

Advisory Committee of Council Staff Report



To Accessibility Advisory Committee
Date Tuesday, October 15, 2024
Subject **Committee edit to Appendix A of the Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook 2023**

Recommendation

1. That the committee approve the edit(s) to the Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook 2023 as part of their annual review of Appendix A.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To gain approval from the committee regarding the 2024 edits to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) Member Handbook 2023, Appendix A specifically, as prepared by committee members.

Key Findings

- Members reviewed Appendix A of the AAC Member Handbook 2023 as part of their annual content update and/or approval.
- In their review, committee members added a new definition and explanation of the term **Intersectionality**.
- An edit that was proposed at the August 2024 AAC meeting was defeated by the committee. The edit was removed.
- The entire handbook is usually reviewed and updated by staff annually, however the update of Appendix A will be the only change to the handbook in 2023 as a review of the procedures for all of the Advisory Committees of Council is underway through the City Clerk's Office.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The key findings and recommendations in this report align with the Strategic Plan priorities areas:

Lead with accountability - Review the continued effectiveness of Council processes and its Advisory Committees; and

Provide excellent service - Remove barriers.

Financial Implications

None directly related to the committee recommending this report.

Report

The AAC Member Manual is reviewed by the AAC annually. It's believed that only Appendix A will be reviewed by committee members in 2024.

The manual is divided into two sections. The Member Manual outlines the committee's terms of reference, conduct of committee members, through to meeting processes and so on. This Member Manual is overseen by the City Clerk's Office.

The second part of the manual is Appendix A which is overseen by the committee members. Appendix A gives the committee members the opportunity to define the committee's commonly used terminology. Every year, the AAC reviews Appendix A of the Member Manual.

The following section is proposed for committee approval as an addition to Appendix A.

“What is intersectionality:

Intersectionality has its roots in Black and Indigenous feminist work and the concept was introduced by Black feminist activist Kimberlé Crenshaw. It is a way of understanding how a person's different identities – such as race, religion, gender-identity, gender expression, class, sexuality, disability, etc. – can affect the way they experience life. It's like looking at lived experiences through many different lenses at the same time rather than putting them in different boxes. Intersectionality also helps to understand how our communities include or exclude these different experiences in making decisions about who gets access to services or resources.

We include disability when we talk about intersectionality because different people with disabilities face different challenges or barriers. Experiences of disability can be different if you are a woman, man, or gender-diverse, or are Black or Indigenous, or depending on your religion, age, immigration status, or level of education. Using an intersectional lens helps us understand that everyone's experience is different and more complex than just one part of their identity. It also helps us to make our policies, schools, and communities more inclusive of our diversity.”

During the August 2024 AAC meeting, an edit was proposed to the last sentence in the second introduction paragraph. The AAC requested that the edit be removed, and the sentence remain as it was in the 2023 version.

Approval of Appendix A includes approval of this added term of Intersectionality and the details that explain it as well as the removal of the edit proposed at the August 2024 AAC meeting.

Financial Implications

There are no directly related financial implication to the committee recommending this report and approving their defined terminology in Appendix A.

Consultations

AAC members prepared the added terminology of Intersectionality.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Appendix A Draft 2024

Report Author

Leanne Warren, Accessibility Project Specialist and Acting AAC Liaison

Attachment-1 Appendix A Draft 2024

Appendix A

Overview of barriers that could be experienced by people with disabilities

Introduction

The following section is written to serve as an introduction to some of the barriers a person with a disability may experience. A person may identify with more than one of these types of disabilities, or may not identify as a person with a disability but require accommodations.

Some people are born with disability, and disabilities can also be acquired throughout life. Be mindful that there are many types of disabilities that may not present in ways that fit in with these descriptions. Disabilities present in different ways for everyone and need different accessibility options for each person. Two people with identical diagnoses can have entirely different symptoms, experience entirely different barriers and require opposite accessibility features from one another. Levels of disability are not static, they can increase and decrease in severity with different environmental and situational factors. It is important not to predict someone's needs based on previous interactions with them, but rather to check in and adjust to people's ever-changing needs whenever necessary.

