

# **Equal Opportunities for All:**

## **Respecting the Rights of Persons With Disabilities**



**Disabled Peoples' International  
North America and the Caribbean  
March 2008**

## A Note from DPI NAC

This booklet was created to help educate individuals throughout the Caribbean about the rights of persons with disabilities. You may ask, “Why do we need to be concerned with the rights of persons with disabilities?”

Well, people throughout the Caribbean (and indeed worldwide) are routinely denied many basic rights that persons without disabilities often take for granted:

- ☐ Receiving an education
- ☐ Moving around freely
- ☐ Living independently in the community
- ☐ Getting jobs, even when well qualified
- ☐ Accessing information
- ☐ Obtaining proper health care
- ☐ Exercising political rights, such as voting
- ☐ Making their own decisions
- ☐ “Fitting in” and being accepted

Being able to work, access public services, even shop at the supermarket are everyday activities that are denied to millions of persons with disabilities across the world because of prejudices and barriers in society and inequitable policies enacted by governments.

We hope this booklet helps you to become more aware of the rights of your friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers with disabilities. However, reading this booklet is just a beginning; we hope that you will work with us to ensure that persons with disabilities experience equal opportunities in all aspects of life. Perhaps, if we unite our voices and speak loudly enough, we may convince our governments to enact legislation that will open doors for persons with disabilities. Together we can help to create a more accepting, accessible society that we can ALL enjoy equally.

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*Disabled Peoples' International North America and the Caribbean*

## What is a disability?

Did you know that persons with disabilities constitute the world's largest minority? It's true! This group is incredibly diverse, including persons of all ages, genders, religions, ethnicities, and socioeconomic levels. Furthermore, it is a minority group that any one of us may join at any time - through birth, accident or illness.

They are not a single group called "the handicapped" or "the disabled". They are mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, friends and neighbors, students and teachers, employers, employees, and community members. Persons with disabilities are individuals with unique beliefs, loves, and talents, just like everyone else. They are, first and foremost, *people*.

The one thing they have in common with each another is the constant barrage of misunderstanding, prejudice, and discrimination that they experience. But that's an issue that we will discuss later.

First, it may be helpful to define the term "**disability.**"

**Persons with disabilities are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory limitations which, when combined with attitudinal and environmental barriers, prevent them from fully participating in society on an equal basis with others.**

You may notice that this definition describes outside factors that contribute to what we consider a disability. It is not only a person's physical condition, but also the barriers that person faces which determine disability. For example, a building with a large set of stairs leading into it creates a truly disabling situation for a person who uses a wheelchair. However, if that same person encountered a building with a ramp in the entrance, they would be able to access the building as easily and freely as anyone else!

## What would a barrier-free world look like?

**Persons with disabilities would enjoy equal access to quality primary, secondary and tertiary education...**

**Public buildings and facilities would be accessible for ALL persons...**

**Public buses would include low floors, ramps and wheelchair lifts for easy access...**

**Sign language would be recognised as an official language...**

**Qualified applicants with disabilities would secure fulfilling, rewarding and challenging employment...**

**Sidewalks would be wide enough for wheelchairs and have curb cuts leading to the street below...**

**Governments would enact and enforce laws designed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities...**

**Signs would be made easier to read by adding visual pictures and Braille...**

**People would have access to affordable adaptive equipment and assistive devices...**

**Persons with disabilities would be included in all aspects of life...**

**Building entrances would have ramps in addition to stairs...**

**PEOPLE WOULD VALUE DIVERSITY AND FIGHT TO PREVENT DISCRIMINATION!!!**

## The Power of Language and Labels

Words have power. By using certain terms to describe persons with disabilities, you may inadvertently be perpetuating negative stereotypes, reinforcing attitudinal barriers and showing disrespect. Persons with disabilities are individual human beings, who should not be defined by their circumstances. Language is a powerful tool with which we can change perceptions of persons with disabilities. If persons with disabilities are to be included in all aspects of society, and be respected and valued as our fellow citizens, we must stop using negative and disempowering words.

SAY...	AVOID...
<b>“Persons with disabilities”</b>	<b>“The handicapped” or “The disabled”</b>
<b>“She’s deaf”</b>	<b>“She’s deaf and dumb” or “She’s a deaf mute”</b>
<b>“He has an intellectual (or developmental) disability”</b>	<b>“He’s mentally retarded” or “He’s a retard”</b>
<b>“A person who has a physical disability”</b>	<b>“A cripple”</b>
<b>“A person who uses a wheelchair”</b>	<b>“wheelchair-bound” or “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair person”</b>
<b>“She has Down’s Syndrome”</b>	<b>“She’s a mongoloid”</b>
<b>“He has a brain injury”</b>	<b>“He’s brain damaged” or “He’s a vegetable”</b>
<b>“A person without disabilities”</b>	<b>“Normal/healthy/regular person” or “able-bodied”</b>
<b>“accessible parking”</b>	<b>“handicapped parking”</b>
<b>“He has cerebral palsy (CP)”</b>	<b>“He’s spastic” or “he’s a spaz”</b>
	<b>“inflicted” “stricken with” “victim of” “invalid” “suffers from”</b>

# Disability Etiquette

## **Respect personal space**

Leaning or hanging on a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning or hanging on a person and is generally considered annoying and rude. The wheelchair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, try to put yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.

## **Think before you speak**

When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than to an aide, friend or interpreter who may be present.

## **Be honest and patient**

Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Give the person your full attention. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for that person. If you are having trouble understanding, don't nod or pretend you understand. Just ask the person to repeat or rephrase.

## **Ask before you help**

Just because a person has a disability, don't assume that he or she needs help. Adults with disabilities want to be treated as independent individuals. Offer assistance only if the person appears to need it, and ask how the person would like to be helped. Don't try to guess or assume what the person wants or needs.

## **Treat adults as adults**

Don't patronize or talk down to persons with disabilities.

## **Be yourself!**

You don't have to feel awkward when dealing with a person who has a disability. Just relax and be yourself. And if you are ever unsure about what to do or say with a person who has a disability, just ask!

