

# LD Edge Guidelines©2006

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When the LD Edge Guidelines were researched and created all of the supporting documentation links were live and current. As the World Wide Web is constantly changing, some of these links may no longer be active. Due to copyright legislation we could not capture it on PDF and redistribute this material as we found it at that time. We will be making every effort to update all links before our next reprint of the Guidelines. We apologize for any inconveniences that this may cause.



# **Accessibility Package**

Thank you for choosing to use the LD Edge Learning Disability Transition and Accessibility Guidelines to assist you in providing the opportunity for everyone to achieve to their fullest potential. The materials in this package are intended to provide a framework for your own policies and procedures to address situations that may arise in your operations.

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## LD Edge Learning Disability Transition and Accessibility Guidelines

### Introduction:

The policies and procedures that are built within this framework should be able to accomplish several things. First and foremost, they should assist you in finding effective ways to meet your needs in accommodating individuals with learning disabilities (LDs), in an environment that promotes and appreciates the unique abilities of individuals who learn in different ways. **This particular package has been assembled to address issues arising for individuals in a workplace environment.**

The contents within this package are arranged to allow you as an employer, to find the tools you need for a particular situation or application. “Decision Tree” flowcharts are provided to assist in determining which guidelines and tools would be most appropriate to your needs. The Guidelines, along with references to supporting documentation are provided in a separate section. We encourage becoming familiarized with the contents of the entire package to better utilize the tools as needed.

Specific checklists for assessing needs and gaining the ability to accommodate are provided to enable you to assess the extent to which your facility is “LD friendly” and to identify areas where improvements to facilities or services may be needed.

Other tools and forms are provided to “streamline” and support the Guidelines. These forms should become the standard wherever the Guidelines are used, enabling seamless movement from one situation to the next. Ideally, the use of the Guidelines will help to ensure that the process for obtaining supports and accommodations in one location is already in place at another when someone with a learning disability changes situations.

Finally, there is the accompanying CD-ROM which contains links to many other resources available on the Internet as well as digital versions of all materials presented in this package.

## **Definition of Learning Disabilities**

The term **Learning Disabilities** refers to a variety of disorders that may affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of information. These disorders are the result of differences in one or more types of psychological processing skills related to learning, in persons having at least average intelligence and abilities essential for thinking and reasoning. Learning disabilities are specific and are **not** the result of intellectual or emotional disturbances.

**Learning disabilities range in severity and invariably interfere with the attainment and use of one or more of the following important skills:**

- Oral language (e.g. listening, speaking or understanding)
- Reading (e.g. decoding, comprehension)
- Written language (e.g. spelling, writing, expression)
- Mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving)

Approximately 800,000 people in Ontario have some form of learning disability or attention deficit disorder.

### **Common Signs of Learning Disabilities:**

People with learning disabilities may exhibit some of the following characteristics:

- Difficulty with mathematics, spelling, reading or writing
- Verbal skills better developed than written skills
- Lack of organization
- Negative self-esteem
- Anxiety, frustration, or anger
- Poor coordination or spatial disorientation
- Poor auditory or visual memory skills
- Difficulty with time management
- Difficulty with money management
- Poor organizational skills
- Poor or inappropriate social skills

## **Defining Specific Learning Disabilities**

### **Dyslexia**

Dyslexia commonly affects the ability to make connections between the written form of a word and the phonetic sound of the same word when spoken. As well, dyslexia affects the ability to make a link between a group of letters on a page and a word that is known by its sound. Dyslexia can also affect a person's ability to hear individual sounds in a word, to analyze whole words into parts and to blend sounds into words. Persons with dyslexia often reverse letters within words when reading or writing (p/q, b/d, brid/bird, who/how)

### **Dysgraphia**

Extremely poor handwriting may indicate dysgraphia and might reflect an impairment of fine motor skills. The person with dysgraphia may be unable to transfer visual memory to written word, or they might have problems in attempting to copy the shape of a letter onto paper.

### **Dyscalculia**

Dyscalculia usually refers to particular problems with calculating or performing mathematical operations including addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. It also makes it difficult for the individual to grasp mathematical concepts.

### **Dyspraxia**

Dyspraxia may be characterized by speech problems, poor posture, reduced sense of direction and difficulties such as throwing and catching. Messages from the brain are not properly transmitted to the body and although muscles are not paralyzed or weak, they have difficulty working well together.

