

School District No.19 (Revelstoke)

BC Accessibility Plan

October 2023



School District 19
(Revelstoke)

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Section 1: Introduction

a. Territorial Acknowledgement

We would like to honor the nations on whose territory we are gathering: the Sinixt, Secwepemc, the Ktunaxa and the Sylix Okanagan who have been stewards of this land since time immemorial. We welcome and the history that we share with the Nations share with us including culture, stewardship and voice.

b. About Our School District Community

School District #19 enrolls approximately 1,100 students in three elementary and one secondary school. We are a smaller rural district serving the City of Revelstoke and surrounding areas. Our district provides many different school programs that enrich or complement our students' educational studies. Class sizes continue to be one of the lowest in the province. We offer quality Early Learning Programs, Indigenous Learning Programs, and Career Development Programs. As well, we support our students with disabilities/diverse abilities through District and School-based Inclusive Education Programs.

Our leadership team and staff are committed to providing a positive educational environment that fosters each child's learning in an accessible and inclusive environment. Our leadership team includes a superintendent, secretary treasurer, two district principals, six school-based principals/vice principals, and a manager of operations. We have approximately 85 teachers and 65 unionized support staff.

School District #19 elects a Board of five trustees who establish policies, and set a vision and the strategic direction for the school district. Board meetings occur every third Wednesday from September to June. The various board committees and Parent Advisory Councils meet monthly.

c. A Message from the Superintendent

As Superintendent of Schools, I would like to express gratitude for your commitment and dedication to ensuring accessibility for all within our educational community. The work you do in promoting inclusivity and accommodating diverse needs is of utmost importance.

The Accessible BC Regulation is not just a set of guidelines; for us, it is a commitment to the future of education in our province. We firmly believe that diversity is our strength, and by embracing inclusion, we can create a more compassionate, equitable, and vibrant learning environment for all.

Your diverse backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives are invaluable assets that will contribute to the development of a comprehensive and effective plan.

Sincerely

Roberta Kubik
Superintendent of Schools

d. Definitions

Accessibility: The ability to have programs, services and environments that allow all individuals to participate fully in society without encountering barriers.

Accessibility Committee: An official group formed by one or more organizations in collaboration with people with disabilities, to create an accessibility plan and a feedback mechanism.

Accessibility Plan: A plan developed by an Accessibility Committee that identifies challenges and solutions for addressing accessibility barriers.

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. This includes physical/environmental, attitudinal, information, communications, policy or practice, and technological barriers. Types of barriers:

- i. **Physical/Environmental Barrier:** A barrier resulting from building design, smells/sounds, lighting, the area adjacent to the building, shape of rooms, and the size/width of doorways.
- ii. **Attitudinal Barrier:** A barrier that arises from the attitudes of staff, students, and the school community, including discriminatory behaviours and a lack of disability awareness.
- iii. **Communication Barrier:** A barrier that arises from difficulties receiving information in person, by telephone or online, interacting with teachers, peers, receptionists or other staff, and receiving training.
- iv. **Information Barrier:** A barrier that arises from inadequate or incomprehensible signage, difficulties reading brochures, forms, manuals, websites, equipment labels, and computer screens.
- v. **Policy or Practice Barrier:** Rules, regulations and protocols that prevent a person from performing their job satisfactorily or participating in society. Policy, practice, and procedures that prevent a student from accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.

vi. Technological Barrier: Barriers resulting from computers, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones and switches, including the lack of assistive technologies.

Disability: The state of being unable to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction between an impairment and a barrier. (For more information about disability and types of disabilities and support, refer to Appendix A: About Disability.)

Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

Section 2: Framework Guiding our Work

The School District #19 accessibility plan builds on global, national, provincial and school district specific actions to promote and support accessibility.

a. Global Context – United Nations

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace and within the larger community. The United Nations has been instrumental in leading the importance of disability as a global health issue. In 2006, the United Nations led efforts to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In 2010, Canada ratified the CRPD and described the CRPD as follows:

“The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human right treaty aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the Convention of the rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law.”

b. Canadian Context and Legislation – Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canada-wide, around one in five people had some form of disability in 2017. Nationally, Canadian accessibility legislation started in 1985 where disability was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in 1986, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were included in the new federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force in 2019, with the overarching goal to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This act applies to federally regulated entities. The ACA has seven focus areas, and was developed based on the following guiding principles:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities.
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.
4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
5. Laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.
6. PWDs must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures.
7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for PWDs.