## Interacting with people who are blind

People who are blind know how to orient themselves and get around on the street. They are competent to travel unassisted, though they may use a cane or a guide dog. A person may have a visual disability that is not obvious. Be prepared to offer assistance—for example in reading—when asked.

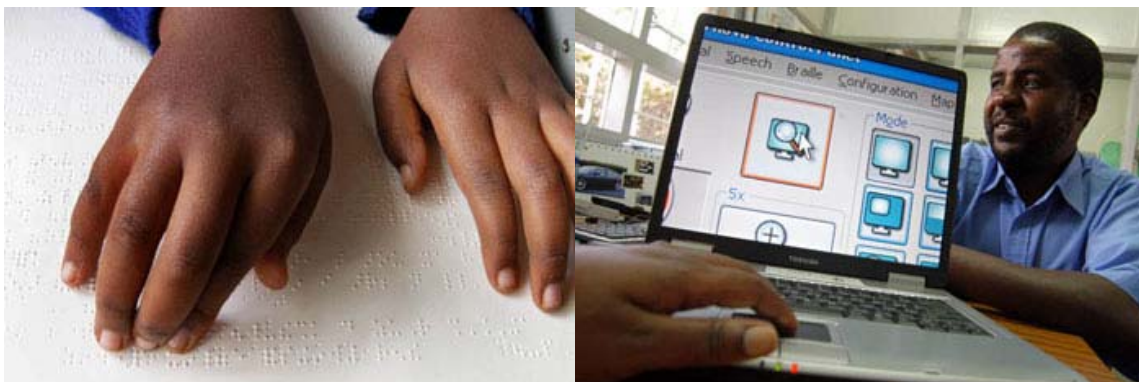
If asked to guide someone who is blind, never push or pull the person. Allow him or her to take your arm, and then walk slightly ahead. Point out doors, stairs, or curbs, as you approach them.



If you serve food to a person who is blind, let him know where it is on the plate according to a clock orientation (twelve o'clock is furthest from them, six o'clock is nearest).

When meeting a person who is blind, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person to whom you are speaking. Speak in a normal tone of voice, indicate in advance when you will be moving from one place to another and let it be known when the conversation is at an end.

People who are blind use many different types of assistive devices to allow them to do all the things sighted people can do, without outside help. These include special canes and service dogs that help them navigate their environment; and Braille text, large print books, and screen reading computer software that allows them to read and access information independently.



## Communicating with people who are Deaf or hard of hearing

Many people who are deaf communicate with sign language and consider themselves to be members of a cultural and linguistic minority group. They refer to themselves as Deaf with a capital “D,” and may be offended by the term “hearing impaired.”

People who are hard of hearing communicate in spoken English. They use some hearing but may rely on hearing aids and/or seeing the speaker’s lips to communicate effectively.

In fact, there is a wide range of communication preferences and styles among people who are deaf and hard of hearing. They will usually inform you what works best for them.

American Sign Language (ASL) is an entirely different language from English, with a syntax all its own. Speech reading (lip reading) is difficult for many people who are deaf because the majority of sounds in the English language are formed inside the mouth.

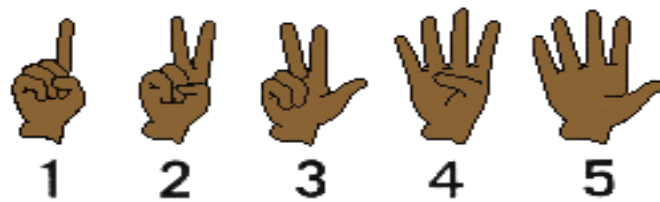
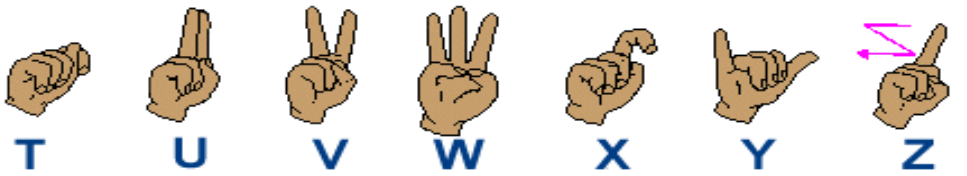
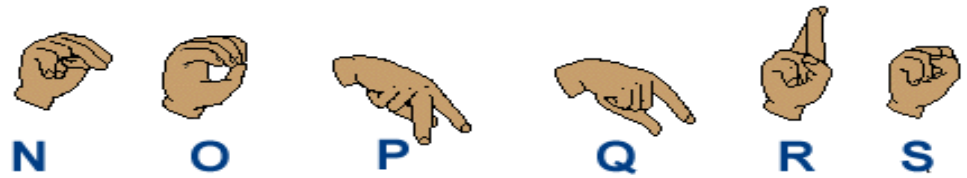
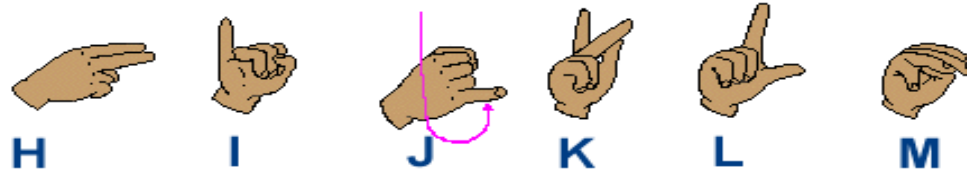
When the exchange of information is complex, such as during a job interview or doctor’s visit or when reporting a crime, the most effective way to communicate with a native signer is through a qualified sign language interpreter. For simple, informal interactions, however, writing back and forth is usually okay.

When using a sign-language interpreter, look directly at the person who is deaf, and maintain eye contact. Talk directly to the person (“What would you like?”), rather than to the interpreter (“Ask her what she’d like.”).

Before speaking to someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, make sure that you get their attention. Depending on the situation, you can extend your arm and wave your hand, tap them on the shoulder or flicker the lights. There is no need to shout at a person who is deaf or hard of hearing.



# American Manual Alphabet & Numbers 1-10



# What are learning disabilities?

Learning disabilities are lifelong disorders that interfere with a person's ability to receive, express or process information. People are often identified as having a learning disability in childhood, when they begin having difficulty with reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math. Although they may have trouble learning and using these skills, the truth is, most people with learning disabilities have average or above-average intelligence. In fact, you may not even realize that the person *has* a disability.