### **Dysnomia**

Dysnomia is characterized by chronic difficulties in finding a desired word to use when talking. The person may go through several descriptive routines, often verbally, in order to find the word for something as familiar as a friend's name. This is that 'word is on the tip of my tongue but it won't come out' experience that everyone has occasionally. It can be very pronounced in someone with this learning disability and can interfere with both communication and learning.

### **Auditory Perceptual Deficit**

Someone with this type of learning disability may have trouble receiving accurate information from their sense of hearing. The person's hearing is not impaired; the difficulty is that the brain misinterprets what is heard. The individual may have problems understanding and remembering oral instructions, differentiating between similar sounds or hearing one sound over background noise.

### **Visual Perception Deficit**

This includes difficulties receiving and/or processing accurate information from the sense of sight. People with VPD might have trouble seeing things in correct order or picking out singular images from a background of other images. Struggles include differentiating shapes and sizes, comparing and contrasting similar items (e.g. letters like p, d, b, q or the numbers 6 and 9) and difficulties in picking one line of print from another while reading. Some people may not readily recall information that was primarily visual in format and might find the process of visualizing information to be a challenge.

### **Other Impairments**

#### **Difficulty Interpreting Perception Through Touch:**

Individuals with problems in this area have difficulty processing information from the sense of touch. They may not be able to judge how much pressure to use with their hands and exhibit such characteristics as too tight or too loose a grip when shaking hands with others, letting tools slide from their grasp, and so on.

#### **Temporal Perception Problems:**

This involves difficulty understanding concepts of time. Because adults with temporal perception issues lack a sense of how much time it takes to complete tasks, many procrastinate, miscalculate work time and subsequently miss deadlines, or fail to associate the passage of time with their actions.

#### **Spatial Perception Difficulties:**

People who have spatial perception difficulties frequently lose sense of directions and misplace personal belongings. A deficient sense of the orientation of the environment around them contributes to the individual's tendency to become disoriented, even in familiar surroundings.

## **Learning Disabilities in the Workplace**

### **How can I recognize potential learning disabilities?**

- **Performance:** May be able to speak well but write poorly or in an immature manner.
- **Punctuality:** Might continually arrive unusually early or late for work or meetings. May also show up at wrong location.
- **Coordination:** May have superior creative talents but show difficulty completing tasks requiring manual dexterity.
- **Social Skills:** May be able to understand complicated technical data but misinterpret a casual remark.

### **What are the responsibilities of the employee?**

The employee should cooperate in the development of an accommodation plan that is mutually agreeable and acceptable. The employee should also work in a diligent and effective manner to meet job standards.

### **What are my responsibilities as an employer?**

As an employer it is in your best interest to recognize that staff turnover accounts for a great deal of lost revenue and productivity. It is, therefore, more profitable to make 'accommodations' for an employee with learning disabilities than to hire a new person and start the training process again.

As a good corporate citizen, you are aware that learning disabilities are considered by the Government as a disability under legislation such as Federal and Provincial Human Rights Codes and the Access for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

There are funding initiatives through both the federal and provincial government to make accommodations. For information on these and other programs, please contact:

**LD Edge**  
**504 – 141 Dundas St**  
**London ON N6A 1G3**  
**Phone: 519.433.7950**

## **Defining Accessibility in the Workplace**

There is a mutual benefit for both employers and employees when creating an accessible workplace. While employers provide jobs for employees and employees provide the products and services through these jobs for employers to deliver, there is the ability, with cooperative effort, to prosper through mutual respect. Through that, both employers and employees can attain what they are capable of achieving without the hindrance of defined barriers.

A defined barrier is one that exists by definition and not from any real physical causes. Defined barriers for persons with learning disabilities are ones that arise from the fact that they learn differently than most other people. A workplace that is based on the ability of the majority is guaranteed to pose barriers because it does not take into account the learning styles of employees with learning disabilities. An example would be a workplace that only uses information in written form. This will pose a defined barrier for anyone who has difficulties in reading or writing. Similarly, a workplace that only uses verbal messaging places a barrier on persons who have verbal and auditory processing difficulties.

Workplace accessibility is defined by the atmosphere of the work environment. A workplace where an employee

with a learning disability fears the loss of his/her job or does not feel comfortable seeking opportunities for advancement is an environment that presents barriers and limits accessibility. A workplace that encourages disclosure not only of learning disabilities but just of a need for accommodations is one that promotes accessibility. With both employer and employee working cooperatively to identify and establish effective solutions, the employee becomes more productive and develops a greater sense of loyalty to the employer. As well, the employer finds greater access to skill, talent and problem solving ability in those particular employees.

