MUNICIPALITY OF BROCKTON

MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

CONTENTS OF PLAN

Executive Summary 3

Accessibility Standards Overview 4-9

Aim 10

Description of the Municipality 10-11

Council Commitment to Accessibility Planning 12

Recent barrier removal initiatives 12

Informal site audit of Municipal Facilities 13

Past Barrier Identification 13-15

Barriers to be Addressed 16

Progress on 2012 initiatives for barrier prevention or removal 16-18

Initiatives for barrier prevention or removal in 2013-2014 18-21

Review and Monitoring of the Process 21

Communication of the Plan 21

Contacts 21

Appendix – About Disability 23-27

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the Province.

Under the ODA, all municipalities have a legal obligation to prepare multi-year accessibility plan. This document has been revised to now represent a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. In addition, the plan was recently updated to reflect the Ontario Regulation 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation requirements. By incorporating the information pertaining to the Integrated Accessibility Standards into this plan, it will address the current and future requirements of the ODA.

The contributions of the Action Committee of Community Living Walkerton and District have greatly assisted in developing the 2005-2007 accessibility plans and providing updates for the Annual Accessibility Plans thereafter.

In 2011, Department Heads within the Municipality of Brockton were asked to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities. The Department Heads identified a number of barriers and we will continue to improve and/or eliminate these barriers. The most significant findings were that while many facilities can accommodate wheelchair accessibility, certain renovations or alterations will be required to become fully accessible. Over the next few years, it is recommended that focus be placed on these facilities which deny access or use on a day-to-day basis.

Currently, the Municipality is committing itself through continual improvements of access to municipal facilities, within budget limitations, with the primary objective for 2013 to be an upgrade to the Municipal Website making it WCAG 2 compliant

The Municipality is in full compliance for the Customer Service Accessibility Standard that became effective January 1, 2010 and with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations, with compliance in the relevant areas as required. We will continue to focus on providing policy, training support and continue to improve services and programs to meet these regulations.

With this plan, the Municipality will present its findings and report on the development of strategies to remove and prevent future barriers for persons with disabilities.

Accessibility Standards Overview

Customer Service (Regulation 429/07)

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into force on January 1, 2008. The standard applies to all organizations in Ontario that provide goods and services to the public or to other businesses that have one or more employees.

As a public sector organization, the Municipality of Brockton complied with the following Accessibility Standards by January 1, 2010:

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods and services to people with disabilities.
2. Training staff on how to serve people with disabilities.
3. Allowing persons with disabilities to bring their support person or service animal with them.
4. Communicating with a person in a way that respects their disability, with integrity and allows for integration.

Integrated Accessibility (Regulation 191/11)

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 191/11, entitled, “Integrated Accessibility Standards” (Regulation), came into force on July 1, 2011. This Regulation establishes accessibility standards for **Information and Communication, Employment, and Transportation**.

Some of the requirements are: developing policies to ensure that our communication is accessible to people with disabilities; ensuring we are able to provide information in a format that considers an individual’s disability; ensuring that our website is compliant with applicable standards; and developing policies on ensuring potential employees with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations during the recruitment phase.

The Integrated Standards has been implemented in phases according to the compliance deadlines for each facet of the standards and the required training has been completed.

Information and Communications

Information and communications are a large part of the Municipality of Brockton’s daily business. It is because of this that it so important to ensure that information and communications are created and presented in a way that considers accessibility.

The Municipality has followed universal design principles and best practices when developing, implementing and maintaining information and communications strategies and products. This includes websites and print communications materials as well as face-to-face interactions.

The Municipality is committed to ensuring that information and communications are available and accessible to people with disabilities. The Municipality will make reasonable efforts based upon the needs of the community and upon request within the constraints of being a small rural municipality. For the purposes of this policy reasonable efforts by the Municipality shall be based on the frequency of indications for needs of service, the availability of the service requested, the relative cost compared to the overall Municipal budget, best practices recognized by similar rural municipalities and Provincial regulation.

