



Accessibility and Disability Inclusion in the Employee Life Cycle

January 22, 2025

**Presented by: Nora Loyst
and Sarah Molder from
Untapped Accessibility**

Territory acknowledgement

Untapped Accessibility's offices are on the unceded traditional territory of the x^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam), Sk_wx_wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

We extend thanks, honour, and respect to our hosts.

Accessibility for this session

- *🌟 Accessible slides shared in advance
- *🌟 Auto captions and transcript enabled
- *🌟 5-minute break built into the session

Did we miss anything?

Purpose of today's session

This session will cover important concepts related to accessibility and disability inclusion in the employee life cycle.

After the session, attendees will have a better understanding of the role they play in create inclusive workplaces.

Agenda

- *🌟 Accessibility standards overview – **10 minutes**
- *🌟 Key terms and concepts – **15 minutes**
- *🌟 Accessibility and accommodations – **20 minutes**
- *🌟 Break – **5 minutes**
- *🌟 Accessibility in the employee lifecycle – **25 minutes**
- *🌟 Wrap-up and questions – **5 minutes**

About Untapped Accessibility

- ✿ We are the **leading accessibility consulting agency** in BC
- ✿ We deliver comprehensive, innovative, and **practical approaches to accessibility** planning and delivery
- ✿ **Our work centers the lived experience** and professional expertise of consultants with disabilities
- ✿ Our **mission** is to help organizations reach beyond legislative compliance to create truly inclusive and accessible organizations
- ✿ We are a **certified social enterprise** that generates revenue for our non-profit parent, Open Door Social Services Society



Trish Kelly
(she/her)
Managing
Director



Nora Loyst
(she/her)
Accessibility
Consultant



Sarah Molder
(she/her)
Accessibility
Consultant



Meg Ingram
(they/she)
Executive Assistant

Our team

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The Accessible BC Act

Accessible BC Act

- * 🌟 Enacted to foster an inclusive environment and remove barriers for members of the disability community
- * 🌟 Became law in June of 2021

Source: [Accessible BC Act](#)

Requirements in the Accessible BC Act

- *🌟 The Act names “prescribed organizations” that must meet certain requirements
- *🌟 If you are a prescribed organization, you must work to **identify, remove, and prevent barriers**

Source: [Accessible BC Act](#)

How do prescribed organizations do this?

Prescribed organizations must:

- Create accessibility committees
- Create accessibility plans
- Establish a process for receiving public feedback on accessibility

Source: [Accessible BC Act](#)

Coming standards

As part of the Act, accessibility standards are also being developed.