Learning disabilities vary from person to person. One person with a learning disability may not have the same kind of learning problems as another person who has been similarly diagnosed. One may have trouble with reading and writing, while another may have problems with understanding math. Still another person may have trouble in each of these areas, as well as with understanding what people are saying.

Researchers think that learning disabilities are caused by differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes information. Children with learning disabilities are not "dumb" or "lazy." Their brains just process information differently.

With certain accommodations at home and in the classroom, students with learning disabilities can learn more easily and successfully. One of the most important strategies a parent or teacher can use is to identify the child's preferred and most effective mode of processing information, and use teaching methods that build upon the child's strengths. There are three major styles of learning:

- ▣ **Visual learners** learn best through seeing. These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual distractions. They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, videos, charts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.
- ▣ **Auditory learners** learn best through listening. They gain the most through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.
- ▣ **Kinesthetic/tactile learners** learn best through moving, doing and touching. They access information through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

## What you should know about intellectual disabilities...

People with intellectual disabilities have significantly below-average intellectual functioning that limits their ability to cope with two or more activities of normal daily living. These activities include the ability to communicate; take care of oneself; make decisions; and participate in leisure, social, school, and work activities. This particular disability was once commonly referred to as “mental retardation,” but because of the negative social stigma associated with this term, people have begun using the term “intellectual disability.”

A wide variety of medical and environmental conditions can cause intellectual disabilities:

Before or at conception	<input type="checkbox"/> Inherited disorders (such as Down Syndrome and Fragile X Syndrome)
During pregnancy	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe maternal malnutrition <input type="checkbox"/> Infections (such as HIV and rubella) <input type="checkbox"/> Toxins (like alcohol, drugs and lead) <input type="checkbox"/> Abnormal brain development
During birth	<input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient oxygen <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme prematurity
After birth	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe head injury <input type="checkbox"/> Brain infections (like encephalitis) <input type="checkbox"/> Brain tumors and their treatments <input type="checkbox"/> Severe sensory deprivation

The common factor among all these causes is that something interferes with the growth and development of the brain.

People with intellectual disabilities learn slowly. They may have a hard time using what they have learned in one setting or situation and generalizing it to another. But do note that people with intellectual disabilities are *individuals*, with a wide range of abilities, talents and skills. With access to supports and accommodations, many people will be able to acquire the life skills necessary to live independently or with minimal assistance. They may be able to develop vocational skills that will allow them to get a job and earn an income. Some will require a greater degree of care and assistance. Still, it is important not to make assumptions about what a person with an intellectual disability can and cannot do.

If you have a friend, coworker or family member with an intellectual disability, you can help them to understand things more clearly by speaking in clear sentences, using simple words and concrete - rather than abstract - concepts. Help them understand a complex idea by breaking it down into smaller parts. However, don't talk down to people who have developmental disabilities. Let the pace, complexity, and vocabulary of their speech guide yours.

It can be difficult for people with developmental disabilities to make quick decisions. They often rely on routine and on the familiar to manage daily living. Be patient and allow the person to take their time. Remember that the person deserves to be treated with patience and respect.

## Persons who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids...

People use wheelchairs as a result of a variety of disabilities, including spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, cerebral palsy and polio. Wheelchairs provide mobility for persons with paralysis, muscle weakness, lack of coordination, nerve damage, and/or stiffness of joints. Wheelchairs come in many sizes and shapes that are adapted to the lifestyle of the user. Most people who use wheelchairs encounter environmental and attitudinal barriers that affect their lives on a daily basis.

### Food for Thought

Wheelchair users are people, not equipment. Don't lean over someone in a wheelchair to reach for something, or ask that person to hold things for you. Don't set your drink (or anything else) on the desktop attached to someone's wheelchair.



If conversation continues for more than a few minutes, consider sitting down in order to share eye level. It is uncomfortable for a seated person to look straight up for a long time. If that's not possible, stand at a slight distance, so that they aren't straining their neck to make eye contact with you.

Don't park your car in an accessible parking place. These places are reserved out of necessity, not convenience. The space is wider than usual in order to get wheelchairs in and out of the vehicle more easily.



Don't push or touch a person's wheelchair without permission; it's part of their personal space. If you help someone down a curb without waiting for instructions, you may dump them out of their chair.

People who use wheelchairs, crutches and other mobility aids generally are able to do things for themselves. Offer assistance if you wish, but do not insist. If a person wants or needs help, they will accept your offer and tell you exactly what will be helpful.



## Psychiatric Disabilities

Mental illnesses are biological brain disorders that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, behaviour, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning. Mental illnesses fall along a continuum of severity. Some of the more serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, and borderline personality disorder. If the symptoms and effects of a person's mental illness substantially limit one or more major life activities, such as learning, working and caring for oneself, the person can be said to have a psychiatric disability. Often, though, the two terms are used interchangeably.

As with other disabilities, one of the greatest barriers that people with a mental illness experience is the stigma associated with their disability. People fear what they do not understand, and mental illness is one of the least understood of all the disabilities we have discussed so far. Because of this stigma, many people hesitate to get help for a mental health problem because they fear the discrimination and negative attitudes they will encounter. The stigma experienced by people with a mental illness can be just as debilitating as the disability itself.

Now, to dispel a few myths about mental illness:

Myth #1: Mental illnesses are caused by personal weakness.

**Untrue!**

Mental illnesses are caused by imbalances in the brain's chemistry, and are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing. As is true with other disabilities, mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion, or income.

Myth #2: People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.

**Wrong!**

As a group, people with a mental illness are no more violent than any other group. In fact, they are far more likely to be the victims of violence than to be violent themselves.

Myth #3: There is no treatment for people with mental illness.

**False!**

Effective treatment is available for many types of mental illness, in the forms of medication and therapy. If a person with a mental illness seeks out and complies with a treatment plan, that person, with reasonable accommodations, can absolutely participate fully in their community, family and work.

Myth #4: People with a mental illness are crazy.