Accessibility in the workplace also refers to how a person is able to enter from one field to the next. 'Accessibility' means that someone with a learning disability can move from one situation to the next without disruptions of the accommodations and supports they need. The transition from situation to situation would be a flawless event.

**Providing everyone with the opportunities and the tools they need to succeed to the best of their ability results in higher economic benefits and greater success for all.**

## **Defining Accessibility Across Transitional Boundaries**

A person may cross numerous transitional boundaries in a lifetime and in some way education is associated with each transition. This is especially important in transitions to and from the workplace.

Moving from an educational environment into a workplace environment, and *vice versa*, is perhaps the most significant transitional boundary that an individual encounters. It can bring about frustration and bewilderment when trying to establish what services an individual may need in order to find accommodations and supports to achieve success.

“Accessibility across transitional boundaries” means that the opportunity for an individual to obtain the accommodations and supports required for success are already in place and that the applicable policies are coordinated from situation to situation. It also means that individuals would also already have the knowledge and understanding of how to self-disclose and self-advocate in new situations.

This is not as difficult as one might think. Some government funding initiatives to encourage such accommodations already exist. **Contact LD Edge for further information on this and other programs:**

**LD Edge  
504 – 141 Dundas St  
London ON N6A 1G3**

**For issues involving transitions between school and workplace, please refer to the “LD Edge Learning Disability School and Workplace Transitions Guidelines” package** (available on the accompanying CD-ROM or as a package document by request).