c. B.C. Context and Legislation - Accessible B.C. Act

- The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June 2021, and initially the accessibility planning requirements only applied to provincial government organizations.
The Accessible British Columbia Regulation, under the Accessible British Columbia Act, came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations, and school districts and independent schools will be required to have an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a tool to receive feedback on accessibility by September 1, 2023.
- The goal of the act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and involve them in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

d. Principles in the Accessible B.C. Act

The Accessible B.C. Act includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop an accessibility plan. The Definitions are adapted from the foundational document [BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/about-the-bc-LEGISLATION). (HYPER LINK TO LEGISLATION) <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/about-the-bc->

[government/accessible-bc/disability-consultation/2019-consultation/framework-for-accessibility-legislation.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov2/gov/accessible-bc/disability-consultation/2019-consultation/framework-for-accessibility-legislation.pdf)

- a. **Adaptability:** Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.
- b. **Collaboration:** Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.
- c. **Diversity:** Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience greatly inform the experiences of individuals. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.
- d. **Inclusion:** All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
- e. **Self-Determination:** Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
- f. **Universal Design:** The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.” An accessibility plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who interact with the organization.

e. **Our Commitment to Accessibility**

Accessibility refers to the degree of ease with which people with disabilities can use and enjoy something such as a device, service, or place.

School District #19 is committed to providing an environment that is engaging for all members of our diverse community, including people with disabilities. We recognize the importance of conscious planning, design, and effort in ensuring that barriers are removed, and full accessibility is created.

Our district is committed to working collaboratively with the community to provide equitable treatment for people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity.

To achieve this goal, we have outlined the following commitments:

f. Our Approach

School District #19 Revelstoke believes that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an opportunity to participate, and provided with access to learning and community. Our approach is grounded in the core provincial principles of accessibility, including adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination, and universal design.

Our approach is designed to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility in our community. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action, we aim to deliver lasting accessibility improvements for all members of our community.

To achieve this goal, we have outlined the following commitments:

- Engage with staff, community members, and people with disabilities in the development and review of our accessibility plan.
- Increase opportunities for staff to learn about disabilities/diverse abilities and how to remove and prevent barriers.
- Ensure that our school board policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility.
- Continually improve accessibility for people with disabilities/diverse abilities in our school community.

In June 2023, we began the process of establishing an accessibility committee and to begin the process for identifying barriers to accessibility in our school district community. This process involved:

- Calling for members of the Accessibility Committee
- Making a plan to assess the current physical and architectural accessibility of our schools
- Information gathering approaches including the use of surveys to understand the issues, challenges, and priorities of stakeholders within our school district community.
- Development of a feedback tool.
- Establishing a monitoring and evaluation process
- Engage with staff, community members and people with disabilities in the development and review of its accessibility plan.
- Ensure that our School Board policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility.

- Improve access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for all individuals.

Section 3: About our Committee

a. Purpose of the Accessibility Committee

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, organizations must establish an Accessibility Committee to assist with identifying and addressing barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

The purpose of the accessibility committee is to work collaboratively to assess and improve community accessibility by focusing on the experiences of individuals with disabilities while encompassing the whole community.

The Accessibility Committee also advises the District Administrator/Board on strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory, and other barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all aspects of school community life. The Committee makes recommendations regarding issues that have been identified.

b. Recruitment of the Accessibility Committee Members

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, the selection of accessibility committee members must, to the extent possible, align with the following goals:

- At least half the members are persons with disabilities (PWD), or individuals who support or are from organizations that support PWDs;
- At least one member is an Indigenous person; and
- Members reflect the diversity of persons in B.C.

