

# Building Inclusive Communities



**Promoting Awareness of  
Culture and Diversity**

## **Building Inclusive Communities Tips Tool**

**How to ensure that your  
organization includes  
everyone...**



Ontario

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## **This tips tool was produced by:**

Building Inclusive Communities for Ethnoracial  
People with Disabilities Project

C/O Ethno Racial People with Disabilities

Coalition of Ontario

2 Carlton Street, Suite #500

Toronto, Ontario M5B 1J3

**Written by:** Rabia Khedr, Project Coordinator

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**Ayshia Musleh** - Ethno Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario

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This Tips Tool will provide you with information about disability-related access and cultural accommodations to assist you with the development of programs, strategies, outreach initiatives and the delivery of events that are welcoming and inclusive of ethnoracial people with disabilities.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Ethnoracial people with disabilities face many barriers that prevent their full and active participation in society. They face discrimination because they have a disability in addition to being people of colour for whom racism, language barriers and other systemic obstacles interact to limit their full participation. Cultural or religious attire can add to the layers of discrimination as can the circumstances that necessitated their migration and their immigration or refugee status after arriving in Canada. These and other barriers such as educational levels, gender, sexual orientation, class, financial circumstances and family responsibilities add to socio-economic-political marginalization. It is also important for us to recognize that ethnoracial people with disabilities might be limited in their capacity to connect with others with disabilities and that they may lack resources and networking opportunities to ensure that their requirements are heard and reflected at community events, by organizations and in service delivery.

People with disabilities from ethnoracial communities report that their ethno-specific community agencies, churches, mosques and temples are often physically inaccessible leaving them with no where to go for culturally appropriate programming or support systems. They also report that whilst mainstream disability agencies are able to address disability-related requirements, the complexity of barriers experienced by ethnoracial people are not always acknowledged and/or understood. Ultimately ethnoracial people with disabilities are left feeling like there is no real support that can address all their individual and/or collective needs.

*(Including Us: Ethno Racial People with Disabilities Speak Out on Issues of Race and Disability. ERDCO, 1996)*

As service providers, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves about issues of race, culture and disability in order to provide appropriate services for everyone. Together we must advocate for the integration of ethnoracial people with disabilities into all aspects of society.

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# **DISABILITY-RELATED ACCESS**

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## **Physical Facility**

### **Tips**

- If you do not have a disability, do not assume that you are capable of deciding if a venue is accessible to people with disabilities!
- Be sure to seek input from people with different disabilities - visual, physical, hearing, psychiatric, etc.
- Make sure that every person with a disability can enter your office or venue and participate with dignity

### **Hints**

- Elevators with raised numbers and letters or Braille on the buttons
- Ramped entrances, automatic and wide doors
- Accessible washrooms
- Wheelchair ramp to the stage
- Wireless or detachable microphone
- Low counters at reception
- Clear hallways and walkways
- Good lighting
- Large contrasting signage, clearly contrasting decor, paint, floor, furniture

- A person using a wheelchair should be able to enter through the front door rather than being forced to use the loading dock or the back entrance

## **Print Materials**

### **Tips**

- Be sure that all printed materials are made available in a variety of formats
- Do not assume everyone can read the 12 point font size or smaller documents or materials without glasses, magnifier or without squinting

### **Hints**

- Use a minimum of 14 pt Times New Roman or Universe as a standard font on your printed materials
- Make available information as documents on diskette in Word format or RTF
- As an alternative format, provide Website accessible files with screen magnification and screen reading speech software
- Record printed materials on standard audio cassettes

*For further information:*

[www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility](http://www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility)

[www.equalopportunity.on.ca](http://www.equalopportunity.on.ca)

[www.enablelink.org](http://www.enablelink.org)

[www.thot.net/~dawn](http://www.thot.net/~dawn)

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# **CULTURAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

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## **Language**

### **Tips**

- Every member of your community should be able to understand the information you make available to the public
- Your staff should be able to clearly communicate with all members of the public

### **Hints**

- Staff members should have basic American Sign Language skills to meet and greet persons who communicate in Sign
- American Sign Language and Cultural Interpreters should be provided as necessary at meetings, presentations and individual encounters
- Provide information brochures in languages commonly spoken in your community
- Keep information clear and the level of language at a user appropriate level

# **Inclusive Environment**

## **Tips**

- Demonstrate diversity

## **Hints**

- Board members, staff and volunteers should represent the diversity within the community you serve
- Decor should express ethnoculturalism with inclusive and appropriate art work, posters, and messages