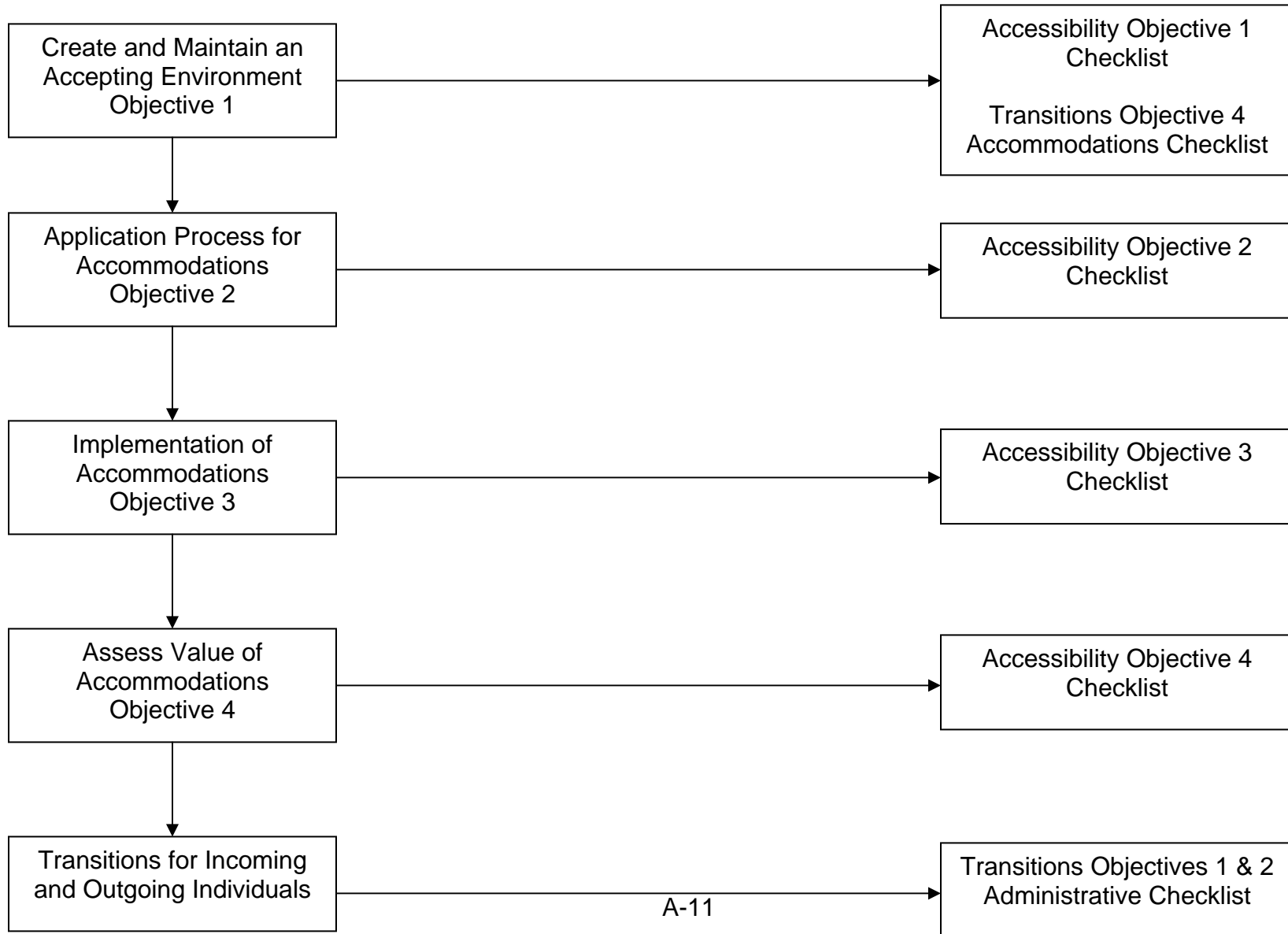
## **Flow Chart Description**

The flow chart provided in this package is designed to assist you in determining which of the Guidelines and accompanying checklists may be most appropriate to a particular situation. As much as possible, the Guidelines and checklists have been designed for use by small, medium, and large corporations as well as by individuals. The actual size of your operation should not be a consideration in this process.

Proceed through the appropriate chart boxes, step by step, to determine the checklists to be used, and then work through those checklists to identify areas of your operation that correspond to the guidelines and areas that might be in need of improvement.

Phone: 519.433.7950

### Enterprise Flowchart



## Community Learning Disability Accessibility Guidelines

**Objective 1: Create and maintain an environment that conveys the acceptance of learning disabilities that grows from an informed understanding of their nature and characteristics.**

1. Be proactive about educating all employees about the nature of learning disabilities and foster an environment of inclusiveness as an aspect of productivity.
2. Highlight accomplishments of famous individuals with LDs as a way to convey an understanding of the value of providing accommodations for people with LDs to ensure their maximum productivity and capacity to contribute.
3. Convey that you see providing workplace accommodations as a competitive business advantage.
4. Introduce management level training about learning disabilities with annual 'refresher' training.
5. Make LD training/facilitation a component of employee training to encourage changing how LDs are viewed in the workplace.
6. Establish an employee focus group around LD 'role models' within the organization to act as liaison between company management and employees and to provide informed support and mentoring practices. This group should also be responsible for ensuring a high level of awareness around 'safe' disclosure and the availability of accommodations via posters, memos, seminars etc.

## Resources

Roadmap on Learning Disabilities for Employers  
(2003, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada)  
ISBN 0-919053-66-1

Brief for Inspection of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities website:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subisocialpolycysocialservices/content/brief/ld-standards-e/tm>

7. Incorporate a standard statement in all relevant recruiting, workplace, and publicity materials that outlines your position that LD accommodation is an important aspect of productivity, success and offers a competitive business advantage.
8. Offer LD accommodation to clients and customers as an integral part of all business operation.
9. Ensure that all business documentation is available in alternative format and that this fact is widely publicized.
10. Develop and publicize recruitment strategies that are inclusive of people with learning (and other) disabilities.
11. Set up a workplace assessment checklist to assist in the identification of environmental effects on individual performance.
12. Set up an “ergonomics for the mind“ checklist that can be coordinated with Health and Safety procedures.

**Objective 2: Application Process for Accommodations**

1. Have a resource list for the employers to refer to for appropriate services.
2. Provide an application form in clear language format that staff can utilize to request accommodations.
3. Use a standard process to acquire understanding of an individual's strengths and weaknesses.

### **Objective 3: Process for Implementation of Accommodations**

1. Set up a workplace assessment checklist to assist in the identification of environmental effects on individual performance.
2. Set up an “ergonomics for the mind“ checklist that can be coordinated with Health and Safety procedures.
3. Develop a self-discovery survey or inventory so that staff can determine their own learning style and facilitate self-advocacy and enhance productivity.
4. Introduce an Employment Systems Review (ESR) process to identify what needs to be modified or replaced by a suitable accommodation for individuals with learning disabilities.

### **Objective 4: Assess the Value of the Accommodation(s) Process**

1. Create a document to record and measure the progress of the accommodation(s) and resource(s) that have been provided.
2. One-on-one initial assessment should be done within a month with periodic reviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine whether additional accommodations are needed. Employees should be encouraged to talk about their concerns and the suggestions that are brought forward are valued.