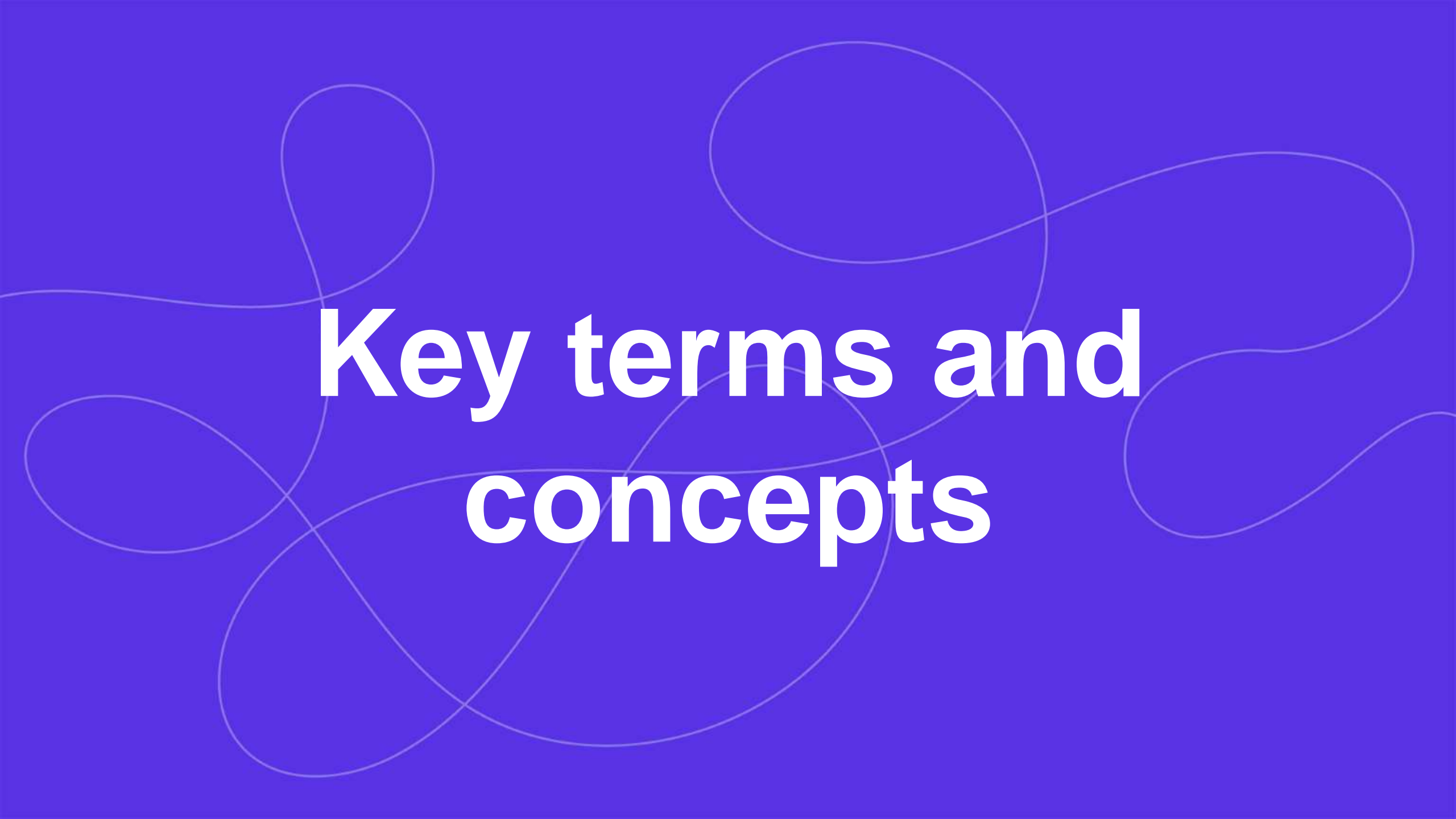
Standards will focus on the following areas, and maybe others:

- *✳ **Employment**
- *✳ **Delivery of services**
- *✳ Built environment
- *✳ Information and communications
- *✳ Transportation
- *✳ Health
- *✳ Education
- *✳ Procurement

Source: [Accessible BC Act](#)

Draft employment standards themes

- ✿ Offer accommodations to applicants and staff early and often.
- ✿ Collaborate with employees with disabilities – but don't lean on them for your organization-wide accessibility planning and barrier identification, removal, and prevention.
- ✿ Be open and responsive to accommodation requests, but also take ownership of more proactive accessibility planning.
- ✿ Be transparent about your organization's accessibility initiatives and use storytelling to communicate your progress.

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Key terms and concepts

How does the Act define disability?

Disability is the inability to participate fully and equally in society due to the **interaction between an impairment and a barrier.**

Impairments can be:

*🌟 Physical

*🌟 Learning

🌟🌟 Permanent

*🌟 Mental

*🌟 Communication

🌟🌟 Temporary

*🌟 Intellectual

*🌟 Sensory

🌟🌟 Episodic

*🌟 Cognitive

Source: [Accessible BC Act](#)

How does the Act define barrier?

A barrier is anything that hinders the full and equal participation of a person with an impairment.