**No!**

It is important to remember that mental illnesses are biologically based disorders which affect a person's thoughts and behavior, and are considered to be a disability like any other. Hurtful, disempowering labels such as "crazy," "mad" or "psycho" are just a few examples of words that keep the stigma of mental illness alive. It is cruel to make fun of a person with a mental illness.

## Mainstreaming: A Hot Topic in Education

Mainstreaming (often referred to as “inclusion”) is the idea that students with disabilities can and should be educated alongside students without disabilities. Historically, students with disabilities (especially those with serious physical, developmental and sensory disabilities) have been placed in special, segregated schools. Today, many people worldwide argue that ALL students, regardless of severity and/or type of disability, can learn and, in fact, flourish in a “regular” education setting, as long as he or she is provided with certain support services.

There are many benefits of mainstreaming, for both the student with disabilities as well as their classmates without disabilities. Segregating students in separate special education classes isolates and stigmatizes them, and often fails to maximize their academic potential. By placing students with special needs into a regular classroom, they are able to learn from, develop friendships with, and model their behavior after students without disabilities. Students with disabilities aren’t the only ones who benefit from this arrangement; students without disabilities benefit as well. They learn, from a young age, to look for the similarities and appreciate the differences among people. They learn that persons with disabilities are capable of achieving much more than that which most people generally give them credit for. They learn that **all** people deserve to be treated equally, with dignity and respect.

So if mainstreaming has so many benefits, why is it a controversial subject?

Some find that the difficulty and expense of providing truly inclusive classrooms outweigh the advantages. Mainstreaming requires that teachers and support staff be trained in special education techniques and have the tools necessary to meet the needs of their students with disabilities. Furthermore, depending on the type and severity of the student’s disability, he or she may require certain accommodations in order to truly succeed in a mainstreamed classroom. Some of these accommodations may require the budgetary support of a school or school district (such as hiring additional classroom aides or sign language interpreters) but many modifications are both free and easy to implement (such as reducing distracting stimuli in the classroom).

In fact, not all persons with disabilities wish to be educated in an inclusive setting. Many Deaf people, for example, view schools for the deaf not as oppressively segregated institutions, but as important strongholds of Deaf culture. Classes are taught in their native sign language, and many teachers and staff are, themselves, deaf. To them, attending a deaf school is a less restrictive and more desirable option than being mainstreamed in an inclusive classroom.

# The Mainstreaming Debate in a Nutshell

Arguments For Mainstreaming	Arguments Against Mainstreaming
Being educated in an inclusive setting helps prepare students for life in mainstream society once they leave school.	Mainstreaming may not be the most effective option for <u>every</u> student with a disability. Some may do better or prefer to be educated in a different setting.
Techniques used in instruction of students with disabilities (visual aids and peer tutoring, for example) will enhance the education of <u>all</u> students in class.	Many general education teachers have not been trained in special education techniques, and therefore lack the skills required to meet the needs of students with disabilities who are placed in their classrooms.
Students with and without disabilities will learn to understand, appreciate and respect each other by sharing the same classroom and working together.	Many schools and school systems do not staff classrooms with adequate numbers of teachers and support staff required in order for inclusion to be effective and successful.
Mainstreaming can help students with disabilities develop self-confidence, new skills, and greater independence.	Large class size and poor teacher-to-student ratio make it difficult for the teacher to simultaneously meet the individual needs of students with disabilities <i>and</i> provide instruction to the class as a whole.
Many necessary modifications, such as providing extra time to complete assignments and presenting information through a variety of modalities, do not require any monetary support from the school.	Some schools claim that providing the supports and resources necessary for mainstreaming to work are too expensive or too difficult to implement.

## THE SOLUTION TO THE DEBATE:

Let's lobby our schools and governments to...

- ➊ adequately fund services and provide support for students with disabilities and their teachers
- ➋ provide a variety of educational settings in which students with disabilities can learn, achieve, and thrive!!

# Accommodations

An accommodation is essentially any strategy that removes or lessens the effect of a specific barrier which may exist in school, at the workplace, in the community, or in the home. An accommodation is any change or adjustment to an environment that makes it possible for an individual with a disability to have equal access to the world around them. Accommodations are used to help individuals with disabilities learn; work as independently and efficiently as possible; and live comfortably within their communities and home. Sometimes accommodations can be modifications to existing equipment or materials to make them usable for persons with disabilities (such as lowering a kitchen countertop, or installing computer software that is capable of reading school assignments aloud.) Reasonable accommodations like these allow a person with a disability to participate in all aspects of everyday life, and to enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment, education and community life equal to those enjoyed by those individuals without disabilities.

When trying to determine how to provide reasonable accommodations to a person with a disability, consider the following:

1. Changes to facilities and equipment (such as putting in ramps and parking spaces, making materials available in large print, or providing low- and high-tech assistive technology)
2. The provision of special services (such as sign language interpreters or job coaches)
3. Creative thinking and problem solving! Remember -- providing an accommodation does not have to mean buying expensive equipment or making major renovations to your business. There are many innovative ways to make an environment accessible to a person with a disability!

There are many types of accommodations, but in this section we will focus on examples of these three major classifications of accommodations:

☐ **Educational accommodations**

☐ **Workplace accommodations**

☐ **Community accommodations**



## Educational Accommodations



- ☐ Accessible classrooms
  - ☐ Modified instruction (for example, use of small groups)
  - ☐ Modified curricula (for example, different learning outcomes or different materials than those for other students)
  - ☐ Providing supervised breaks or allowing extra response and processing time during testing sessions
  - ☐ Providing special seating in a general education classroom
  - ☐ Providing access to information through large print materials, Braille materials, and computers with specialized software
  - ☐ Providing written copies of orally presented materials
  - ☐ Allowing individuals to answer by pointing rather than marking in a test booklet, or by dictating responses to interpreters or examiners for verbatim transcription
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## Workplace Accommodations



- ☐ Changing the physical arrangement of an employee's workstation
  - ☐ Modifying equipment or devices (for example, computer software)
  - ☐ Reassigning non-essential functions through job restructuring
  - ☐ Providing qualified interpreters for trainings and meetings
  - ☐ Providing part-time or modified work schedules
  - ☐ Telecommuting options
  - ☐ Adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials, and policies
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## Community Accessibility



- ☐ Providing ramps and reserved parking spaces
- ☐ Providing assistive technology
- ☐ Providing interpreters for community events
- ☐ Providing accessible public transportation
- ☐ Providing access to outdoor recreation activities
- ☐ Providing accessible bathrooms
- ☐ Providing accessible drinking fountains
- ☐ Providing accessible equipment at public facilities

# Why should you care?

Aside from the obvious benefit of being kind to your fellow man, creating an inclusive society has many tangible benefits:

## A larger talent pool

Persons with disabilities can contribute a wide array of expertise, skills and talents to your business. Studies show that the job performance and attendance of persons with disabilities is as good as, if not better than, that of the general population. By hiring a qualified applicant with a disability, you may increase your company's productivity and introduce new perspectives.