The Municipality will achieve this by:

1. Website Redesign within the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to ensure the Municipal website is accessible to people with disabilities and all pdf documents dated after January 1, 2014 are in an accessible format.
2. Developing resource materials for creating accessible documents for common software programs such as MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
3. Ensuring that emergency information, procedures, plans and public safety information is available in alternate formats, when requested.
4. Developing a training strategy to ensure that staff has the knowledge, tools and technical advice to create accessible materials.
5. Ensuring documents are available in an alternate format, upon request.
6. Review and update the Municipal Multi-Year Accessibility Plan at least once every five (5) years
7. Preparing an Accessible Information and Communication Policy.

Progress

1. Complete Website Redesign in 2013.
2. Preparing pdf documents on the website in an accessible format and converting any documents dated prior to January 1, 2014.
3. Emergency Preparedness pamphlets compiled for a variety of disabilities.
4. Facility Emergency and Public Safety information pertaining to each Municipal facility to be compiled and posted.
5. Format request form developed and posted on website.
6. Added criteria to the Tender documents that ensure that third party contractors are familiar with the Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requirements and sign off accordingly

7. The former Accessibility Plan has been converted to a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Future Activities

1. Reviewing current processes to receive feedback from the public.
2. Reviewing current processes on how public can request an alternate format.
3. Update of Purchasing By-law with regards to accessibility criteria
4. Update to purchasing procedure to ensure that third party contractors are familiar with the Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requirements.
5. Continue to convert pdf documents for the website on an ongoing basis

Employment

The Municipality of Brockton is committed to ensuring that the process of finding, getting and keeping a job is as inclusive as possible in order to build an effective workforce. The Municipality will make reasonable efforts based upon the needs of the community and upon request within the constraints of being a small rural municipality. For the purposes of this policy, reasonable efforts by the Municipality shall be based on the frequency of expressions for the need for service, the availability of the service requested, the relative cost compared to the overall municipal budget, best practices recognized by similar rural municipalities and Provincial regulation.

The Municipality will achieve this by:

1. Understanding employer obligations to provide employment accommodations.
2. Identifying and removing barriers in the workplace.
3. Enhancing workplace emergency responses through individualized emergency response information and assistance as required.
4. Revising individual work plans and developing a guide, tools and templates to remove barriers from the recruitment process.
5. Creating an Accessible Employment Policy

Progress

1. Attended training to assist staff with the development of an Employee (individual) accommodation plan template.
2. Have installed a visible fire alarm system for employees with auditory impairment.
3. Council has adopted an Accessible Employment Policy.

Future Activities

1. Train relevant staff on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.
2. Ensure job advertisements specify that accommodation is available for job applicants with disabilities, if applicable.
3. Keep employees up to date on changes to policies, including the Accessible Employment Policy.

Transportation

The majority of the Transportation Standard does not apply to the Municipality of Brockton. However, certain conditions that apply to the operation of taxicabs have been addressed.

The Municipality will achieve this by:

1. Ensuring that taxi cab owner/operators are aware of their legislative requirements
2. Ensuring that Taxi owners/operators do not charge passengers with a disability a higher fare or an additional fee for storage of assistive devices
3. Ensuring that all taxicabs display vehicle identification on the rear bumper and available to all passengers in an accessible format

Progress:

1. The Municipality has revised the application package for taxi cab licences to include the requirements under AODA (Section 80)
2. Taxi cabs owners/operators are required to post their fares in a large format and to make them available upon request in an alternate format
3. Taxicabs display bumpers stickers with the relevant vehicle identification.

Future Activities

1. To update the taxicab by law to include the requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act , 2005, (AODA)
2. To provide taxicab operator with a standard sticker with the relevant vehicle identification to allow for a uniform format throughout Brockton.

Built Environment (still in process)

The Accessible Built Environment Standard will be the fifth and final standard. This standard has been released in draft form and there is no set date as to when it may be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This standard is intended to help

remove barriers in buildings and outdoor spaces for persons with disabilities. The standard will only apply to new construction and extensive renovation. A number of drafts of the Built Standard have been reviewed and commented on by other public agencies. Changes will be reflected in two pieces of legislative components including the Ontario Building Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The focus is to be on built public open spaces and streetscape elements as well as building elements in a range of occupancies. Occupancies may include, but are not limited to, business and industrial occupancies, multi-residential occupancies, hotels, motels, assembly occupancies such as theatres, recreational facilities, interior and exterior transportation infrastructure (boarding platforms, facilities, bus stops, etc.). In accordance with these Terms of Reference and the Act, the proposed accessibility standard will set out the policies, practices or other requirements for the identification and removal of barriers with respect to the built environment for persons with a range of disabilities.

