

A Functional Needs Framework for Every Community  
Emergency Planning and Response for People with Disabilities



## Setting Up Accessible Reception Centres and Group Lodgings in BC

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This document is part of a series created by Disability Alliance BC in order to help local Emergency Programs in British Columbia integrate the needs of people with disabilities into their emergency plans. The series was developed for the **A Functional Needs Framework for Every Community** project, based on key areas identified by local Emergency Programs.

Created by  
Disability Alliance BC



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## INTRODUCTION

This resource highlights accessibility considerations that are relevant to reception centres and group lodgings during an emergency or disaster.

The first section in this resource relates to the 2012 British Columbia Building Code and references the *Building Access Handbook, 2014*, produced by British Columbia's Office of Housing and Construction Standards. The *Handbook* is designed to help users of the Code to understand the *Building Requirements for Persons with Disabilities*, Section 3.8 of Division B, as well as throughout the Code.

The second section in this resource provides considerations above and beyond the BC Building Code, based on the *Guide to Welcoming People with Disabilities in Ontario's Reception Centres, 2010*. This guide was created to help emergency programs in Ontario to meet the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Disability Alliance BC's purpose in creating this resource is to help local Emergency Programs create accessible emergency facilities to welcome and shelter evacuees. People with disabilities should have access to all areas of the reception centre and group lodging facility that other evacuees can access. You can use this resource as a checklist to increase access for people with mobility, visual, communication and other disabilities.



## SECTION ONE: 2012 BRITISH COLUMBIA BUILDING CODE

### KINDS OF FACILITIES USED

Local communities use a range of facilities for reception centres and group lodgings. Please see the access requirements in the Code for the following:

- 3.8.2.11. Community Halls
- 3.8.2.13. Gymnasiums
- 3.8.2.17. Schools and Colleges, Non-residential
- 3.8.2.19. Arenas

### GETTING INSIDE THE RECEPTION CENTRE

This includes parking, walkways, and entrances.

#### ENTRANCES AND PARKING LOTS

- ✓ At least one main entrance provides access from the street.



- ✓ There is access from the parking area to an accessible entrance .

See section **3.8.2.3. Specific Requirements** in the Code for more details.

#### PATHS OF TRAVEL

- ✓ Walkways have a firm, even surface
- ✓ Walkways have a continuous and uninterrupted path of travel
- ✓ The width of walkways allows a wheelchair user to pass an ambulatory person with ease
- ✓ Walkway surfaces are slip-resistant
- ✓ The walkway gradient is not more than 1 in 20
- ✓ The curb is not more than 75 mm high

See section **3.8.3.2. Paths of Travel** in the Code for more details on design requirements.

#### RAMPS

- ✓ Have an uninterrupted width of not less than 1500 mm
- ✓ Ramps are free of obstructions for the full length of the ramp
- ✓ Have walls or railings, if the vertical drop at the side of the ramp is more than 75 mm
- ✓ The ramp surface is slip-resistant
- ✓ Ramps don't have abrupt changes in direction

See section **3.8.3.3. Ramps** in the Code for specific details on the requirements for ramps which includes items in the above checklist as well as gradients, maximum lengths and landings.

#### PARKING STALLS

- ✓ Parking stalls for people with disabilities are located close to accessible entrances
- ✓ Accessible parking stalls are clearly identified for use by people with disabilities only
- ✓ Accessible parking stall widths are 3.7 m, including 1200 mm for entering and leaving the vehicle
- ✓ Some parking stalls are 4.7 m wide to accommodate side-loading vans
- ✓ Accessible parking stalls are on a level surface
- ✓ Parking stalls have a firm, slip-resistant surface

See section **3.8.3.4 Parking Stalls** in the Code, for specific details on accessible parking stall requirements.

#### MAIN ENTRANCES

- ✓ At least one main entrance to the building is accessible and usable by people with disabilities
- ✓ Accessible main entrances provide access to all parts of the building

See section **3.8.3.5. Main Entrances** for details on requirements of the Code.



## INTERIOR ACCESS: CORRIDORS AND PASSAGeways

- ✓ Obstructions located within 1980 mm of the floor do not project more than 100 mm horizontally into an exit passageway or public corridor, so they do not create a hazard for people with visual disabilities
- ✓ In passageways, abrupt changes in floor level do not exceed 13 mm

See section **3.3.1.9. Corridors** and section **3.8.3.3. Interior Passageways** in the Code for detailed requirements.