Consider the barriers associated with the different types of disability listed and the effects of these barriers on an individual's everyday life.

Note: New 2024 Section (this note will be removed upon Committee approval)

What is intersectionality:

Intersectionality has its roots in Black and Indigenous feminist work and the concept was introduced by Black feminist activist Kimberlé Crenshaw. It is a way of understanding how a person's different identities – such as race, religion, gender-identity, gender expression, class, sexuality, disability, etc. – can affect the way they experience life. It's like looking at lived experiences through many different lenses at the same time rather than putting them in different boxes.

Intersectionality also helps to understand how our communities include or exclude these different experiences in making decisions about who gets access to services or resources.

We include disability when we talk about intersectionality because different people with disabilities face different challenges or barriers. Experiences of disability can be different if you are a woman, man, or gender-diverse, or are Black or Indigenous,

or depending on your religion, age, immigration status, or level of education. Using an intersectional lens helps us understand that everyone's experience is different and more complex than just one part of their identity. It also helps us to make our policies, schools, and communities more inclusive of our diversity.

Note: End of new 2024 section (this note will be removed upon Committee approval)

Types of Disabilities

Motor Function and Mobility

Motor function and mobility 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. Motor function and mobility disabilities can be congenital, such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendinitis.

Motor function and mobility disabilities affect an individual's ability to:

- 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
- Control the speed of one's movements
- Coordinate one's movements
- Move rapidly
- Experience balance and orientation
- Move one's arms or legs fully, e.g. climb stairs
- 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

Speech

Disability that impacts a person's speech is a partial or total loss of the ability to speak.

Typical voice disorders can impact a person's:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- 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 difficult to understand. They may require more time, or pauses when speaking.

Hearing

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

A person who is Deaf (considered a culture and therefore capitalized) deafened or hard-of-hearing may be unable to understand speech in noisy environments (or when unable to see a person's mouth move, for example, wearing a mask or not facing a person who is talking), or pronounce words clearly enough to be understood because they can't hear their own voice. The person may choose to use assistive listening devices to boost available hearing, read lips, use sign language, sign language interpreters, and/or captioning.

Vision

Vision related disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity to total blindness. A person with reduced visual acuity may have trouble reading street signs, recognizing faces, or judging distances. They might find it difficult to maneuver, especially in an unfamiliar place.

They 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.

People with vision disabilities may or may not use assistive devices or a service animal. Providing information in alternate, non-visual manners such as, but not limited to describing images or reading aloud could be of assistance to a person with a vision related disability.

Deaf-blind

Deaf-blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. It can result in difficulties accessing information and performing activities of daily living. Deaf-blind disabilities can interfere with communication, 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 can 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 can act as sighted guides. Interveners are skilled in the communication systems used by people who are Deaf-blind, including sign language and Braille.

Smell

Disabilities that relate to sense of smell 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.

Taste

Disability related to taste 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.

Touch

Disability related to touch 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.

Cognitive

Cognitive related disabilities can cause difficulty with thought, memory, information input, information output, and/or information processing. Some cognitive disabilities may include things like acalculia, dyscalculia, aphasia, difficulty reading or processing written text, impaired risk assessment, difficulty with problem solving, and challenges related to adaptive functioning and communicating through speech. It is important to note that cognitive disabilities can affect any aspect of a person's thinking and information processing.

The symptoms of cognitive related disabilities frequently increase and decrease in severity depending on environmental triggers. People with cognitive disabilities may benefit from taking breaks, having quiet areas available to decompress, and may require the use of assistive technology in order to process information. It is important to provide information in a variety of formats that are compatible with a wide variety of assistive technology.

A cognitive related disability may affect an individual's ability to think and reason. The disability may be caused by genetic factors (e.g., Downs Syndrome), exposure to environmental toxins (as in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), brain trauma and psychiatric conditions.