# **Scheduling Events**

## **Tips**

- Consider cultural festivals and religious observances when scheduling events and activities

## **Hints**

- Check the calendar for the Lunar New Year (Asian/Far East), Navroze (Central Asian/Zoroastrian Lunar New Year), Eid-ul-Fitr (The Islamic feast after Ramadan fasting), Diwali (Festival of Lights celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs), Kwanzaa (A Pan-African Celebration of Family, Community and Culture), Epiphany (Orthodox Christian celebration of the manifestation of Jesus as

Christ), Yom Kippur (Judaism -Day of Atonement), Wesak (Buddhist festival celebrating the Birth, Enlightenment and Death of the Buddha) and other religious festivals

- If you are not sure about the significance of specific religious festivals, check with a religious leader from that faith
- A good multi-faith calendar is available on the Internet at [www.interfaithcalendar.org](http://www.interfaithcalendar.org). A multi-faith calendar which includes all religious festivals may be purchased in Toronto from Culture-Link ([www.multiculturalcalendar.com](http://www.multiculturalcalendar.com)) or from AMSSA ([www.amssa.org](http://www.amssa.org))

## **Food**

### **Tips**

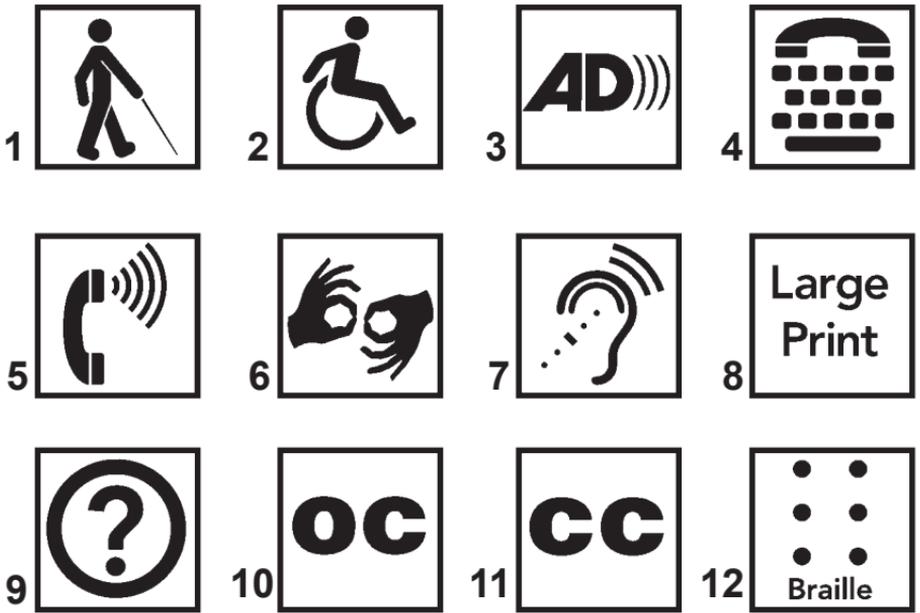
- Remember to consider dietary restrictions from medical, cultural and religious perspectives
- Consideration should also be given to those who may require help eating. Make sure that there is an attendant care worker to assist with such needs

### **Hints**

- Be sure that the meat is halal or kosher and that there is a full range of vegetarian food
- Be sure to accommodate for food allergies and medical disorders
- Provide ethnically appropriate food choices

## **More Tips and Hints**

- People with disabilities need time to make necessary transportation arrangements, to arrange for attendants and child care and to reschedule personal care appointments
- Provide on-site childcare and attendant care whenever possible
- American Sign Language interpreters and cultural interpreters often must be booked several weeks in advance
- People with disabilities who are making use of Wheel Trans are on a very strict schedule. Events must begin and end on time
- Offer assistance with transportation such as bus tokens and volunteer drivers
- It is important to ensure that your environment is fragrance free and smoke free. Inks and markers should also be scent free
- In order to make sure that there are no oversights in terms of accessibility, give participants the opportunity to indicate their disability, cultural and food related requirements well in advance of the event
- Be sure to include the accessibility symbols on all your promotional materials so that people with disabilities are aware that your event is accessible



1. Access for people who are blind or have low vision (other than Print or Braille)
2. Symbol of accessibility for people with limited mobility including wheelchair users
3. Audio Description for performing arts, visual arts, television, video and film
4. Telephone Typewriter (TTY)
5. Volume Control Telephone
6. Sign Language Interpretation
7. Assistive Listening Systems
8. Accessible Print
9. The Information Symbol
10. Open Captioning
11. Closed Captioning
12. Braille Symbol

