



HEALTH & DISABILITY COMMISSIONER
TE TOIHAU HAUORA, HAUĀTANGA

Are you Committed to the Convention?

Useful tips for implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities for disability service providers

United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

New Zealand signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities on 30 March 2007, and ratified the Convention on 26 September 2008. It received a great deal of support from people with disabilities across the country and provided hope that it will increase the momentum of the implementation of the New Zealand Disability Strategy. The purpose of the Convention as stated in Article 1 reads as follows:

“The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all people with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

Greetings to you all!

It's always good to challenge ourselves and to move out of our comfort zones. It's important to acquire new knowledge and to try working in new ways. I challenge you to create an exciting work environment and to stimulate your staff to go beyond the usual to discover better, more effective ways of doing things to be non-disabling.

If your organisation provides any service to people with disabilities you have an obligation to take reasonable actions to fulfil the purpose of the Convention. We recognise that your obligation is to 'progressively realise' the articles within the bounds of available funding. As part of our role in promoting the articles of the Convention and the objectives of the New Zealand Disability Strategy, the Health and Disability Commissioner, with the advice and support of the office's Consumer Advisory Group, has devised ten practical tips to assist you to implement the Convention at an organisational level. Please note that this is only a suggested guideline and not an exhaustive list of all the things you can do to implement various articles of the Convention.

Your organisation may already have implemented some of the suggested actions, or it could be a work-in-progress. Through this resource we invite you to work towards as many of the suggested actions as possible within your organisation.

I sincerely hope that you will find these "Ten Tips" practical and useful. If you have any questions regarding this resource, please contact our office on 09 373 1060 or email hdc@hdc.org.nz



Tania Thomas

Deputy Health and Disability Commissioner – Disability

Suggested Actions:

1. Provide accessible information:

Ensure that all information your organisation provides to consumers, including your policy documents, procedures, forms and guides, publications etc, is available in various accessible formats to cater to your target group/s. Such formats include Braille, large print, easy-read, plain-language, audio, New Zealand Sign Language, and accessible “information and communication technology” (i.e. ensure your website is tested for accessibility).

2. Provide accessible equipment and environments:

Ensure that “universal design” principles are followed in your organisation – i.e. the design of products, environments, programmes, and services should be such that they require the least amount of adaptation during their lifetime and are easily accessible to people with different types of impairment. For example, all areas of your premises should be accessible to people with mobility impairments; and your programmes and service delivery should cater to the needs of people with intellectual or sensory impairments. Also ensure that any external venue that you use to host any meeting or event is fully accessible.

3. Provide staff training on the rights of people with disabilities:

Promote the training of professionals and staff working with people with disabilities on the rights recognised in the Convention and The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers’ Rights. This will enable your staff to better provide the assistance and services guaranteed by those rights. Your local advocate from Nationwide Health and Disability Advocacy Service can provide free training on the Code of Rights.

4. Promote disability leadership:

In line with the notion of ‘Nothing about us - without us’ it is important to ensure that the development of policies, service planning and delivery, and other decision-making processes are actively influenced by disabled people and their wider networks. This will promote disability leadership.

5. Promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of people with disabilities:

People with disabilities make a significant contribution in society in various capacities, from employees to entrepreneurs, and from artists to activists. However, often their contribution does not get as much recognition as their non-disabled counterparts. To promote an awareness of their unique talents, abilities, and achievements you could conduct events, award campaigns, press releases, and other means of public awareness that the consumers and/or their families are comfortable with.

6. Promote inter-dependent living and community participation:

Ensure people with disabilities have access to a range of in-home and community-based activities and are appropriately supported to participate. Also provide the necessary personal assistance to support inter-dependent living and inclusion in the community. It is important to prevent all forms of isolation or segregation from the community.

7. Prevent exploitation, violence, and abuse:

Take all appropriate measures to prevent all forms of exploitation, violence, and abuse by ensuring the provision of information and education to all concerned on how to recognise and report instances of exploitation, violence and abuse. Ensure that all facilities and programmes designed to serve people with disabilities are effectively monitored by independent authorities.

8. Protect respect and dignity of people with disabilities:

No person with an impairment, regardless of place of residence or living arrangements, should be subjected to any form of interference with his or her privacy (including matters related to family, personal correspondence, or other types of communication), or to an attack on his or her dignity and reputation. Ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to inform and educate staff regarding prevention of, and protection from, such interference with a person's privacy.

9. Provide “reasonable accommodation” to people with disabilities:

Ensure that “reasonable accommodation” is provided to people with disabilities in your organisation – i.e. make necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments (that are manageable without undue burden), where needed in a particular case, to provide people with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, on an equal basis with others.

10. Promote a culture of “thinking about accessibility” and “being non-disabling”:

Most importantly, ensure that in whatever you do, you and your staff are constantly and consciously “thinking about accessibility” and “being non-disabling”. This can be achieved by incorporating such a discussion as an agenda item in all your internal meetings. Ensure that your staff are aware of current respectful disability language and terminology use. Also, take time to talk to the consumers who use your service (through formal feedback mechanisms, if required) to find out what works well and what could be improved.

Useful Links:

If you wish to read the articles of the Convention in detail or need more guidance on what you can do to implement the Convention, the following links may be useful.

- To read and understand what the Convention means for New Zealand, visit:
<http://www.odi.govt.nz/what-we-do/un-convention/index.html>
- For help on providing accessible information, visit:
<http://www.webstandards.govt.nz/new-zealand-government-web-standards-2/>
<http://www.rnzfb.org.nz/ourservices/readingandwriting/accessibleinformation>
<http://www.odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/disability-perspective/resources/plain-language.html>
- For help on providing accessible equipment and environments, visit:
<http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/>
- To read the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, visit:
<http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights>
- For information on fundamental human rights, visit:
<http://www.hrc.co.nz/home/default.php>
- For information on auditing requirements/expectations, visit:
<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/disability-contracting-auditing>
http://www.healthaudit.co.nz/legislation_standards

- For information on providing reasonable accommodation in a work setting, visit:

<http://www.workbridge.co.nz/?page=1335>

- For information on Ministry-funded support services for people with disabilities, visit:

<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/disability-fundedservices>

- For other relevant information visit:

<http://www.odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/disability-perspective/index.html>

<http://www.eeotrust.org.nz>

<http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/home.asp>

<http://www.hdc.org.nz/publications/other-publications-from-hdc/disability-resources/making-it-easy-to-communicate-effectively-with-disabled-people>

For further information and help:

Health and Disability Commissioner

PO BOX 1791, Auckland 1140

Auckland: (09) 373 1060

Wellington: (04) 494 7900

Other areas: 0800 11 22 33

Email: hdc@hdc.org.nz

Website: www.hdc.org.nz



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