Literacy BC – 2004-05 Annual Report  
[www.literacy.bc.ca](http://www.literacy.bc.ca)

3. The accommodation process should be in line with the work place policies and practices. The goal of the accommodation should be linked to helping the employee to improve job performance that is related to the job description.
4. The accommodation process should be measured by a questionnaire, survey or checklist or any other of documentation to provide data gathering for future adjustments or revised actions plans. This document should also be able to measure employee attitude, perceptions, and comments to promote “buy in” and bring awareness to the overall workforce.
5. Establish an advisory sub committee to measure effectiveness in the following areas:
  - the new measures introduced are achieving the planned result
  - changes in organizational strategy, structure, or process that could affect key components of the plan in the short and long term
  - changes in the workforce, management, business strategy, and vision that may affect the implementation of accommodation(s)
  - changes in financial and/or human resources that could affect the delivery and achievability of work place accommodations
6. Establish a clear prioritized framework for delivering and assessing progress. Design plans should have measurable objectives and timescales for achievement.

**NOTES:**

**Other Resources**

**Objective 1**

Brief for Inspection of Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities website:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subisocialpolicysocialservices/content/brief/ld-standards-e.htm>

Thinking Styles, Robert J. Sternberg (1997, Cambridge, Univ. Press) ISBN 0521553164

Learning Disabilities Training: Phase II, Screening Tools, Strategies, and Employment  
Published by: Literacy Link South Central

Employee / Employer Rights, A guide for the Ontario Work Force 11<sup>th</sup> Edition  
Ernest Rovet, B.A., LL.B.

Information from the Job Accommodation Network, a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy,  
Website: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu>

**NOTES:**

**Other Resources**

**Objective 2**

Meeting the Challenge of Learning Disabilities in Adulthood Roffman, Arlyn J.(2000, Brooks Publishing) ISBN 1-55766-430-7

**Objective 3**

New Audit Framework for Federal Contractors Program (FCP)

**Objective 4**

<http://web.uvic.ca/equity/plans/uveqplan.pdf>

Guideline for Assessing Accommodation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities  
[www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca)

Diversity at Work – The Business Case for Equity Wilson, Trevor (1996, John Wiley & Sons Canada Limited) ISBN 0-471-64124-3

**NOTES:**

**Other Resources**

**Objective 4**

Final Report Diversity Planning for Inclusive Employment Employer Survey

<http://www.ccrw.org/pdf/CCRW-DPIE-EN.pdf>

A Place For All: A Guide to Creating an Inclusive Workplace

[www.chrc-ccdp.ca](http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca)

Creating a Welcoming Workplace for Employees with Disabilities

[www.tbs-sct.gc.ca](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca)

## **The Checklists: Their Purpose and Instructions on Use**

Included in this package, with the Guidelines, are a number of checklists which have been coordinated with the Transition and Accessibility Guidelines Objectives 1 to 4. It would be an advantage to become familiar with the content of the Guidelines and supporting documentation for maximum effectiveness.

**Note: Digital copies of all the supporting documentation have been included in the accompanying CD-ROM and are accessible through the web browser on your computer.**

Use the checklists to help you identify areas of strength and weakness regarding persons with learning disabilities in your operations. The checklists can also be used to provide a reference list of areas of concern through the examination of your facilities, policies, and day to day operations. In a point by point manner, the checklists can allow you to readily identify areas in which your institution is working towards a particular objective as well as any area where more effort is needed.

Each checklist, furthermore, can be used as a record of assessment for annual accessibility standards reviews when dated and signed.

Select the checklist in accordance to the objective that you wish to address, work through it point by point, and decide whether your institution's policies and operations meet the requirements of each point. If so, check off that point and continue onto the next. If your institution's policies and operations do not meet the requirements of a specific point, leave the check box blank.

At the end of the checklist, the points that have not been checked reveal areas of improvement in regards to accessibility for persons with learning disabilities.

**Checklists can be dated and notarized to become part of your annual accessibility strategy review.**

## **Accessibility Objective 1: Create and Maintain an Accepting Environment**

- We have a strategic plan for educating employees about the nature of learning disabilities.
- We have formal policies and procedures in place for promoting our inclusive work environment.
- We have determined the competitive business advantage of our diversity program.
- We have a workplace diversity advisory or steering committee.
- We conduct structured group interviews for open management positions.
- We have a formal, fully-inclusive mentoring program.
- We are attempting to diversify our recruiting pool while maintaining high recruitment standards.
- We conduct diversity training for managers, supervisors, and employees.
- We offer training in problem-solving and conflict management for diverse employees.
- We have developed an in-house diversity resource center (books, videos, newsletter, and other educational materials) for our employees.
- We acknowledge in a positive way the diversity of our employees.