Barriers can be affected by intersecting forms of discrimination.

Barriers can be caused by:

- *✳ Environments
- *✳ Attitudes
- *✳ Practices
- *✳ Policies
- *✳ Information
- *✳ Communications
- *✳ Technology

Source: [Accessible BC Act](#)

Accessible BC Act reflects the social model

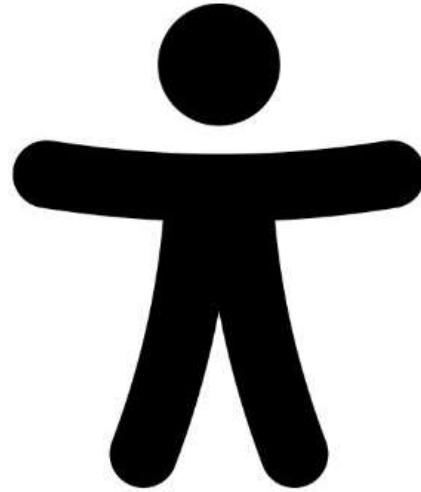
Medical model

- * Views disability as:
 - An individual's problem
 - An illness to be cured or rehabilitated
- * **Isolates disabled people** to receive care or services
- * People with disabilities **don't have the same opportunities**

Social model

- * Views disability as:
 - The result of inaccessible design of our environments, policies, and culture
 - A normal part of being human
- * **Society must change**, not the person with a disability
- * Disabled people have **equal rights and responsibilities**

Prevalence of disability



27% of Canadians
15 years and older have at least one disability

Source: [Canadian Survey on Disability](#)

Most common disabilities

- *☀ Pain-related – 62%
- *☀ Flexibility-related – 40%
- *☀ Mobility-related – 39%
- *☀ Mental health-related – 39%

Source: [Canadian Survey on Disability](#)

Most disabilities are not apparent...

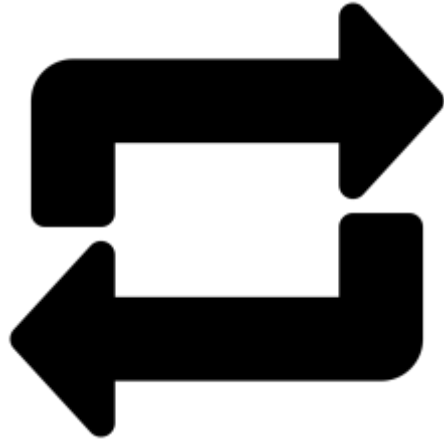


70-80%
of disabilities
are invisible
(global estimate)

- * Mental health conditions
- * Autism and other neurodivergences
- * Addictions
- * Brain injury and memory loss
- * Epilepsy
- * Diabetes
- * Arthritis
- * Crohn's disease
- * Dyslexia and learning disabilities
- * Chronic pain
- * Hearing loss

Source: [UK Parliament](#)

Dynamics of disability



61%

of disabilities have some dynamics and the severity or limitation fluctuates



39%

of disabilities are constant, continual states of limitation

Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

Most people don't disclose their disability



90%

of disabilities are not
disclosed at work

Source: [SurveyMonkey Diversity and Inclusion guide](#)