An initial invitation to the Accessibility Committee was sent out in June 2023 to recruit a diverse representation as outlined above. The Accessibility Committee was formally constituted in June 2023. Current members of the Accessibility Coordinating Committee are listed below and membership will be reviewed on a regular basis.

c. Accessibility Committee Membership

We would like to thank the following committee members for their time and commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

Roberta Kubik, Superintendent

Rita Tedesco, District Principal

Jodi Wallach, District Principal

Celes Lucius, CUPE President

Allison Just, RTA member

Lisa Moore, Indigenous Student Support

Section 4: Consultation Conducted

a. Barrier Identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Committee will use the following methods to identify barriers:

- District Accessibility Feedback Tool - A feedback tool is to be developed and posted to the district website. Information about the tool will be shared with district and school stakeholders (i.e., students, staff, outside professionals and parents/guardians): January 2024
- Audit of policies and practices - A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion is to be conducted by key staff members. Completion date: March 2024
- Accessibility Scan – An assessment of accessibility barriers in our district will be developed. Completion date: March 2024

Establishing additional processes for the identification of barriers will be part of the Committee’s work moving forward. These may include student, parent, and staff surveys and an accessibility site audit.

Section 5: Feedback Mechanism

a. Feedback Mechanism Development

School District #19 will develop an online feedback tool that includes questions about accessibility experiences that students, staff and members of the school district community can complete. The tool will be posted to the main page of the district website and an information announcement about the tool will be provided to students, staff, and parents/guardians. Feedback will be anonymous, or people can add their name and contact information if they wish to be contacted. There is an option for people to email a video or photo(s) to accessibility@sd19.bc.ca

b. Report an Accessibility Barrier

We want to learn about specific barriers that people face when they are trying to access a school program, building, or school information. This information can be

relayed via the online feedback tool that will be posted on our district website or byemail at accessibility@sd19.bc.ca

Section 6: Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers

a. Key Discussion Themes - Accessibility Accomplishments

Overview

This Accessibility Plan outlines the measures that our district will take to remove and prevent barriers and to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in our school district community. The plan is based on the accessibility principles of adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination, and universal design, as set out in the Accessible B.C. Act.

The guiding principles of inclusive practice inform the School District's programs, policies, practices, and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. We strive to create an environment that is accessible and to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility. There are several initiatives in School District #19 to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The following is a synopsis of some of the major achievements:

a. Information and Communication

1. Share information on the accessibility act with district/school staff, students and parents/guardians/caregivers.

b. School Policies and Practices

1. Adaptations for Students:

The district and schools continue to assess student accommodation requirements on a case-by-case basis and use all relevant information to respond to each scenario.

- The district has established practices and procedures by which adaptations are offered throughout our schools.

2. Mental Health and Well-being Supports

- The district recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being of its students and staff, especially as the world has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. Initiatives have taken place to

assess and improve the mental health and well-being of students and staff to ensure support and positive outcomes.

- Mental health staff is assigned to promote student mental health and improve personal mental health and well-being and reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

3. Accessibility Awareness Training

- Ongoing professional development continues to be provided to staff and students that supports accessibility awareness, obligations, and inclusive environments.

c. Physical and Architectural Environment

1. We will complete a school and district scan of physical and architectural environments and determine, prioritize, and provide suggestions and actionable items to improve accessibility of the physical and architectural environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities.
2. The district has invested in upgrades to existing facilities over the past twelve years. New standards that support accessible school communities have been considered as part of these upgrades. Investments have been targeted to upgrade washroom accessibility, and door operators.

d. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Advisory Committee meets quarterly, or more often if necessary, to review progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. The committee will ensure the following steps are taken regarding the three-year accessibility plan:

1. Prepare an annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan.
2. Review and update the three-year accessibility plan every three years in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

e. Key Discussion Themes

The following are some of the potential barriers identified for phase 1 of plan.

- a. Information and Communication Barriers
- b. Physical and Architecture Environment Barriers

- c. Technology Barriers
- d. School Policy and Practice Barriers

Section 7: Appendices

Appendix A: About Disability

The Disability Continuum

There is no universally accepted meaning for the word “disability”. However, the Ontario Human Rights Code provides definitions of disability that form our guiding principles. Definitions of disability can be placed on a continuum. At one end, 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).

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 an 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 from 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 (World Health Organization (WHO) report titled “Ageing and health”, 2015). 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 individuals, and it is the barriers in the built and human environments, not their medical conditions, that create disability. Disability occurs when the world is designed only for a certain way of living, without considering the natural variation among human beings. Barriers are created by humans, and modifying how we live, the tools we use, and our understanding of the proper way to do things can eliminate or minimize design problems that cause barriers. Systematic barriers can be eliminated by modifying policies, plans and processes. Attitudes that cause barriers can be addressed through disability awareness, respect, and positive interactions with people with disabilities.