These symbols may be downloaded at  
<http://www.gag.org/resources/das.php>

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# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING AN EVENT

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## **Brainstorm an Idea**

If you think there is a lack of awareness about supports available to ethnoracial people with disabilities in your community, then think about an idea that would bring different sectors together to present their services, information and resources. For instance, in developing our Building Inclusive Communities initiative, we first identified the fact that ethnoracial people with disabilities who were immigrants or refugees living in the Greater Toronto Area were not aware of the range of services available to them in their community. The different service sectors were also not aware of services outside of their specialty. Consequently, we organized an event to bring together disability services, community health services, ethnospecific agencies, employment related services, recreational and physical activity services and settlement services under one roof to exhibit their programs and services in an environment that was accessible in a cross-cultural and cross-disability framework.

## **Identify Collaborative Partnerships**

It is important to have the right mix of partners who believe in and support your idea and are willing to invest time and energy to the fulfillment of the vision. Involve grassroots organizations, community agencies, cultural and religious groups along with governmental organizations and the private sector (i.e. local small businesses) for a workable mix. It is critical to the success of all projects to develop explicit terms of reference to insure that all partners and community representatives have a clear understanding of their commitment.

## **Develop Funding Options**

Identify government departments, foundations, corporations or clubs who could be approached to fund some of the project expenses. Write a proposal that meets the application requirements of your potential funder. Be sure to identify the lead organization and its partners. Compile a budget that includes all possible costs for cultural and disability related accommodations. Be sure to include all costs arising from issues related to cultural and disability requirements including, cultural interpreters, ASL interpreters, language translation, attendants, sound systems, and child care.

## **Secure Funds**

Ensure that the money is received before incurring budgeted expenses for your initiative.

## **Hire Co-ordinator**

It is important to hire the right person to organize your event. Event coordinators must be familiar with issues of disability and culture in ethnoracial communities.

## **Establish an Advisory Committee/Working Group**

Bring together an Advisory Committee/Working Group made up of various community stakeholders who are willing to make the necessary commitments in terms of time and resources to ensure success. The Committee should include representatives from the collaborative partners as well as community representatives. It is especially important to include a broad a range of persons with different disabilities from various ethnoracial communities.

## **Develop An Inclusive Statement**

Identify all the possible barriers to participation people with and without disabilities may face when the community is invited to your event. Make a list of the barriers you foresee in reaching out to ethnoracial people with disabilities and also

list the barriers that will prevent a person or group from participating at your event. This will help you identify solutions toward minimizing or removing those barriers. Create and promote a statement that shows your vision of including everyone in your community.

For further information:

[www.thot.net/accessible\\_meetings.html](http://www.thot.net/accessible_meetings.html)

## **Design a Clear Work-Plan**

Develop a step-by-step work-plan that shows tasks, responsibilities and timelines. Remember that in designing programs to meet the needs of ethnoracial people with disabilities, many and various issues of cultural and disability related access need to be addressed. Without a clear work-plan, it is difficult to remember all these variables.

## **Be Inclusive**

Always involve ethnoracial people with disabilities in the process to help you become truly inclusive.

## **Outreach To Ethno-Racial Communities**

- Ask multicultural organizations to place your information on their websites
- Use the ethnic media (CHIN Radio, OMNI (#1 & # 2), TeleLatino, Share, Sing Tao Daily Newspaper and other language specific media) as well as the mainstream media for public service announcements
- Use E-Mail list serves, personal contacts and mass fax broadcast services to circulate flyers  
Helpful Contacts include:  
Social Worker Action Team  
([www.swatjobs.com](http://www.swatjobs.com))  
The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians  
([www.cassa.on.ca](http://www.cassa.on.ca))  
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants ([www.settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org))
- Provide mosques, churches, temples, and synagogues with flyers and request faith leaders to make announcements to their congregations
- Follow up with telephone calls to all of the above
- Keep records of contacts developed for future promotions
- Evaluate the outreach by asking participants to indicate how they heard about your event



**Ethno Racial People with Disabilities  
Coalition of Ontario  
2 Carlton Street, Suite #500  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5B 1J3**

**To request more copies of this booklet or  
for alternate format versions contact  
ERDCO at:**

**Voicemail**

416-657-2211 *or* toll-free 1-888-988-3999

**Email**

erdco\_ca@yahoo.ca *or* erdco@acs.ryerson.ca

**Web**

[www.ryerson.ca/erdco](http://www.ryerson.ca/erdco)