All municipal building exterior steps and forward edges should be highly coloured contrasted for easy visibility. All municipal buildings that have accessible entrances should be marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility. The municipality also needs to add more accessible parking spaces that are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility

All renovation and construction projects moving forward will comply with the Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) if applicable.

Any new Site Plan Control and Subdivision plans must be reviewed to ensure barrier-free requirements are identified.

Design of Public Spaces

The Municipality of Brockton commits to ensure that the Public Spaces Design meet accessibility requirements according to Regulation 413/12. The Municipality shall incorporate accessibility into Public Spaces that are newly constructed or redeveloped on and after January 1, 2016. We will ensure that we follow the existing requirements stated under the Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment) for recreational trails and beach access routes, outdoor public use eating areas, outdoor play spaces, exterior paths of travel, accessible parking, and service related elements (counters, waiting areas, etc) When developing recreational trails the Municipality shall consult with the public and persons with disabilities. The Municipality shall also provide maintenance and restoration of public spaces by ensuring our multi-year accessibility plan includes procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in public spaces and procedures for

dealing with temporary disruptions when accessible elements required under this section are not in working order.

Being a public sector organization, accessibility reports shall be provided every two (2) years.

The Municipality will achieve this by:

1. Referring to the Design of Public Spaces Regulation when any relevant trail or park work is completed
2. Providing regular maintenance on any equipment or trails that have been identified

Progress:

1. The Municipality has revised the legislation and has applied the principles to trail development.

Future Activities

1. All new trail development must comply with the legislation

Aim

“To promote, encourage, and provide an accessible community which ensures equality for all in the Municipality of Brockton”.

Description of the Municipality of Brockton

The Municipality of Brockton is located in southwestern Ontario and is situated in the southeasterly portion of Bruce County. Brockton is bordered on the west by the Municipality of Kincardine, on the south by the Municipality of Huron-Kinloss and South Bruce, on the east by the Municipality of West Grey and the Town of Hanover and on the north by the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie.

This municipality was created on January 1st, 1999 by the amalgamation of the former Townships of Brant and Greenock and the Town of Walkerton. Brockton has a population of 9351 with 4158 households and covers an area of 564.02 sq km or 56,402 hectares.

The Municipality is home to the communities of Walkerton, Chepstow, Cargill and Elmwood.

The Brockton Municipal Office and Council Chambers is located at 100 Scott Street, Walkerton and all municipal administration processes are conducted at this location eg. public information, planning, zoning, building permits, financial administration and tax collection.

Maintenance and construction of a system of roads owned by the municipality are also a major function of the municipality. Three roads workshops exist and are located in Walkerton, and at the former Brant and Greenock buildings.

The Walkerton Fire Department is owned and operated by the Municipality of Brockton while the Elmwood Fire Department is jointly owned with the Municipality of West Grey and administered through the West Grey Municipal Office with control under the jurisdiction of a joint board consisting of representatives from both Brockton and West Grey Councils. Fire Services for a portion of Brockton is purchased from the Town of Hanover. The northerly area of Brockton receives fire service from the Paisley Fire Department through a Fire Services Agreement.

The Recreation Department provides recreation programs and operates the Walkerton Arena/Community Centre as well as a number of parks and the Walkerton swimming

pool. Community Centres/Parks in Elmwood, Cargill, Bradley and Glammis are operated by local boards with the Brockton Recreation Department acting as a liaison. Waste Disposal Sites in the Brant and Greenock wards are operated by the Municipality of Brockton and the Walkerton ward is serviced for waste disposal requirements at the Walkerton-Hanover Landfill Site which is operated by a joint board.

Water and Sewer services are provided in the Walkerton ward and water services are provided to the Road No. 4 area of Lake Rosalind and a portion of Chepstow.