### DOORS AND DOOR HARDWARE

- ✓ Doors in the open position provide a clear opening of not less than 800 mm so that wheelchair users can safely pass through
- ✓ Code requirements for door swing and allowance for maneuvering of a wheelchair have been taken into consideration
- ✓ Door handles do not require tight grasping or twisting of the wrist. Push-pull mechanisms and lever handles are in place
- ✓ The resistance of a door closer is such that a person with a disability can pass through doors with reasonable ease
- ✓ Doors equipped with a closer have a closing period of not less than 3 seconds
- ✓ Door thresholds are flush. If not, the difference in level is not more than 13 mm and is beveled

See section **3.3.1.13. Doors and Door Hardware** in the Code for specific details on requirements.



### SLIP-RESISTANT RAMPS AND STAIRS

- ✓ Ramps, landings and stairs have slip-resistant surfaces
- ✓ Ramps, landings and stairs have colour contrast or a distinctive pattern apparent from both directions to demarcate the leading edge of the tread or of the landing, and the beginning and end of ramps
- ✓ The top of stairways and intermediate landings intercepted by other paths of travel have tactile warning strips
- ✓ Steps on stairs have a closed riser to prevent hazards for people with visual and mobility disabilities

See section **3.4.6.1. Slip-Resistance of Ramps and Stairs** in the Code for specific requirement details.

### DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

- ✓ Signs are located so they are easily read and understood
- ✓ Signs are located where they can be seen by a wheelchair user
- ✓ Signs have a glare-free surface



- ✓ Signs have characters and symbols in colours that are in high contrast to their backgrounds
- ✓ Signs for parking spaces are 1500 mm above the ground
- ✓ The characters and stroke width-to-height ratio of signs meet the Code requirements
- ✓ Signs contain the International Symbol of Accessibility
- ✓ Signs have raised lettering for people with visual disabilities

See section **3.8.3.12. Directional Signs** in the Code for detailed requirements.

#### WASHROOMS

- ✓ Restroom entrance doors are wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through and do not have a second door in close proximity to the first
- ✓ There is sufficient space for wheelchair users to move freely to and from the various accessible fixtures
- ✓ At least one toilet compartment conforms to the Code requirements
- ✓ Grab bars have a non-slip finish
- ✓ Clearance under the wash basin enables a wheelchair user to reach the faucets and accessories at the wash basin
- ✓ Soap and towel dispensers are close to the sink and at a level that wheelchair users can reach
- ✓ Faucet handles are operable without tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist
- ✓ Water temperature is controlled so that people with disabilities who have little or no sensation in their hands will not burn themselves

- ✓ Shelves above a lavatory are positioned so they will not be a hazard

See section **3.7.2.10. Accessible Washrooms** and **3.7.2.3. Faucets** in the Code for requirement details.

#### UNIVERSAL TOILET ROOM

- ✓ Has a floor space of not less than 3.7 m<sup>2</sup>, with no dimension less than 1700 mm when the door swings out and 4.0 m<sup>2</sup>, with no dimension less than 1800 mm when the door swings in
- ✓ Fixtures are located to provide maximum maneuverability for wheelchair users

See section **3.7.2.10. Accessible Washrooms 9)** for detailed information about universal toilet requirements.

#### SHOWER COMPARTMENTS

See section **3.7.2.10. Accessible Washrooms 10)** for details on shower compartments requirements.

#### DORMITORIES

- ✓ Access is provided to each type of facility
- ✓ At least one bed space conforms to the requirements under the Code
- ✓ At least one bath or shower conforms to the requirements under the Code

See section **3.8.2.30. Dormitories** in the Code for more details.

#### SLEEPING UNITS

- ✓ Have enough space to provide a turning area of not less than 1500 mm diameter on one side of a bed





- ✓ Have enough space to provide clearance of not less than 900 mm to allow for functional use by wheelchair users
- ✓ The top of a mattress/cot is about the same height as a wheelchair seat, i.e. 450 mm to 500 mm to assist with transfer from a wheelchair to the bed

See section **3.8.3.14. Sleeping Units** for detailed information.

### DRINKING FOUNTAINS

- ✓ In each location where drinking fountains are installed, one fountain has a spout opening not less than 750 mm nor more than 915 mm above the finished floor
- ✓ The spout is set close to the front of the fountain with the direction flow of water being parallel to the front of the fountain

This needs to be considered if bottled water is not available.

See section **3.8.3.17. Drinking Fountains** for details on requirements.

### ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

**Definition:** Wireless sound transmission systems such as FM, infrared or magnetic induction loop, improve sound reception for the hard of hearing. These systems provide amplification which can be adjusted by each user, while blocking out unwanted background noise. A signal is picked up by special receivers available for people who are hard of hearing, whether or not they use a hearing aid. Portable systems can be used, but are best suited for small audiences (Source: *Building Access Handbook*, page 76).

