr. Chris Rands, President chrisrands@coquitlamcollege.com.

Section 10: Appendices

Appendix A: About Disability

The Disability Continuum

Although there is no universally accepted meaning for the word "disability". However, the Ontario Human Rights Code provides definitions of disability that form our guiding principles. Definitions of disability can be placed on a continuum. At one end, disability is explained in terms of medical conditions (medical model). At the opposite end, disability is explained in terms of the social and physical contexts in which it occurs (environmental model).

The medical model focuses on deficiencies, symptoms and treatments. The World Health Organization's (WHO) 1976 definition for disability, for example, is "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being." Medical model definitions promote the idea that disability is a deviation from the norm.

Many people with disabilities are troubled by definitions that regard disability as abnormal, preferring instead to portray disability as commonplace, natural, and in fact, inevitable. As people age, they experience gradual declines in visual acuity, auditory sensitivity, range of motion, bodily strength and mental powers. Significant functional limitations affect almost half of people between the ages of 55 and 79, and over 70% of people over 80 (World Health Organization (WHO) report titled "Ageing and health", 2015). Beyond middle age, disability is the norm.

The environmental model explains disability in relation to social and physical contexts. In this view, the environment, not an individual's medical condition, causes disability. For example, during an electrical blackout, a person who is completely blind can effortlessly navigate around the home, hammer nails, and, if a Braille user, read a novel.

A sighted person would be unable to perform these tasks easily, if at all. In this example, the environment disables the sighted person.

The environmental model emphasizes that people with disabilities are capable individuals, and it is the barriers in the built and human environments, not their medical conditions, that create disability. Disability occurs when the world is designed only for a certain way of living, without considering the natural variation among human beings. Barriers are created by humans, and modifying how we live, the tools we use, and our understanding of the proper way to do things can eliminate or minimize design problems that cause barriers. Systematic barriers can be eliminated by modifying policies, plans, and processes. Attitudes that cause barriers can be addressed through disability awareness, respect, and positive interactions with people with disabilities.

Types of Disability and Functional Limitations

A person's disability may make it physically or cognitively challenging to perform everyday tasks such as operating a keyboard, reading a sign, differentiating colours, distinguishing sounds, climbing stairs, grasping small items, remembering words, or doing arithmetic. There are many kinds of disabilities, including physical, sensory, hearing, mental health, developmental and learning. Disabilities can be visible or invisible.

Visual Disabilities

Visual disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Some have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Impaired vision can restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a visual disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with visual disabilities:

- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them.
- Speak normally and clearly.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Unless it is an emergency, only touch the person if you have been given permission.
- If you offer assistance, wait until your receive permission.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- 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 just assume the individual can't see you.
- When entering a room, show the individual to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them.
- Ensure you say good-bye prior to leaving the individual.
- Be patient. Things may take a little longer.

Hard of Hearing and Deafness

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. People who are hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating. While some people may use sign language, notes or hearing aids when communicating, others may also use email, pagers, TTY telephone service or Bell Canada Relay Service.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- 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-lighted area where the person can see your face.
- Look at and speak directly to the person. Address the person, not their interpreter.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example a pen and paper.
- Keep your face clearly visible when speaking.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- 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 is different because their first language may not be English. It may be American Sign Language (ASL).
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.

Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. For example, people who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to the person rather than someone who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Be patient and be sure you understand their needs.
- Unless it is an emergency, refrain from touching any assistive devices, including wheelchairs.
- Provide the person with information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

Intellectual Disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with intellectual disabilities:

- As much as possible, treat the person with an intellectual disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.
- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Make sure the person understands what you've said.
- If you can't understand what's being said, ask again.
- Give one piece of information at a time.
- Be polite and patient.
- Speak directly to the person, not to someone who is with the person.

Learning or Cognitive Disabilities

Learning or cognitive disabilities can result in a host of different communications difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced, but they can interfere with the person's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with learning disabilities or disabilities:

- Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Recognize that some people with communication difficulties use augmentative communication systems such as Signed English and Picture Exchange System.
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- Speak normally and clearly, and directly to the person
- Take some time — people with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- If you're dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Be courteous and patient and the person will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.

Mental Health Disabilities

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You won't know that the person has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let the person tell you how you can best help.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with mental health disabilities:

- Treat people with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring and listen to persons with a mental health disability and their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.
- Take the person with a mental health disability seriously, and work with them to meet their needs.

Speech and Language Disabilities

Some people have communication challenges. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards, sign language or other assistive devices.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with speech and language disabilities:

- Just because a person has one disability doesn't mean they have another. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking; make no assumption they have an intellectual disability as well.
- If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'.
- Take some time. Be patient and polite and give the person whatever time they need to get their point across.
- Allow the individual to finish their sentences themselves without interruption.
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Deaf-Blind Disabilities

A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deafblind:

- Make no assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Some deaf-blind people have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- A deaf-blind person is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Speak directly to the person, as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach the person who is deaf-blind.
- Don't touch service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Unless it's an emergency, refrain from touching a deaf-blind person without permission.

Appendix B: Suggested References/Resources

Global, Canadian and Local Accessibility Context and Legislation

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada Ratifies the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation

Accessible British Columbia Act

BC Accessibility Legislation Plan Language Summary

Accessibility Planning Resources for Schools and School Boards:

BC Accessibility Hub

Developing Your First Accessibility Plan: A Guide for BC Prescribed Organizations

Creating an Accessibility Committee

Universal Design

Special Education Technology BC (SET BC)

Accessible Resource Centre - BC

Standards Council of Canada

B6521-95 Barrier-Free Design

A Guide to Creating Accessible Play Spaces (Rick Hansen Foundation)

[Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)](#)

[Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired](#) (PRCVI)

[Canadian Hard of Hearing Association](#)

[Canadian Hearing Services](#)

[Provincial Outreach Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POPDHH)](#)

[Auditory Outreach Provincial Resource Program](#)

[Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deafblindness](#)

[Provincial Inclusion Outreach Program](#) (Complex Needs)

[Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders](#)

[Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder](#)

[Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada](#)

[Learning Disabilities Association of Canada](#)

[Brain Injury Canada](#)

[Spinal Cord Injury Canada](#)

[Tourette Canada](#)

[Kelty Mental Health](#) (BC Children's Hospital)

[Gifted Children's Association of BC](#)

[Specialist Association of Gifted Educators in BC](#)