Reasons for low disclosure



Previous negative experiences when they disclosed

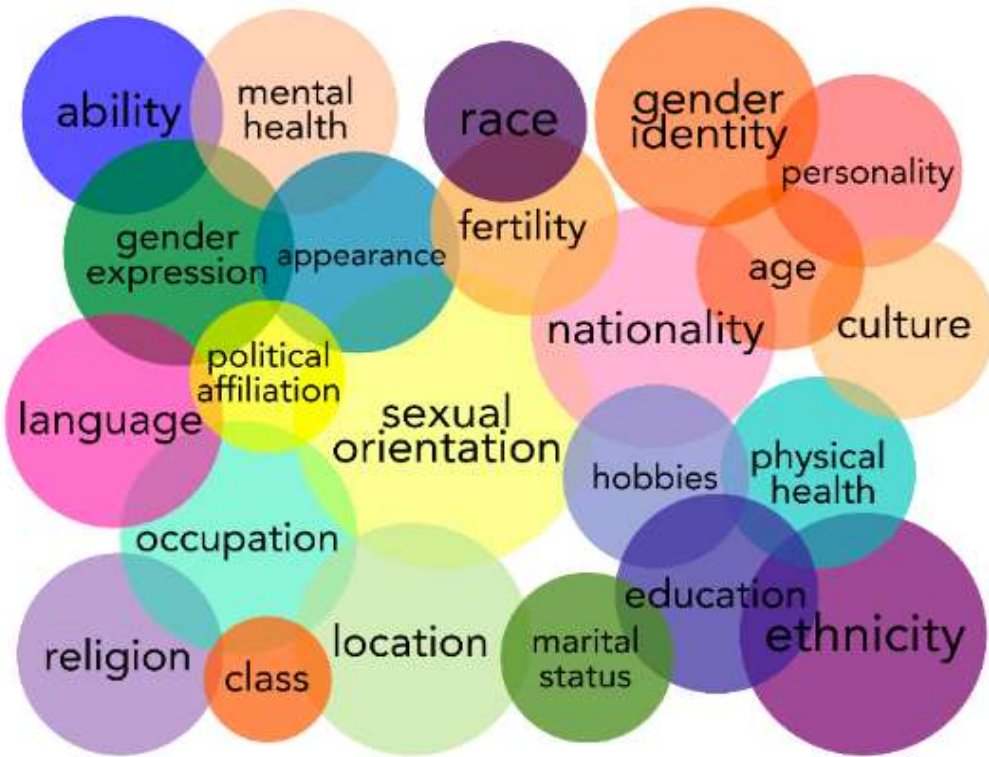


Low-trust culture in organization or department



They can do the job without any accommodations

Intersectionality



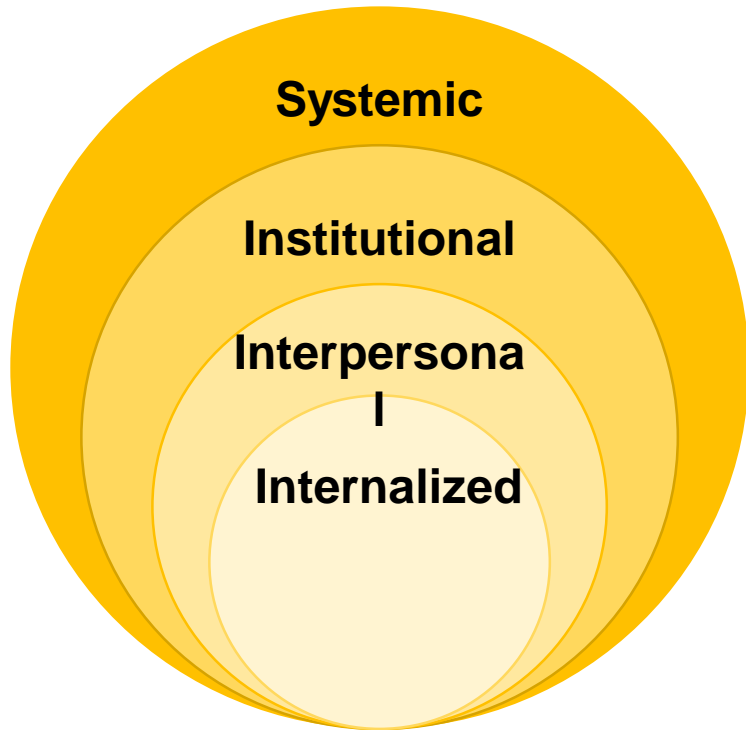
“Intersectionality” was coined by [Kimberlé Crenshaw](#). It describes the way different identities overlap to produce inequality or privilege.