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## It makes good economic sense!

Persons with disabilities shop, eat at restaurants, travel and enjoy recreational activities just like people without disabilities. If merchants saw people with disabilities as potential customers with money to spend, we wouldn't have so many inaccessible stores. By making your place of business accessible, you will expand your customer base and increase your net profits!



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## Universal design benefits everyone!

Making modifications to public buildings and spaces can end up providing convenience and accessibility to more than just persons with disabilities. For example, creating curb cuts and ramps benefits:

- ☐ mothers with baby strollers...
- ☐ delivery people with handcarts...
- ☐ people riding bicycles and skateboards...
- ☐ and yes, people with wheelchairs, too!



## How can you support and respect the rights of persons with disabilities?

- ☐ Improve the physical structure of your business to make it accessible to customers with physical disabilities by installing ramps. This does not necessarily mean a large financial investment on your part. Quality ramps can be constructed with inexpensive, locally available materials.
- ☐ Expand employment opportunities by hiring a qualified applicant with a disability.
- ☐ Make presentations inclusive by providing information in accessible formats (e.g., hiring a sign language interpreter for presentations where there are deaf individuals present or creating alternate formats of printed materials for persons who have low vision).
- ☐ Use person-first language. This means using terms that focus on the person, NOT the disability (e.g.: “people who use wheelchairs” instead of “the wheelchair-bound”; “people who have epilepsy” instead of “epileptics”). Talk to others about their word choices.
- ☐ Volunteer your time and talents in a special education classroom.
- ☐ Be courteous to persons with disabilities. Remember, they are humans too, who deserve the same dignity and respect that you extend to all other humans.
- ☐ Take a sign language class.
- ☐ Teach your children to value diversity and encourage them to stand up against discrimination.
- ☐ Urge the elected officials in your country’s government to ratify and implement the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. Write letters, make phone calls and send emails supporting the passage of comprehensive disability rights legislation that will create equal opportunities under the law for ALL people.
- ☐ Tell your friends about this booklet, and encourage them to read it, too!

## What is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

Adopted in 2006, the Convention is an international treaty that aims to address and reverse the long history of discrimination and exclusion of persons with disabilities worldwide. It lists the rights of children, youth and adults with disabilities, and establishes guidelines on how to put these into practice. When the Convention is signed and ratified by a country, it becomes a legally binding agreement and guides the actions of that country's government.

The development of the Convention was a lengthy process in which governments, human rights organizations, and disability advocates from around the world came together to promote the dignity and worth of every person with a disability by creating a revolutionary document that guarantees that the world's largest minority enjoys the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, including:

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Access to justice and equal protection under the law</b>	<b>(Articles 12 and 13)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Living independently and being included in the community</b>	<b>(Article 19)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Access to information and communication services</b>	<b>(Article 21)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Access to education</b>	<b>(Article 24)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Access to health care</b>	<b>(Article 25)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Equal opportunity for employment</b>	<b>(Article 27)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Freedom from torture, exploitation and violence</b>	<b>(Articles 15 and 16)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Right to life, liberty and security of the person</b>	<b>(Articles 10 and 14)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Freedom of movement</b>	<b>(Article 18)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Freedom of expression and opinion</b>	<b>(Article 21)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Respect for privacy</b>	<b>(Article 22)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Right to adequate standard of living</b>	<b>(Article 28)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Right to participate in political and public life</b>	<b>(Article 29)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Right to participate in cultural life</b>	<b>(Article 30)</b>

With the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, governments were also given an effective legal tool to end the injustice, discrimination and violation of rights that confront most persons with disabilities.

## Why is the Convention necessary?

The rights that are guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are the same human rights that are recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So why do we need it?

In a perfect world, the rights outlined in the more general human rights treaty would be enough to protect everyone. But in practice many of the 650 million people in the world living with disabilities—about 10 per cent of the world's population—still lack the opportunities that are available to the majority of the population. In spite of the broader human rights treaty, persons with disabilities continue to encounter many physical and social obstacles that prevent them from living fulfilling and independent lives as students, employees, family members and citizens.

While the Convention does not establish new human rights, it does set out with much greater clarity the obligations of governments to promote, protect and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. The Convention not only clarifies that governments should not discriminate against persons with disabilities, it also sets out the many steps that States must take to create an accessible, barrier-free environment so that persons with disabilities can enjoy real equality in society.

To date, Jamaica is the only country in the English-speaking Caribbean that has ratified this comprehensive human rights treaty.

However, we can change that. If we unite our small, individual voices into one powerful collective roar, the powers that be will not be able to ignore us any longer. Our governments will have to hear us and heed our call for equal rights for all persons with disabilities by agreeing to ratify the Convention and pass other sweeping disability rights legislation. If we join hands to work toward an inclusive society that is free of discrimination, there will be no limit to what we can all achieve.



If you would like to read more about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, please visit the United Nations website at

<http://www.un.org/disabilities>.

## Resources to Help You Learn More About Disabilities

After having read this booklet, you may have more questions about disabilities. Perhaps you have a friend or family member with a disability, and you would like to find local organizations that can help them. Perhaps you are interested in learning more about a specific disability. Maybe you are interested in volunteering your time and energy with an organization that works with persons with disabilities. Whatever your reason, there are many resources available to you, both locally and through the internet.

