

ANNUAL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN
for the
Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre
and
Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre School
October 2006

Prepared by:

The Accessibility Working Group

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(www.npcc.on.ca)

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Executive Summary | i |
| 1. Aim | 1 |
| 2. Objectives | 1 |
| 3. Description of the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre | 1 |
| 4. The Accessibility Working Group | 2 |
| 5. N.P.C.C.'s commitment to accessibility planning | 3 |
| 6. Past barrier removal initiatives | 3 |
| 7. Investigation of identified barriers | 4 |
| 9. Review and monitoring process | 4 |
| 10. Communication of the plan | 4 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province. To this end, the ODA requires public organizations to prepare an annual accessibility plan; to consult with persons with disabilities in the preparation of this plan; and to make the plan public.

This is a joint plan prepared by the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre School. The plan builds on the investigations undertaken for the earlier plans and describes: (1) the measures that the Centre and School have taken in the past to eliminate barriers to accessibility that were identified in earlier plans, and (2) the measures that will be taken during the 2006-2007 to keep the plan current with accessibility circumstances at the Centre and the School.

1. Aim

The Accessibility Plan described in this document is a joint plan of the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre (N.P.C.C.) and the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre School (N.P.C.C. School). The Centre and School are two separately governed organizations that operate in close cooperation within the same physical structure.

Previous Accessibility Plans outlined the commitment of the Centre and the School, as rehabilitation service providers, to the concept of accessibility and described the processes followed to solicit consumer input on accessibility and the changes made in the facility to ensure optimum accessibility. The 2006-07 Accessibility Plan builds on these previous efforts and outlines mechanisms to ensure that accessibility issues, when identified, are addressed.

2. Objectives

This plan:

1. Describes the process by which the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and School has investigated potential barriers within the facility.
2. Describes the measures the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and the School have taken to remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.
3. Describes how the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and School will ensure that accessibility issues are identified and addressed.
4. Describes how the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and the School will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

3. Description of the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and School

The **Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre** (NPCC) is listed as a Schedule "K" hospital under the Public Hospitals Act of Ontario and is accountable primarily to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. It is a children's (re)-habilitation Centre, providing the primary services of Physiotherapy, Speech-Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy and Augmentative and Alternative Communication. The Centre, established in 1964, is a voluntary, non-profit charitable organization. The Centre's catchment's area is the Regional Municipality of Niagara. Our vision is

"Children with Special Needs at their Best".

The organizational structure is program based, and includes the following:

- A. Infant and Preschool Services
- B. School-aged Services and Clinics
- C. Speech Services Niagara

- D. Community Projects and Contracts (*as the Service Provider for a contract with the Community Care Access Centre, Niagara*)
- E. Administration and Support

In addition to funding from and accountability to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, NPCC receives funding from:

- the Regional Municipality of Niagara, for a Pre-school Special Needs Resourcing Program;
- The Community Care Access Centre, Niagara, in the way of fees for services provided in its School Health Support Services Program and for paediatric acute Home Care (see below);
- and the NPCC Foundation, which has traditionally funded the equivalent of three full-time equivalent therapy positions.

NPCC is one of six Children's Treatment Centres in Ontario that has an on-site school. Approximately 80 full-time equivalent students from JK through the High School level attend this school that provides academic programs in a therapeutic milieu. A number of students spend part of their time at the NPCC School and part at their community school, with the goal for each to be fully included in their home school programs. Over the last five to seven years the demographics of the student population has shifted from children with physical disabilities (cerebral palsy, spina bifida) to children with communication disorders.

The academic programs of the school are funded as a School Authority by the Ministry of Education and Training. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services provides funding for the therapy programs.

The Centre houses a child care program that is operated by A Child's World which operates 12 other child care centres in Niagara. The childcare program has 48 available spaces, of which the first 12 are prioritised for NPCC's own Preschool Resource Services program in order to provide an integrated setting for this program. After that spaces are allocated first to children of NPCC staff and then to the community at large.

4. The Accessibility Working Group

The Accessibility Working Group was formally established in June 2003 with a mandate to:

- Identify barriers that will be removed or prevented in the coming year
- Review and list policies, programs, practices and services that cause or may cause barriers to people with disabilities
- Describe how these barriers will be removed or prevented in the coming year, and
- Prepare a plan on these activities and make the plan available to the public.

The Working Group is chaired by the Executive Director of the Centre and has membership representation from the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre School, the Board of Directors of the Centre and staff and management of the Centre.

5. Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and School

commitment to accessibility planning

Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre and School are committed to:

- The continual improvement of access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for the children we serve and their family members, staff, health care practitioners, volunteers and members of the community.
- The participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans
- Ensuring Centre and School by-laws and policies are consistent with the principles of accessibility

6. Past barrier removal initiatives

As a Children's Rehabilitation facility, The Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre has always given high profile and priority to issues that affect the disabled. As rehabilitation professionals, staff interacts on an ongoing basis with special needs children, their families and advocates. In addition, it is policy of the Centre and the School that new staff, Board members and volunteers are oriented to the function of the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre, to the various diagnostic groups served by our Centre, as well as our mission "children with special needs at their best."

This commitment to the needs of the disabled was evident when The Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre underwent a physical development in 1996. At that time the building was designed to incorporate features that would maximize physical accessibility, including:

- An alarm system with pulls in every washroom and treatment area. A public announcement for personal assistance is transmitted throughout the building when the alarm is pulled.
- Automatic doors at the front and back entrances
- Reception at wheelchair height
- Washrooms with handrails, wheelchair accessible sinks and automatic taps
- Elevator
- Designated parking spots at both entrances
- Pool lift
- Curb cuts at both entrances
- Accessible playground
- Ramp to the stage in the gym

In 2001-02 the Centre added additional track lift in the washrooms in the School and in the pool change areas. Adjustable beds were added to assist with changing in the pool area. A specialized trolley to transport individuals from the adjustable bed to pool side was purchased.

7. Investigation of barriers

Following completion of the initial Accessibility Plan, managers were given responsibility for determining the feasibility of rectifying the concerns which were raised. The investigation of each issue included contacting key stakeholders affected by the problem, determining the degree of impediment caused by the problem, developing options for rectifying the difficulties and determining the cost of the solutions.

In some cases the problem, when examined, turned out to not be an accessibility problem and was referred to a more appropriate forum (e.g. health and safety). In other instances, the problem identified is accessibility related but too costly to remedy at the present. In several cases the identified problem requires further input and investigation prior to a remedy being initiated. In the remainder of cases the problems have been resolved.

8. Review and monitoring process

As a rehabilitation centre and school with a primary mission to provide service to children with physical disabilities, the NPCC and School are vigilant about accessibility issues within the facility. It is because of the population we serve that accessibility issues are quickly recognized and rectified. As a measure to ensure that all stakeholders have input into this process, signage is posted throughout the facility informing staff, parents and visitors about the Accessibility Plan and how to inform management of accessibility difficulties and issues that require attention.

9. Communication of the Plan

In addition to the postings throughout the facility, the plan will be posted on the NPCC website and hard copies will be available to the public through the reception desk or requests to program assistants. The plan will be included in the employee orientation package and will be highlighted in the Parent Information Handbook.