The Walkerton Daycare Centre is operated by Brockton and is located at 215 Jane Street, Walkerton.

The Walkerton Cemetery is also owned and administered by the Municipality of Brockton.

This Municipality houses one or more of the following amenities:

- Municipal Administration Building/Works Yard
- Community Centres
- South Bruce Grey Health Services (Hospital)
- Medical Centre
- Two (2) elementary, one (1) secondary and one (1) combined elementary/secondary school
- Arena/Community Centre
- Municipal Airport
- Senior Citizens/Nursing Home
- Two (2) Libraries
- Municipal Campground
- Municipal parks
- Ambulance Station
- Two (2) Fire Halls
- One (1) Day Care Centre
- One (1) Tourist Information Centre
- County Administration Buildings/Sheds
- Provincial Court/Offices

Council Commitment to Accessibility Planning

The Council of the Municipality of Brockton is committed to:

- Providing quality service to members of the community with disabilities.
- The continual improvement of access to all municipally owned facilities, premises and services, to better meet the needs of those with disabilities
- The re-examination of its regulations and policies to ensure the objectives of the plan are being met.
- Building strong relationships with persons with disabilities in order to ensure that existing barriers can be identified and removed and future barriers are prevented.

The Council of the Municipality of Brockton has authorized the adoption of a Multi Year Accessibility Plan that will enable the Council to meet these commitments.

Recent Barrier – Removal Initiatives

In 2013 the website was entirely redesigned to meet the WCAG guidelines and to allow for full accessibility. Council minutes, agendas, upcoming news, policies, and other pertinent information are conveyed on the website and electronic format. The Municipality also communicates regularly within the local newspapers and through its Facebook page and twitter account.

The Parking By-law was amended to reflect the increase in parking fines for misuse of a Disabled Parking Permit or those illegally parking in a Disabled parking space without a permit.

The Municipal Elections on 2010 and again in 2014 will use the alternative method of Internet and Telephone voting. This is particularly helpful to residents that find transportation difficult, as well as providing an opportunity for those requiring assistance to do so in a private manner.

Various facilities have been identified to receive automatic doors and/or hardware to allow for easier access to Municipal facilities.

The following items were addressed in the Annual Accessibility Plan:

- Continuance of the policy of site plan review taking into account provisions for handicapped parking and accessibility.
- Renovations/updates to existing businesses will continue to be encouraged to consider accessibility.

- Special events using portable washrooms will be encouraged to provide an adequate supply of handicapped accessible portable washrooms as well as handicapped designated parking.
- The Brockton Buzz will continue the use of symbols/icons where possible to draw attention to certain articles and to illustrate points.
- Plain language signage will be encouraged.
- Sidewalk replacement will provide improved accessibility at intersections i.e. Ramping instead of a step.
- Sidewalk replacement and improvements to interlocking brick at Walkerton Library entrance.
- Improved enforcement of the by-law restricting bicycles/skateboards on certain sidewalks.
- Inventory of sidewalks and a plan for replacement will improve barrier free accessibilities.
- Review of building plans by the Building Department ensures that requirements for barrier-free access are complied with.

Informal Site Audit of Municipally Owned Buildings

Department Heads reviewed the municipally owned buildings to assess any barriers that may exist. Solutions to removing those barriers in order to comply with the current legislation under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and the Building Code were identified. These finding will be appended to future revisions to the Multi Year Accessibility Plan.

Barrier Identification

In order to identify barriers, the following methodology was used:

Methodology	Description	Status
Tour of facilities	A checklist was completed for each site, stating barriers, types of barriers and the strategy for removal.	Most sites were well identified and assessed.

Barriers / Disabilities: Definitions

Barrier
A “barrier” is anything that stops a person with a disability from fully taking part in society based of that disability. Some barriers include:

- Physical barriers, for example a step at the entrance to a store;
- Architectural barriers, for example no elevators in a building of more than one floor
- Information or communications barriers, for example a publication that is not available in large print
- Attitudinal barriers, for example assuming people with a disability can’t perform a certain task when in fact they can
- Technological barriers such as traffic lights that change too quickly before a person with a disability has time to get through the intersection; and
- Barriers crated by policies or practices, for instance not offering different ways to complete a test as part of job hiring.