## **Accessibility Objective 2: Application Process for Accommodations Checklist**

- Recruiters are aware that candidates for employment may require accommodations in the workplace.
- Job openings posted on bulletin boards (electronic and paper version) are accessible to all employees including persons with disabilities.
- Managers are aware of any special measures for recruiting and are encouraged to use them.
- All job advertisements accurately reflect qualifications and skill requirements.
- Job advertisements indicate that we are an equal opportunity employer.
- All jobs are open to all fully qualified individuals.
- All job advertisements are written in clear language designed to attract a wider pool of job applicants.
- Our recruitment practices are up-to-date and consistently reflect our written policy and procedures.
- Our recruitment policy and practices have been clearly communicated to unions, managers, and employees.
- We have developed mechanisms to carry out consultation and collaboration with employee representatives.
- We advertise employment opportunities through a wide variety of mechanisms and media when conducting open competitions.
- We distribute job bulletins to communities without reserve.
- When conducting recruitment at educational institutions, we seek advice from employment equity officers and designated group student associations.
- Our staff inventory has a representative pool of qualified candidates at all job levels.

### **Accessibility Objective 3: Implementation of Accommodations**

- We communicate with employees about employment equity and accommodation issues on an ongoing basis.
- We work closely with employee representatives in developing and implementing ways of meeting equity and accommodations targets.
- We collect equity and accommodation information through a workforce survey.
- We distribute self-identification forms to new employees.
- We keep our company equity and accommodations information up-to-date.
- We conduct a workforce analysis to identify areas where accommodations are underutilized.
- We use a company employment equity plan that addresses under-representation and removes barriers to individuals with learning (and other) disabilities.
- We monitor the progress and revise the equity plan, as necessary.
- We have established and maintained records of employment equity activities.

## **Accessibility Objective 4: Assessing Value of Accommodation Process**

- Documentation of the accommodated individual's level of functioning in the workplace setting may include:
  - A description of the presenting characteristic(s)
  - Relevant medical history
  - Academic history including results of prior standardized testing
  - Reports of work place performance
  - Relevant employment history
  - Description of accommodation
  - Periodic review of employee's performance with accommodations provided
    - Within one month of accommodation
      - Actions recommended
      - Actions implemented
    - Within three months of accommodation
      - Actions recommended
      - Actions implemented
    - Within six months of accommodation
      - Actions recommended
      - Actions implemented
- Our accommodation process is defined in our workplace policies and practices.
- We have a questionnaire survey or checklist that records measurable information about the effectiveness of accommodations.
- We have a sub-committee that monitors the operation of the accommodation process in our company.
- Accommodation plans are implemented with measurable objectives and timescales for achievement.

## DEFINED TERMS

**accessibility** – the ability to access or gain full entry to and participation in a situation or location

**accommodation** – a process or device that enables an individual to perform a task to the full potential of their abilities

**assistive technology** – any devices or applications that have been constructed in material goods or software that serve to assist an individual to access an enhanced level of performance in accord with natural abilities

**duty to accommodate** – a situation proscribed in Canadian law in which an employer or agent of authority is obligated to provide accommodations as requested by a person having disclosed a legally recognized disability

**force of procurement** – using the economic value of purchases to ensure that suppliers of goods and services provide only those goods and services that meet the purchaser's standards

**inclusion** – the acceptance of all individuals into any particular experience, regardless of their abilities, place of origin, etc.

**learning disabilities** – any of a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information

**mentor** – an individual who provides guidance and assistance to someone as they become familiar with the protocols of a new situation

**natural supports and accommodations** – supports or accommodations that exist within a situation or location, that do not require an input of materials

**point of undue hardship** – the extent to which an employer or agent of authority is obligated to provide accommodations when requested by a person having disclosed a legally recognized disability, unless such provision constitutes a health or safety hazard for others. Undue hardship is usually taken to mean a significant impact on the economic viability of a company or other agency.

**reading** – visual acquisition of information in text or pictorial form, independent of the medium of presentation

**transitional boundary** – a perceived crossing point from one situation to another

**universal design** – a philosophy that seeks to provide enhancement of accessibility and success for all persons within the fundamental design of buildings and procedures

**universal instructional design** – a philosophy that seeks to provide instruction and teaching of all individuals regardless of abilities