Types of Disability and Functional Limitations

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

There are many kinds of disabilities, including physical, sensory, hearing, mental health, developmental and learning. Disabilities can be visible or invisible.

Visual Disabilities

Visual disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Some have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Impaired vision can restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a visual disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with visual disabilities:

- ☒ Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them.
- ☒ Speak normally and clearly.
- ☒ Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- ☒ Unless it is an emergency, only touch the person if you have been given permission.
- ☒ If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- ☒ Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- ☒ Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- ☒ If you are giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you're approaching a door or an obstacle, say so. Do not just assume the individual can't see you.
- ☒ When entering a room, show the individual to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- ☒ Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them.
- ☒ Ensure you say good-bye prior to leaving the individual.
- ☒ Be patient. Things may take a little longer.

Hard of Hearing and Deafness

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. People who are hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating. While some people may use sign language, notes or hearing aids when communicating, others may also use emails, pagers, TTY telephone service or Bell Canada Relay Service.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- ☒ Always ask how you can help. Do not shout.
- ☒ Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- ☒ Attract the person's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- ☒ Make sure you are in a well-lit area where the person can see your face.
- ☒ Look at and speak directly to the person. Address the person, not their interpreter.
- ☒ If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example a pen and paper.
- ☒ Keep your face clearly visible when speaking.
- ☒ Be clean and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- ☒ Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- ☒ Any personal (e.g., financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- ☒ Be patient. Communication for people who are deaf is different because their first language may not be English. It may be American Sign Language (ASL).
- ☒ If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.

Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. For example, people who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty moving, standing, or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with physical disabilities:

- ☒ Speak normally and directly to the person rather than someone who is with them.
- ☒ People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- ☒ Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- ☒ Be patient and be sure you understand their needs.
- ☒ Unless it is an emergency, refrain from touching any assistive devices, including wheelchairs.
- ☒ Provide the person with information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

Intellectual Disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one’s ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with intellectual disabilities:

- ☒ As much as possible, treat the person with an intellectual disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.
- ☒ Do not assume what a person can or cannot do.
- ☒ Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- ☒ Use simple words and short sentences.
- ☒ Make sure the person understands what you have said.
- ☒ If you cannot understand what’s being said, ask again.
- ☒ Give one piece of information at a time.
- ☒ Be polite and patient.
- ☒ Speak directly to the person, not to someone who is with the person.

Learning or Cognitive Disabilities

Learning or cognitive disabilities can result in a host of different communication difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced, but they can interfere with the person’s ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with learning or cognitive disabilities:

- ☒ Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- ☒ Recognize that some people with communication difficulties use augmentative communication systems such as Signed English and Picture Exchange System.
- ☒ When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- ☒ Speak normally and clearly, and directly to the person.
- ☒ Take some time – people with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- ☒ Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- ☒ If you are dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.

- ☒ Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- ☒ Be courteous and patient and the person will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.

Mental Health Disabilities

People with mental health disabilities look like everyone else. You will not know that the person has a mental health disability unless you’re informed of it. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let the person tell you how you can best help.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with mental health disabilities:

- ☒ Treat people with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- ☒ Be confident and reassuring and listen to persons with a mental health disability and their needs.
- ☒ If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.
- ☒ Take the person with a mental health disability seriously, and work with them to meet their needs.

Speech and Language Disabilities

Some people have communication challenges. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards, sign language or other assistive devices.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with speech and language disabilities:

- ☒ Just because a person has one disability does not mean they have another. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking; make no assumption they have an intellectual disability as well.
- ☒ If you do not understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- ☒ Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- ☒ If you are able, ask questions that can be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’.
- ☒ Take some time. Be patient and polite and give the person whatever time they need to get their point across.
- ☒ Allow the individual to finish their sentences themselves without interruption.
- ☒ Patience, respect, and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Deaf and Blind Disabilities

A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet, or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deafblind:

- ☒ Make no assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Some deafblind people have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- ☒ Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- ☒ A deafblind person is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- ☒ Speak directly to the person, as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- ☒ Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach the person who is deafblind.
- ☒ Don’t touch service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- ☒ Unless it’s an emergency, refrain from touching a deafblind person without permission