In the following pages, you will find information about local organizations and programmes of/by/for persons with disabilities throughout the Caribbean, listed by country. The organizations shown here address a wide range of disabilities, provide a variety of services and represent a mixture of non-profit, for-profit and governmental agencies. The list is by no means meant to be exhaustive. If you do not see your country listed, or a particular agency listed, rest assured we will be updating this document frequently, and new information will be added as it becomes available.

In addition to local organizations, there are many other avenues through which you can learn more about disabilities. Your local library is a good starting point. Visit the library and find out what types of relevant print and video materials they may have in their collections. If you do not find what you need, speak to the librarian and tell him or her what you are looking for. Library budgets include provisions for new acquisitions; if the library staff knows there is a demand for sign language instructional videos, for example, they may include it in their next order. If you do not ask, they will not know their customers want it.

Another important service public libraries offer, and one which growing numbers of people throughout the Caribbean are gaining access to at home and at work, is the internet. There are numerous websites dedicated to the discussion of disabilities in general, sites focusing on specific disabilities, and websites about barriers faced by persons with disabilities (employment, education, health care, etc.). By typing keywords into an online search engine, you will find a plethora of information about your chosen topic. In this section, we have recommended some websites that we feel are top-notch, informative websites. Again, there are many more than are listed here, but it's a good place for you to start.

Good luck to you in your quest for information. By seeking out greater understanding of disabilities, you are taking an extremely important, meaningful step toward an inclusive society.

**The best way to combat stigma and discrimination is through education and understanding!**

## [Antigua and Barbuda](#)

### **Adele School for Special Children**

Mrs. Barbara Charles, Principal  
268-462-4627

### **Amazing Grace Foundation**

Mr. Clarence Pilgrim, Chairman  
268-770-7393

[amazinggracehome@yahoo.com](mailto:amazinggracehome@yahoo.com)  
<http://www.amazinggracefoundation.org>

### **Antigua & Barbuda Association of Persons with Disabilities (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Mr. Bernard Warner, President  
268-788-1769 (Cell)

[info@abapd.org](mailto:info@abapd.org)  
<http://www.abapd.org>

### **Antigua Barbuda Centre for Dyslexia Awareness**

Mrs. Desiree Antonio, President  
268-560-8168

[abcda@actol.net](mailto:abcda@actol.net)

### **Antigua and Barbuda Sickle Cell Association**

Ms. Eugenie Gibson, President

[eugesther@yahoo.com](mailto:eugesther@yahoo.com)

### **Antigua and Barbuda Society for the Blind**

Mrs. Jacqueline Tweed-Harris, Executive Director  
268-462-0663

[societyforblind@hotmail.com](mailto:societyforblind@hotmail.com)

### **Disabled Peoples' International North America and Caribbean**

Mr. Leslie A. Emanuel, Regional Development Officer  
268-461-7260

[dpinacr@yahoo.com](mailto:dpinacr@yahoo.com)  
<http://caribbean.dpi.org>

### **National Association for Mental Health**

Mrs. Joan Fung, President  
268-560-2734

### **National Vocational and Rehabilitation Centre**

Mrs. Emelda Wade, Director  
268-462-0062

[rehab@antigua.gov.ag](mailto:rehab@antigua.gov.ag)

### **School for the Deaf**

Mrs. Diane Archibald, Teacher  
268-460-5903

**Unit for the Blind**

Mrs. Jocelyn Adams, Head of Unit  
268-460-5904

## Bahamas

**Disabled Persons' Organization** (DPI NAC National Assembly)

Drexel Deal, President  
242-362-6616/7  
[dpoltd@coralwave.com](mailto:dpoltd@coralwave.com)

## Barbados

**Action for Children**

Mr. Hulbert Blackett, President  
246-429-5632

**Association for the Advancement of the Deaf**

Mr. Richard Wiles  
246-427-0050 (H)  
246-256-0165 (Cell)  
[tour@bstinet.com](mailto:tour@bstinet.com)

**Association Aid for the Physically Handicapped Children of Barbados**

Mr. FitzGerald Brereton BSM, President  
246-429-0158

**Association for the Blind & Deaf**

Mr. Peter Serieux BCH, President  
246-429-0127/246-426-3438  
246-427-7453 (Workshop)  
[bafbd@caribsurf.com](mailto:bafbd@caribsurf.com)  
Mrs. Shirley Grandison, Manager

**Barbados Association for Children with Intellectual Challenges**

Dr. Jennifer Campbell, President  
246-427-3541  
246-427-3540  
[camp\\_bell\\_jen@hotmail.com](mailto:camp_bell_jen@hotmail.com)

**Barbados Association for the Correction of Learning Disabilities**

Ms. Cynthia Herbert, President  
246-432-9676  
[drudder@caribsurf.com](mailto:drudder@caribsurf.com)

**Barbados Association for Persons with Down Syndrome, Inc.**

Ms. Joy-Ann Haigh  
246-416-8626 (H)  
246-430-7300 (W)



**Barbados Cheshire Homes Association**

Mr. Alyson Forte, President

Ms. Janice Smitten, Matron

246-429-0370

246-432-1653 (H)

246-467-4426 (W)

[fortea@gob.bb](mailto:fortea@gob.bb)

**Barbados Council for the Disabled (DPI NAC Associate Member)**

David Harper, Chairperson

246-427-8136

[bcd@caribsurf.com](mailto:bcd@caribsurf.com)

<http://www.barbadosdisabled.org.bb/>

**Barbados National Organization of the Disabled (BARNOD) (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Mr. Patrick Forde, President

246-429-0576 (H)

246-439-6084 (BARNOD)

[barnod\\_national@yahoo.com](mailto:barnod_national@yahoo.com)

<http://barnod.org>

**Barbados Organization of Parents of the Disabled (OPOD)**

Mrs. Patricia Padmore-Blackman

246-437-5456

**Challenor Creative Arts & Training Centre**

Ms. June Blackman, Executive Director Ag.