Disability

The following is the same definition as used in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

A “disability” is:

Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and includes, but is not limited to:

- diabetes mellitus
- epilepsy
- a brain injury
- any degree of paralysis
- amputation
- lack of physical co-ordination
- blindness or visual impediment
- deafness or hearing impediment
- muteness or speech impediment; or
- physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal, or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

A condition of mental impairment or developmental disability;

A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken languages;
A mental disorder; or

An injury or disability for which benefits where claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Disability Barriers

People with disabilities face unnecessary barriers almost everywhere: at home, at work, at school, in parks, in recreational facilities, in the streets, in theatres, in stores and in restaurants – and even in municipalities.

A “barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice. Barriers prevent people with disabilities from going to school and to work.

Types of barriers

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A door knob that cannot be operated by an elderly person with limited upper-body mobility and strength
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter
Informational	Typefaces that are too small to be read by a person with low vision
Communicational	A professor who talks loudly when addressing a deaf student
Attitudinal	A recreational swimming program which discourages people with developmental disabilities from participating
Technological	Information on a municipal web site, which cannot be accessed a person who is blind who has reading software for a computer
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly

Barriers to be Addressed

The more substantial barriers identified in Appendix 2 will require more time and/or funding resolution. These items will be assessed during each annual budget review and prioritized accordingly. It will be the goal to resolve all identified items, recognizing other barriers could be identified and added, in an effective and financially responsible manner, taking into consideration additional capital costs for certain barriers.

Progress on 2012 initiatives for barrier prevention or removal

BARRIER	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
CUSTOMER SERVICE	**Ongoing**	
Potential barriers in delivering goods and services to customers	Continue to deliver Accessible Customer Service training to all new employees and volunteers.	Clerks, Finance and Recreation
INFORMATION/ COMMUNICATIONS		
Potential barriers in information sharing	Introduce staff to the use of plain language in their writing. **Staff training in September 2012**	All Departments
	Improvements to the size of labels and fonts	All Departments
	Ensure that emergency procedures, plans or public safety information is available in an accessible format was completed in 2011	Clerks and Fire Departments

BARRIER	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
	Website was redesigned in 2013. Converting pdf docs to an accessible format is ongoing	All Departments
BUILT ENVIRONMENT	**Ongoing**	
Inaccessible facilities	Conduct accessibility audits of Municipal owned or rented facilities to provide advice on how barriers might be eliminated	All Departments
Inaccessible facilities	Council Chambers and Clerks Office Washrooms not accessible for staff or public (both toilet and sinks) Rental facility makes extensive renovations cost prohibitive	Clerks, Finance
Inaccessible facility	Bradley Hall Walkerton Daycare	Recreation CAO – Daycare Comm
EMPLOYMENT	**Ongoing**	
Potential barriers in existing Policies, Procedures, and Practices.	Regularly review Policies, Procedures and Practices to ensure accessibility.	Human Resources - CAO
Potential barriers throughout the employment process	Shall provide individualized workplace emergency information to employees who have a disability.	Human Resources - CAO

BARRIER	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
	Ensuring that potential employees with disabilities be provided with the appropriate accommodations during all aspects of recruitment phase.	Human Resources - CAO

Initiatives for barrier prevention or removal in 2013-2014

BARRIER	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
CUSTOMER SERVICE		
Potential barriers in delivering goods and services to customers	Continue to deliver Accessible Customer Service training to all new employees and volunteers.	Clerk Finance Recreation
	Review and update policies regularly to ensure high quality, accessible customer service	All Departments
	Reviewing customer feedback and taking appropriate action	All Departments
GENERAL		
Procurement	Incorporate accessibility criteria and features into procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities.	All Departments
Policies	Establish policies on how Brockton will meet its obligations under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.	Clerks