In the context of disability, it helps us consider how inequalities such as low income and racism work together with ableism to magnify marginalization of people with disabilities.

Imagine from: [Diversity and Inclusion Speakers Agency](#)

What is ableism?

Ableism exists at all levels...



“The practices, beliefs and attitudes, intentional or non-intentional, that assign inferior worth to people who have [disabilities]... It is a form of repression.”

Quote from: [DisabilityIN](#)

“At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require ‘fixing’ and defines people by their disability.”

Quote from: [accessliving.org](#)

Unconscious/implicit bias

- *✿ Unconscious attitudes or stereotypes we hold that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions
- *✿ Automatic and often arise from social stereotypes as opposed to conscious thought

“Research tells us that while unconscious or implicit bias against some people has reduced dramatically over the past 14 years, unconscious or implicit bias against people with disabilities has remained relatively constant, dropping only 3% over that same period.”

Quote from: [Askearn.org](https://www.askearn.org)



Accessibility and accommodations

What is accessibility?

Accessibility is the intentional and proactive work we do to identify, prevent, and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

According to the [World Health Organization's *World Report on Disability* \(2011\)](#), accessibility ensures that environments, services, and products can be accessed by as many people as possible – in particular, people with disabilities.

Accessibility and accommodations are not the same thing.

What is accommodation?

- *🌟 Specific adjustment or modification made to address a single barrier for a disabled person
- *🌟 Accommodations are usually initiated at the request of the person experiencing the barrier
- *🌟 The goal is to ensure they can fully and equally participate, contribute, or engage

Comparing accommodations and accessibility

Accommodations

- *☀️ **Reactive**
- *☀️ **Individualized**
- *☀️ Requires **individuals** to identify barriers and initiate the process of removing them
- *☀️ Is usually a **confidential** process that needs to be requested by the individual
- *☀️ Improves access for **one person**

Accessibility

- *☀️ **Proactive**
- *☀️ **Systemic**
- *☀️ Requires **institutions** to identify, remove, and prevent barriers
- *☀️ Planning and design can be **public** and include consultation
- *☀️ Requires an enterprise-wide approach and perspective
- *☀️ Improves access for **everyone**

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**What makes a good
accommodations
policy?**

A good accommodations policy...

- *✳ Supported by an organization's culture and tied to a [centralized accommodation fund](#)
- *✳ Easy to understand for the person requesting the accommodation, as well as all managers and staff involved in the process
- *✳ Values a short response time
- *✳ Tracks wait times
- *✳ Does not require proof of disability

Source: [Accessible Employers](#)

Applying an accessibility lens

An accommodations policy that considers accessibility:

- *🌟 Values accommodation requests as important learning opportunities
- *🌟 Recognizes the emotional labour and risk for the person making the request
- *🌟 Encourages the organization to share what accommodations have been offered in the past
- *🌟 Applies changes to larger organizational systems so everyone can benefit