246-438-6967

246-438-6862

**Children's Development Centre**

Mr. Goldwin Edwards, Coordinator

246-427-9514

246-436-9027

[clydebank@sunbeach.net](mailto:clydebank@sunbeach.net)

**Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society of Barbados Inc.**

Miss Sandra Carter, President

246-437-0890

[sandson58@hotmail.com](mailto:sandson58@hotmail.com)

**Myasthenia Gravis Association of Barbados**

Mrs. Rosalind Mascoll, President

246-423-0683

[mqbarbados@hotmail.com](mailto:mqbarbados@hotmail.com)

**National United Society of the Blind**

Mr. Elviston Maloney, President

246-418-0272 (H)

246-426-3438

[nationalusb@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nationalusb@yahoo.co.uk)

**Paralympics Association of Barbados**

Mr. Wesley Worrell, President

246-426-0049; 246-232-7185

246-467-5718 (W)

[pab18@hotmail.com](mailto:pab18@hotmail.com)

**Parents of Children with Down Syndrome**

Mr. James Burke

246-248-4821

**Special Olympics Barbados**

Mrs. Marguerite Young

246-420-1626 (H)

246-418-6000 (W)

246-426-9064

[olympics@sunbeach.net](mailto:olympics@sunbeach.net)

**Stroke Support Group**

Mr. Richard Leslie, President

[leslies@sunbeach.net](mailto:leslies@sunbeach.net)

**The Autism Association of Barbados**

Mr. Lawton Walcott, President

246-429-8242 (H)

246-822-2193 (Cell)

[lwwalcott@yahoo.com](mailto:lwwalcott@yahoo.com)

[delwal99@hotmail.com](mailto:delwal99@hotmail.com)

## Belize

**Belizean Assembly of Persons with Disabilities (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Kathleen Skeen, President

501-202-4169

[katyskeen@yahoo.com](mailto:katyskeen@yahoo.com)

## Canada

**Council of Canadians with Disabilities (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Marie White, Chairperson

204-947-0303

[ccd@ccdonline.ca](mailto:ccd@ccdonline.ca)

<http://www.ccdonline.ca>

## Dominica

### **Dominica Association of Disabled People** (DPI NAC National Assembly)

Mark Blanc, President

767-440-0842

[dadp83@yahoo.com](mailto:dadp83@yahoo.com); [dadp26@hotmail.com](mailto:dadp26@hotmail.com)

## Grenada

### **Grenada National Council of the Disabled** (DPI NAC National Assembly)

Herman Peters, President

473-440-0112

[gncd@spiceisle.com](mailto:gncd@spiceisle.com)

## Guyana

### **Guyana Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities** (DPI NAC National Assembly)

Julie Lewis, Chairperson

592-227-2682

[julielewis@solutions2000.net](mailto:julielewis@solutions2000.net)

## Jamaica

### **3D Project**

Miss Gerlin Bean, Managing Director

876-984-2840 or 876-943-8528

(stimulation programme, school placement, skill training, parent training; operates in St. Catherine, St. Thomas, St. Mary and Manchester)

### **Abilities Foundation**

Ms. Paulette Brown

876-969-5720

(skills training for 18 and over)

### **Carberry Court Special School**

Mrs Doreen Lawe-Soutar, Principal

876-977-3176

### **Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf**

Ms. Maria Lawrence, Principal

876-923-6103

[deaflink\\_cccd2@hotmail.com](mailto:deaflink_cccd2@hotmail.com)

(also operates in Manchester and Granville)

**Combined Disabilities Association (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Ms. Barbara McKoy, Chairperson

876-929-1177

[advocacy@cwjamaica.com](mailto:advocacy@cwjamaica.com)

**Disabled Peoples' Organizations of the Caribbean**

Mr. Michael Thorney

876-967-9439

[dpoc@cwjamaica.com](mailto:dpoc@cwjamaica.com)

**Early Stimulation Project**

Mrs. Antoneika Gunter-Gayle, Acting Director

876-922-5585 or 876-843-4898

**Hope Estate**

Mrs. Lurline Headly, Principal

876-927-1293

[danswilld@cwjamaica.com](mailto:danswilld@cwjamaica.com)

**Hope Valley Experimental**

Ms. Sharon Williams, Acting Principal

876-927-2247

(programme for the physically impaired)

**Jamaica Association for Children with Learning Disabilities**

Mrs. Joan Spence-Rowe, Director

876-929-4341

**Jamaica Association for the Deaf**

Mrs. Iris Soutar

876-926-7709 or 876-927-1098

**Jamaica Association on Mental Retardation**

Mrs. Grace Duncan, Executive Director

876-927-2054 or 876-977-1118

**Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities**

Mr. Ransford Wright, Executive Director

876-968-8373 or 876-968-0623

**Jamaica Society for the Blind**

Miss Virginia Woods, Executive Director

876-927-3760 or 876-978-7151

**Lister Mair Gilby Senior School for the Deaf**

Ms. Clara Ricketts, Principal

876-927-1261 (fax also)

**Mico Care Centre**

Mrs. Angelita Arnold, Manager

876-929-7722

(school for slow learners)

**Ministry of Education Special Education Unit**

876-922-1400 or 876-948-9132

**Mustard Seed Communities - Kingston**

Mrs. Belnavis, Administrator

876-923-6488

(also operates in St. Andrew and St. Catherine)

**National Parent Advocacy Group**

Ms Christine Sterling, Director

876-907-5901

**Rural Services for Children with Disabilities** (formerly P.V.O)

Mrs. Sandréa Long- White, Executive Director

876-931-4584 or 876-941-9650

**Salvation Army School for the Blind**

Mr. Roharuyi, Principal

876-931-9262 or 876-925-1362

**Special Olympics Jamaica**

Mrs. Bell, Executive Director

876-906-0754

[sojamaica@cwjamaica.com](mailto:sojamaica@cwjamaica.com)

**St. Kitts and Nevis**

**Nevis Blind Light & Vision Impaired Society:**

Jennifer Freeman, President

869-469-2023

**Special Education**

Mr. Doea, St. Kitts contact person

869-466-0038

Ms. Francis, Nevis contact person

869-469-7108

**St. Kitts Society for the Blind**

Rockcliffe Bowen, President

869-465-9939

869-668-9939 (cell)

**St. Kitts Nevis Association of Disabled People** (DPI NAC National Assembly)

Rockcliffe Bowen, President

869-465-9939

869-668-9939 (cell)