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan	Develop a multi-year accessibility plan and update regularly	Clerks
Training	Provide training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities.	Clerks
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS		
Potential barriers relating to information sharing	Accessible Documents Training	All Departments
Feedback	Ensure that receiving and responding to feedback is made available in an accessible format upon request or with appropriate communication supports.	All Departments
Accessible Formats and Communications Supports	Provide information and communicate in an accessible manner about goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities, upon request.	All Departments
Website	Ensure the website is accessible to people with disabilities by conforming to standards for website accessibility.	Clerks

EMPLOYMENT		
Recruitment General	Notify internal and external job applicants that accommodations for disabilities will be provided upon request.	Human Resources - CAO
Recruitment, Assessment or Selection Process	Notify job applicants who have been invited to participate in the recruitment, assessment or selection process that accommodations for disabilities are available on request.	Human Resources -CAO
Notice to Successful Applicants	Notify successful applicants of the policy for accommodating employees with disabilities when offering employment.	Human Resources -CAO
Informing Employees of Supports	Inform new and existing employees of polices supporting employees with disabilities, and provide employment-related accommodations for disabilities.	Human Resources-CAO
Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees	Consult with employees who have disabilities in order to provide them with accessible formats and communications.	Human Resources-CAO
Documented Individual Accommodation Plans	Develop written individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.	Human Resources-CAO
Return to Work Process	Have in place a documented process for supporting	Human Resources-CAO

	employees who return to work after being away for reasons related to their disabilities.	
Performance Management	Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities during the performance management process.	Human Resources-CAO
Career Development and Advancement	Provide career development and advancement opportunities that take into account the accessibility needs of employees who have disabilities.	Human Resources -CAO

Review and Monitoring of the Process

Council, is committed to following through with this plan. This plan will be reviewed at least once every five (5) years or more frequently if necessary. The Establishment of an Accessibility Working Group would be a priority in 2014 to ensure that the barriers outlined in this plan are addressed. This Working Group as well as the public, will have the opportunity of review and monitor the progress of identifying and the direction by which the Municipality is removing all barriers identified under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Communication of the Plan

This plan will be available on the web site www.Brockton.ca as well as at the Brockton Municipal Office and the Walkerton and Cargill Libraries. Every attempt will be made to make the plan available to those with disabilities for their perusal and review. The Municipality of Brockton wants to work together with the members of the community to remove barriers that still exist within the community.

Staff will make every effort to accommodate any specific request to receive this Plan in any other format, including Braille, with the assistance of the Canadian Institute for the Blind.

Contact Information:

Debra B. Roth Clerk. droth@brockton.ca

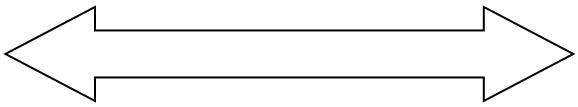
Municipality of Brockton
PO Box 68
100 Scott Street
Walkerton, Ontario N0G 2V0
Ph: 519-881-2223,
Toll Free: 1-877-885-8084
Fax: 519-881-2991

Appendix 1

ABOUT DISABILITY

The Disability Continuum

There is no universally accepted meaning for the word “disability”. Most definitions, however, can be placed on a continuum. At one end of the spectrum, 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).

Design Flaw in the Environment  **Health Problem in Individual**

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 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 of 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. 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 human beings, and that it is barriers, not medical conditions, that are disabling. Disability results when people design a world for their way of living only, without taking into account the natural – and foreseeable – variability among human beings. In other words, disability is a consequence of design flaws in the built and human environments.

All barriers are human-made. If design problems cause barriers, then disabilities can be eliminated – or minimized – by modifying how we live, the tools we use, and our intuitions about the proper way to do things. If systematic barriers cause disabilities, the

disabilities can be eliminated by modifications to policies, plans and processes. If attitudes cause barriers, then disability awareness, respect and an understanding of positive interaction with people with disabilities will remove barriers.

Specialized medical knowledge may be needed to treat diseases and symptoms, but not to address barriers. Barriers, not medical conditions, prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in life.

Types of Disability and Functional Limitations

A person’s disability may make it physically or cognitively hard 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.

Consider the functional limitations associated with twelve different kinds of disability and the effects of these limitations on an individual’s ability to perform everyday tasks.