A person with a cognitive related disability may have difficulty with:

- Language: understanding and using spoken or written information, including numbering and word finding
- Concepts: understanding cause and effect
- Perception: taking in and responding to sensory information
- Memory: retrieving and recognizing information from short- or long-term memory
- Recognizing problems, problem solving and reasoning

Neurodivergence/Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to people who have neurological health conditions. This is sometimes also true of people with cognitive disabilities, but not all neurodiversity causes cognitive symptoms and not all cognitive disabilities are neurodivergence. Some recognized types of neurodivergence include:

- Autism
- Asperger's syndrome

- Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, and;
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

There are more types of neurodiversity than listed above.

Mental Health

Mental health exists along a spectrum. Mental health issues and illnesses impact an individual's thinking, feeling, behaviour and/or mood. A mental illness can impact an individual's overall functioning in many ways, including but not limited to their ability to concentrate on tasks, engage in activities of daily living, cope with daily stressors, relate to others, or maintain safety. It is important to remember and fully accept that all individuals may act, react or interact in ways that not everyone is used to.

Genetics, environment, lifestyle, and trauma may play a role in the development of a mental illness. Mental illnesses are often classified using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) which was produced by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Examples of specific mental illnesses include:

- Mood disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- Schizophrenia and related disorders
- Substance Use Disorders
- Personality Disorders
- Eating and Feeding Disorders

Learning

Learning related disabilities can affect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding, processing, organization and use.

People with learning disabilities may take in information, retain it, and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can 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, directions and wayfinding

Disability Support

Service Animals

Service animals are typically dogs that have been trained to assist a person with disability. Not everyone refers to their dog as a service animal. They may also refer to their dog as their:

- Assistance Dog
- Autism Service Dog
- Diabetic Alert Service Dog
- Guide Dog
- Hearing Dog
- Psychiatric Service Dog
- Seizure Alert Service Dog
- Service Dog

Service animals perform a wide range of tasks for their handler. Unlike in the United States of America, Ontario does not specify the number of tasks an animal must perform in order to be considered a service animal. A person cannot be asked to demonstrate their dog's tasks in order to be admitted into a public space. Some common service animal tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Guide their handler around obstacles and people, and through buildings;
- Alert their handler to sound such as an alarm, a timer or a person calling their name;
- Respond to a seizure;
- Assist their handler with physical tasks such as opening a door, retrieving a dropped item, or taking off their jacket;
- Alert to low blood sugars; and;
- Respond to their handler's stress or anxiety.

Service animals do not need to be trained by an organization, they may also be owner trained or privately trained. International organization such as Assistance Dogs International and the International Guide Dog Federation set guidelines for their members regarding service dog training and qualifications, but in Ontario, there are no special tags, cards, certification or registration requirements.

There is no legal recognition of certification for service dogs in Ontario, unless the team (person who is blind and the service dog) is covered under the Blind Persons' Rights Act. The Act only provides protections for handlers who are blind or visually impaired and rely upon a guide dog trained by an organization. All service dogs and their handlers in Ontario are protected by the Integrated Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The AODA's definition of 'disability' mentioned physical reliance on a guide dog, as well as the use of other animals. The Integrated Accessibility Standards says that a person accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal must be given access to any goods, services, facility or accommodation to which the public is also allowed. In addition, a person with disability has the right to keep their service animal with them at all times unless it is unsafe or against the law to do so. The Act does not mention service dogs in training, so it is left up to individual businesses to decide whether they will permit them. Under the Integrated Accessibility Standards, the animal must be easily identifiable, such as wearing a vest or harness, to be a service animal, or the handler must carry a letter from their healthcare provider, prescribing the need for a service animal.

It is important to remember service dog are working animals and therefore the following etiquette should be remembered:

- Do not touch or stare.

- Provide space for the service dog to do its job.
- Do not feed.
- Do not distract.
- If possible, avoid excessive noise or movement that might startle the service dog.
- Do not expect handlers to tell you about their disability and what their dog does for them.

AAC Handbook – Proposed Addition to Appendix A 2024

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Draft Motions

Motion to Receive Report: That the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) receive the report titled 'Committee Edit to Appendix A of the Accessibility Advisory Committee Member Handbook 2023.'

Motion to Recommend Handbook Update: That the AAC recommend the newly drafted Appendix A of the AAC Handbook 2024, incorporating the term 'Intersectionality'.