- ✓ An induction loop, FM or infrared system is installed in our reception centre and group lodging facilities

See section **3.8.3.20. Assistive Listening Devices** for more details about requirements under the Code.



## SECTION TWO: GUIDE TO WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN ONTARIO'S RECEPTION CENTRES

As mentioned in the introduction, Ontario has legislation called the *Ontarian's with Disabilities Act*. While British Columbia doesn't have a similar Act, it does have the *BC Human Rights Code (BCHRC)* that governs the policies, services, programs and actions of provincial and local governments, businesses and employers in BC.

Section 8 (1) of the BCHRC states:

A person must not, without a bona fide and reasonable justification,

- a. Deny to a person or class of persons any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public, or
- b. Discriminate against a person or class of persons regarding any accommodation, service or facility customarily available to the public

The *Guide to Welcoming People with Disabilities in Ontario's Reception Centres* provides valuable information on accommodating people with disabilities in reception centres. This last section of the document, contains checklists, based on Ontario's Guide, that are transferrable to Emergency Programs in BC.

### REGISTRATION AREA

- ✓ Tables in this area can accommodate a person using a wheelchair or scooter
- ✓ There are no restrictions, such as stairs, for a person with a mobility or visual disability using the registration area

**THIS LAST SECTION OF THE DOCUMENT, CONTAINS CHECKLISTS, BASED ON ONTARIO'S GUIDE, THAT ARE TRANSFERRABLE TO EMERGENCY PROGRAMS IN BC.**

- ✓ Information is provided in multiple formats (i.e. large print, Braille, adjustable onscreen font size, sign language interpretation)
- ✓ Communication aids are used when needed (i.e. communication boards, interpreters, electronic notice screens)
- ✓ Clear, concise and descriptive directions are provided to people with visual disabilities about the areas of the reception centre
- ✓ Simple and easy to understand language is used (plain language) when providing information to people with intellectual disabilities and people with English as a second language
- ✓ Staff and volunteers speak directly to the person with the disability, rather than their support person
- ✓ Staff and volunteers are prepared to read forms and signs aloud

### DORMITORY AREA

- ✓ Evacuees who use mobility aids are asked if they need any support aids
- ✓ Evacuees with mobility disabilities are asked if they need physical support to navigate the dormitory area
- ✓ People with mobility and visual disabilities are assigned cot space in an area



where access to other areas like food services, washrooms and emergency exits is unobstructed

- ✓ Staff and volunteers verbally orient a person with visual disabilities in relation to where they are located in the dormitory and where other services are in the group lodging
- ✓ Dormitory rules and safety rules are communicated using multiple methods

### **MEAL PREPARATION AND SERVING AREA**

- ✓ Evacuees are asked if they have any special dietary needs
- ✓ People with mobility or visual disabilities are asked if they need help to select and/or transport their food and utensils to dining tables and whether they will need help clearing their plate after meals
- ✓ People with visual disabilities are asked if they would like the menu read to them
- ✓ Information on meal service and schedules is posted in multiple formats
- ✓ More time is allowed for meal times for evacuees with disabilities that require it
- ✓ ESS has on hand easy-grip utensils, bendable straws and no-skid placemats

### **RESTROOMS AND SHOWER AREAS**

- ✓ Staff and volunteers identify evacuees with disabilities that need help in using restrooms or shower areas and have asked if they need support aids or supplies (i.e. shower seats)
- ✓ Staff and volunteers explain to people with visual disabilities how the shower

and washrooms are laid out (i.e. where the sink and towels are)

### **OTHER WAYS TO ACCOMMODATE THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

- ✓ There are battery charging stations for power wheelchairs and other power equipment
- ✓ ESS has medical cots and transfer height cots
- ✓ Portable ramps
- ✓ Bedside commodes with privacy screens
- ✓ Transfer boards
- ✓ Table-level access to tools like telephones
- ✓ Audio recordings of key reception centre information
- ✓ There are closed caption televisions
- ✓ Telephones are compatible with hearing aids and handset amplifiers
- ✓ There are telecommunication devices or TTYs
- ✓ Internet access is provided
- ✓ There are quiet rooms for calming and counselling
- ✓ There are coolers or refrigerators for medications

It is important to note that the majority of individuals with disabilities live independently in the community - on their own or with supports - and not in facilities. They should not be segregated in group lodgings or sent to the hospital or specialized shelters just because they have a disability. The hospital(s) or specialized shelters should be for those needing medical help or those with complex medical needs only.



Other ways to support people with disabilities in reception centres and group lodgings is to allow access by attendants, home support services and health services to provide the services and supports individuals with disabilities may need. ■