Anthony Mills, Vice President

869-663-9077

## St. Lucia

### **National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities, Inc. (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Nioma Edmund, Chairperson

758-453-1539

[ncpdinc@yahoo.com](mailto:ncpdinc@yahoo.com)

## St. Vincent and the Grenadines

### **Association of Persons with Disabilities (Helping Hands Centre)**

Ms. Annis John, Coordinator

784-457-0658

### **House of Hope Society**

Mrs. Nanton, President

784-485-6885

### **Lewis Punnett Home**

Sister Wilson, Nurse in Charge

784-458-4250

### **Liberty Lodge Boys' Training Centre**

Mr. Michael Akers, Director

784-457-1580

### **Mental Health Association**

Mrs. Kay Bacchus Browne, President

784-457-1828

### **Mental Health Centre**

Sister Smart, Nurse in Charge

784-458-4240

### **National Society of and for the Blind**

Mrs. Gloria Ballantyne, Coordinator

784-457-2805

### **National Society of Persons with diAbilities (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Mrs. Patricia Cumberbatch, President

784-456-8888

[nsopwd@caribsurf.com](mailto:nsopwd@caribsurf.com)

### **Parent Support Group**

Ms. Corletha Ollivierre, Chairperson

784-457-1111

### **St. Benedict Hospital/Day Care**

Sister Nyra Ann

784-457-3794

**School for Children with Special Needs (Georgetown)**

Ms. Candice Carr, Principal  
784-458-9980

**School for Children with Special Needs (Kingstown)**

Mr. Fred Stay, Principal  
784-456-1474

**Special Olympics**

Mr. Geoffrey Hadaway  
784-457-1366  
433-5353

**Sunnyvale Primary**

Mrs. Hyacinth Sutherland, Principal  
784-451-2952

**Sunshine Primary School (Bequia)**

Mrs. Camille Jacobs, Principal  
784-457-3794

**Vincare Therapeutic Centre**

Mrs. Veronica Daniel, Director  
784-456-2111

**Trinidad and Tobago**

**Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

George Daniel, President  
868-785-7402 (Cell)  
868-624-6060 (W)  
[dpi-tt@tstt.net.tt](mailto:dpi-tt@tstt.net.tt)

**United States**

**United States International Council on Disabilities (DPI NAC National Assembly)**

Marca Bristo, President

## Online Resources

### Autism

*National Institute of Mental Health:*

[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/complete-publication.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/complete-publication.shtml)

*Autism Society of America:* [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

### Blindness

*Blind Net:* [www.blind.net](http://www.blind.net)

*Blindness for Kids:* [www.virted.org/Blind/BlindKidsMain.html](http://www.virted.org/Blind/BlindKidsMain.html)

### Cerebral Palsy

*CP - Ask the Doctor:* [www.about-cerebral-palsy.org](http://www.about-cerebral-palsy.org)

*National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:*

[www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/cerebral\\_palsy/detail\\_cerebral\\_palsy.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/cerebral_palsy/detail_cerebral_palsy.htm)

### Deafness and Hearing Loss

*Deaf Culture Online:* [www.deaf-culture-online.com](http://www.deaf-culture-online.com)

*Deaf Linx:* [www.deaflinx.com](http://www.deaflinx.com)

*League for the Hard of Hearing:* [www.lhh.org](http://www.lhh.org)

*National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders:*

[www.nidcd.nih.gov](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov)

### Developmental Disabilities

*Learning About Intellectual Disabilities and Health:*

[www.intellectuadisability.info](http://www.intellectuadisability.info)

*National Institute of Child Health and Development:*

[www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/developmental\\_disabilities.cfm](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/developmental_disabilities.cfm)

### Learning Disabilities

*LD Online:* [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

*Learning Disabilities Association of America:* [www.ldanatl.org](http://www.ldanatl.org)

### Spinal Cord Injuries

*Mayo Clinic:* [www.mayoclinic.com/health/spinal\\_cord\\_injury/DS00460](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/spinal_cord_injury/DS00460)

*National Spinal Cord Injury Association:* [www.spinalcord.org](http://www.spinalcord.org)

In addition, the **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities** has a number of fact sheets and publications regarding a variety of disabilities, including:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder  
Emotional Disabilities  
Multiple Disabilities  
Traumatic Brain Injury

Down's Syndrome  
Epilepsy  
Speech/Language Disorders  
...and many more

<http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/disabing.asp>



## Words you should understand

**Accessibility:** The opportunity to reach jobs, services, housing, recreation, shopping and entertainment within a reasonable time frame, and without being impeded by physical, social, or economic barriers

**Accommodation:** The adjustments to rules, policies, facilities or practices which remove architectural, communication, and transportation barriers, or auxiliary aids and services that do the same.

**Committee:** A formal working group with a large organization, often formed by election, often having authority or legitimacy of some specific kind, that may include distinct roles, such as chair, secretary, treasurer and so forth.

**Communication:** The activity of conveying and/or exchanging information by one of several methods, including verbal means such as speaking, and nonverbal means, such as sign language, touch, or eye contact.

**Community:** A group of persons with common characteristics such as geographic, professional, cultural, racial, religious, socio-economic similarities or having interest in particular problems or outcomes.

**Convention:** An international agreement that, when ratified or acceded to by a country, carries the binding force of international law. The national laws of the country are to be brought into conformity with the provisions.

**Dignity:** The expectation of respect or esteem, meaning having a high value.

**Discrimination:** Unfair action that prevents an individual or a group from being treated equally because of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion or disability.

**Language:** A language is considered to be an exclusively human system of communicating, using visual, auditory, or tactile symbols to express a meaning, idea or thought. Unlike other forms of communication, languages have distinct rules of usage and can be used to express any idea, concrete or abstract.

**Ratification:** The international act whereby a state indicates its intent to be bound to a treaty.

**Rights:** The legal or moral entitlement to do or refrain from doing something, or to obtain or refrain from obtaining something.

**United Nations:** An organization established in 1945 to maintain peace and stability in the world through cooperation among its member countries.

**Universal Design:** The creation of products and environments meant to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialization. The intent of Universal Design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal Design benefits people of all ages and abilities.