

Community Inclusion - Accessibility Tips

When we think about persons with disabilities, we often picture someone using a wheelchair. In reality, there are many types of barriers that people deal with everyday. Visual impairment, hearing impairment, amputation are some of the disabilities that also may require various levels of adaptation.

- City of Edmonton Measure Up

General Guidelines

Begin Consultation and or/start a committee

- This must include people with disabilities, it should also include any caregivers or friends and family of people with disabilities, as well as any other relevant stakeholders (if you are a business, this could include customers, suppliers, different levels of management etc.).
- Book a disability awareness presentations as a great first step for your organization.

Address Barriers/Create Accessibility Standards:

- For accessibility standard examples, look at the Ontario municipality guidelines and adapt for your uses. These include the built environment, but also have include attitudinal barriers such as customer service, hiring, training etc.

Create a statement, policies and procedures

- A Statement includes your commitment to accessibility, this is where you can identify the barriers you are aware of and what ways you suggest to work around them for the time being while bigger steps are being taken.
- Create policy that includes accessibility standards.

Evaluate and review, take accountability

- Documents must be enforceable and held to account, they must be living documents that can change and shift as more is learned.

Relatively easy, inexpensive and important tips:

- Bring an accessibility lens to every decision moving forward, even if you can't control it right now, make sure it is considered!

- Caption any audio content you put out. (built into Facebook and Youtube, but go over them to make sure they are correct-you only have to do this once and it's important). Zoom does have a caption feature but someone has to do it, Google meet has it built in. YouTube offers various closed captioning options.
- Use ALT text, or image/video descriptions for all visuals you put out (there is space to do it on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter for images, it can be done in the caption/post/tweet and video descriptions have to be put into the main body of the post, or can be put in a second tweet).
- Ask if anyone needs accommodations or has preferences: On contact forms, on job postings, on meeting invites, and more. Give them space to tell you what would make things better/easier and do it deliberately.

Hosting a meeting

Make sure your meeting is accessible with these items where needed:

- language Interpreter
- Note taker
- Assistive listening device for face to face or group meetings
- loop system
- captioning services
- Large print
- Braille
- Wheel chair access
- Mobilized chair/scooter access
- Front row seating
- Dietary restrictions Please List:
- An assistant will be accompanying me
- A service animal will be accompanying me

Areas to look at:

- Physical spaces that do not meet Alberta Building code
- Universal Signage and Way-Finding Communities function best when individuals are confi-

Accessible Tips & Ideas

dent in their abilities to navigate environments, both indoor and outdoor.

- Plain language makes information understandable for most people. There is no standard for plain language that meets everyone's needs, as it varies according to audience requirements.

Features of plain language include:

- Keeping sentences and paragraphs short and concise
- Avoiding jargon and acronyms
- Using pictures and symbols when possible - i.e.: charts and graphs
- Considering the different reading levels of an audience
- Information should be offered in a variety of formats when requested, such as large print, Braille, American Sign Language, captioning, visual signage, audio or verbal, colour contrast, and tactile, in order to accommodate everyone. Printed and online materials that use large and basic fonts, high contrast and bold text to highlight important information are accessible to a large number of people. It is also important to avoid writing in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, italics and script fonts. These guidelines should be used as standard practice for all materials in order to encourage usability.
- People of all ages and abilities should be aware of the opportunities available to voice their needs and concerns to the public. Avenues of advocacy include individual and group meetings, letters, emails, blogs, social media platforms, demonstrations, petitions, committee and organization membership.
- Stereotypes often do not portray people with disabilities with dignity and sensitivity. Stereotypes can be harsh, inaccurate and hurtful. Instead, you and those around you should think about each person's abilities — not disabilities. Act in a way that shows acceptance and understanding. It is more appropriate to ask a person with a disability what their needs are instead of using assumptions. Use people-first language in all communication, such as "person with a disability" instead of "disabled person." Instead of using negative terms such as "confined" or

"wheelchair-bound," use "person who uses a wheelchair."

- People of all ages and abilities should have access to information through education. Conditions for successful learning need to be prevalent at every level of education and in all learning opportunities. Inclusive education and training is facilitated through disability student services, appropriately trained staff, funding opportunities and making accommodations for students requiring additional support.
- Personal supports are important for people with disabilities because they foster independence. Supports can include assistive devices and technology (glasses, specialized writing tools and cutlery, text-to-speech readers, adaptive keyboards), service animals, mobility aids (walkers, canes, scooters, wheelchairs) and assistive personnel (home care workers, educational assistants).
- An individual's safety is maximized through prevention and appropriate response plans. This includes best practices for diverse abilities such as universal design, removing hazards, training and practice drills, and communication.
- Disaster preparedness must consider the needs of people with disabilities in order to best plan for disasters, such as environmental, fire, and power outages.
- Developing, enhancing and sustaining employment opportunities for people with disabilities are direct ways to increase independence and stimulate economic participation. Meaningful employment can enhance self-worth, reduce social isolation, foster increased contributions to society and improve standard of living. It can also increase broad awareness of disabilities and individual capabilities in society.