**What could your
organization do to better
connect the
accommodations process
to accessibility goals?**

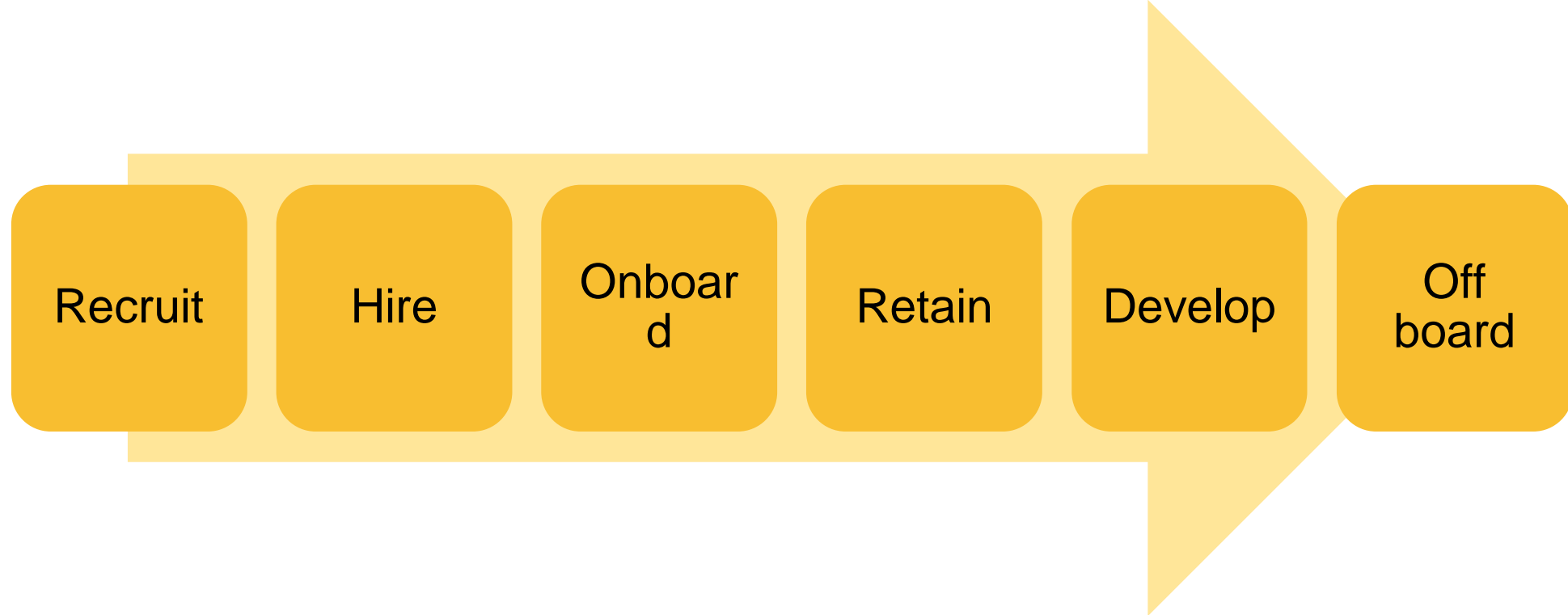


5-minute break

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Accessibility in the employee life cycle

Consider accessibility at every stage



Physical
Barriers

Attitudinal
Barriers

Policy Barriers

Communication
Barriers

Technology
Barriers

Accessible recruitment practices

Common barriers

- * No offer of accommodations for interview
- * Application is not accessible
- * No remote work options
- * Testing that is inaccessible or more stressful than job requires
- * Interview process that rewards storytelling even when the job doesn't require these skills

Removing or preventing barriers

- * Conduct accessibility review of application software and website
- * Do user testing with disabled people to understand experiences
- * Develop policies that support flexible work arrangements
- * Embed inclusive hiring expectations into performance metrics for hiring managers

Accessible hiring practices

Common barriers

- *❁ Candidates with gaps in resume are screened out
- *❁ Qualified candidates with disabilities not chosen
- *❁ No procedure for transferring accommodations from interview to the rest of the hiring process
- *❁ No information about compensation and benefits
- *❁ Old language in hiring materials

Removing or preventing barriers

- *❁ Develop policy to screen in candidates who identify as disabled
- *❁ Ask all new hires about their accessibility requirements
- *❁ Training hiring managers on accessibility
- *❁ Be transparent about the strengths and weaknesses of benefits.