1. Physical

Physical disabilities include minor difficulties moving or coordinating a part of the body, muscle weakness, tremors and in extreme cases, paralysis in one or more parts of the body. Physical disabilities can be congenital, such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendonitis.

Physical disabilities affect an individual’s ability to:

1. Perform manual tasks, such as hold a pen, grip and turn a key, type on a keyboard, click a mouse button, and twist a doorknob.
2. Control the speed of one’s movements.
3. Coordinate one’s movements.
4. Move rapidly experience balance and orientation.
5. Move one’s arms or legs fully, e.g., climb stairs.
6. Move around independently, e.g., walk any distance, easily get into or out of a car, stand for an extended period, reach, pull, push or manipulate objects, have strength or endurance.

2. Hearing

Hearing loss includes problems distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words, ringing in the ears and total (profound) deafness.

A person who is deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing may be unable to use a public telephone, understand speech in noisy environments, or pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers.

3. Speech

Speech disability is a partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical voice disorders include problems with:

1. Pronunciation;
2. Pitch and loudness;
3. Hoarseness or breathiness;
4. Stuttering or slurring.

People with severe speech disabilities sometimes use manual or electronic communication devices. Individuals who have never heard may have speech that is hard to understand.

4. Vision

Vision disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity may have trouble recognizing faces, or judging distances. They might find it difficult to manoeuvre, especially in an unfamiliar place. He or she may have a very narrow field of vision, be unable to differentiate colours, have difficulties navigating or seeing at night, or require bright lights to read. Most people who are legally blind have some vision.

5. Deaf-Blind

Deaf-blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. It results in significant difficulties accessing information and performing activities of daily living. Deaf-blind disabilities interfere with communication, learning, orientation and mobility.

Individuals who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, Braille, standard PCs equipped with Braille displays, telephone devices for the deaf-blind and communication boards. They navigate with the aid of white canes, service animals, and electronic navigation devices.

People who are deaf-blind may rely on the services of an intervener. Interveners relay and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides. Interveners are skilled in the communication systems used by people who are deaf-blind, including sign language and Braille.

6. Smell

Smell disability is the inability to sense, or a hypersensitivity to, odours and smells.

A person with a smelling disability may have allergies to certain odours, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.

7. Taste

Taste, disability limits the ability to experience the four primary taste sensations: sweetness, bitterness, saltiness and sourness.

A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify ingredients in food, spoiled food, or noxious substances.

8. Touch

Touch disability alters the ability to sense surfaces and their texture or quality, including temperature, vibration and pressure. Touching sensations may be heightened, limited, absent (numbness), or may cause pain or burning.

A person with a touch disability may be unable to detect (or be insensitive to) heat, cold or changing temperatures. Alternatively, a person with a touch disability may be hypersensitive to sound, physical vibrations, or heated surfaces or air.

9. Intellectual

An intellectual disability affects an individual’s ability to think and reason. The disability may be caused by genetic factors (e.g., Down’s Syndrome), exposure to environmental toxins (as in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), brain trauma and psychiatric conditions.

A person with an intellectual disability may have difficulty with:

1. Language: understanding and using spoken or written information;
2. Concepts: understanding cause and effect;
3. Perception: taking in and responding to sensory information;
4. Memory: retrieving and recognizing information from short - or long-term memory; and
5. Recognizing problems, problem solving and reasoning.

10. Mental Health

There are three main kinds of mental health disabilities:

1. Anxiety: a state of heightened nervousness or fear related to stress;
2. Mood: sadness or depression; and
3. Behavioural: being disorganized; making false statements or inappropriate comments; telling distorted or exaggerated stories.

People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; exhibit blunt behaviour; be perceived as being pushy or abrupt; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

11. Learning

Learning disabilities are disorders that affect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, and understanding, processing, organization and use.

People with learning disabilities have average or above-average intelligence, but take in information, retain it, and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities affect reading comprehension and speed; spelling; the mechanics of writing; manual dexterity; math computation; problem solving; processing speed; the ability to organize space and manage time; and orientation and way-finding.

12. Other

Disabilities result from other conditions, accidents, illnesses, and diseases, including ALS (Lou Gehrig disease), asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke, and joint replacement.

Alternate formats are available upon request