Accessible onboarding practices

Common barriers

- *❁ Colleagues and managers have low accessibility awareness
- *❁ Lack of timely provision of accessibility supports
- *❁ Rigid onboarding with no room for different learning styles
- *❁ Jargon-heavy paperwork
- *❁ Low transparency about total compensation and extended health benefits

Removing or preventing barriers

- *❁ Ensure people with disabilities are represented in onboarding program
- *❁ Invite accommodations early and set service level expectations with facilities, IT, and other teams who are involved in the process
- *❁ When introducing new staff to the culture of your organization, highlight accessibility and disability inclusion

Accessible retention practices

Common barriers

- * Microaggressions from non-disabled colleagues who believe accommodations are unfair
- * Unclear accommodations policies
- * Company perks are not designed with accessibility in mind

Removing or preventing barriers

- * Disaggregated data to verify if employees with disabilities have similar levels of satisfaction and psychological safety to nondisabled employees
- * Coach managers on how to provide feedback to staff with disabilities and [support disclosure](#)
- * Provide [mentorship plans](#) for employees with disabilities

Accessible development practices

Common barriers

- * Staff with disabilities receive fewer opportunities to shadow or stretch their skills
- * Professional development opportunities are not accessible
- * Strict experience requirements for senior roles
- * Workplace culture that equates in-office appearances with commitment

Removing or preventing barriers

- * Audit e-learning profiles and other training platforms for accessibility and offer multiple ways to engage
- * Develop programs to help disabled employees gain experience outside of their existing roles
- * Provide [mentorship plans](#) for employees with disabilities
- * Ensure professional development occurs over work hours

Accessible off-boarding practices

Common barriers

- * ❁ Off-boarding is not accessible
- * ❁ No confidence that exit interview will result in change
- * ❁ Sudden termination of benefits disrupts needed supports
- * ❁ Severance packages don't account for realistic needs of people with disabilities
- * ❁ Internships/short-term contracts don't translate into full-time work

Removing or preventing barriers

- * ❁ Ensure exit surveys are in accessible (e.g., plain language)
- * ❁ Allow methods for anonymous feedback
- * ❁ Gather disaggregated data about employees with disabilities
- * ❁ Be clear about permanent role prospects with temporary workers

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Scenarios

Onboarding scenario

Magnus is a new employee at a library. As part of his onboarding, he's asked to attend an all-day client service training. He notices the session starts at 8:30 am. To get to the venue, Magnus will need to take a bus and SkyTrain. He finds that accessible seats are always limited. It's very likely that he will arrive late to the session.

He proactively brings this up with his supervisor. She seems annoyed and says, "Our patrons depend on staff to be on time and ready to give great service. I'm concerned you don't really want this job."

What type of barrier is this?

What is the impact of this barrier?

What can be done right away to address this barrier?

What longer term actions could remove this barrier?

What might prevent the org from removing the barrier?

Qualifications scenario

A few years ago, Jyoti started working at a library in a non-management role. They've been performing well and have consistently been recognized as an important part of the team by their manager and colleagues.

Jyoti sees a posting for a new management position and feels their experience matches the responsibilities in the job description. In the qualifications section, it lists a "Bachelor's degree in Business, Public Administration, Computer Science or a related field."

Jyoti doesn't have a degree, only a relevant certificate. They decide they shouldn't apply.

What type of barrier is this?

What is the impact of this barrier?

What can be done right away to address this barrier?

What longer term actions could remove this barrier?

What might prevent the org from removing the barrier?

Medical proof scenario

Camille is organizing a team training at an offsite location. One of her staff members uses a mobility device, so she prioritized finding a wheelchair accessible hotel.

When the invite goes out by email, another team member asks if the hotel has a scent-free policy. When Camille investigates, she finds out that it's not scent-free.

She feels it's too late to change plans. She asks the team member if they've ever submitted a doctor's note confirming this accommodation is required. The team member says they've never been diagnosed but get terrible headaches when they are exposed to artificial scents. As a compromise, Camille offers the team member could log in via Teams for the day.

What type of barrier is this?

What is the impact of this barrier?

What can be done right away to address this barrier?

What longer term actions could remove this barrier?

What might prevent the org from removing the barrier?

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Questions?

Session evaluation



Feedback Form