Applying a neuroinclusive lens to standards development
Learn important terms

PURPOSE

This document is a companion to our *Start Here – Understand neuroinclusivity* document. Below are 12 important terms related to neuroinclusivity, neurodiversity and neurodivergence that we encourage you to know. This list is not exhaustive—the linked sources provide comprehensive lists of terms related to accessibility and inclusion. You may consult them to learn about other relevant terms and definitions.

IMPORTANT TERMS

Accessibility

Ensuring that environments, products, and services are usable by all people, regardless of disabilities. It involves removing barriers and providing flexibility to support full participation in society for individuals with various disabilities, including cognitive, developmental, intellectual, medical, mental, physical and sensory. This includes addressing both physical and attitudinal barriers to promote inclusion and equal access.

Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN) – Carleton University Accessibility Institute

Accommodation

Utilizing tools, making modifications, or adjusting environments, practices or processes, to address identified barriers and facilitate the full participation of individuals with disabilities.

Carleton University Accessibility Institute

Awareness

Knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience.

Cambridge Dictionary

Barrier

Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with disabilities. The circumstance or obstacle that keeps people apart. For people with disabilities, barriers can be attitudinal, communication, physical ability, policy, programmatic, societal and transportation.

Government of Canada; Accessibility Services Canada

Disability

Disability is part of being human. Almost everyone will temporarily or permanently experience disability at some point in their life. Disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support.

World Health Organization

Inclusion

The process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing voice, opportunities, access to resources and respect for rights.

United Nations

Inclusive design

Design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference.

Ontario College of Art and Design (Inclusive Design Research Centre)

Intersectionality

A metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking. Examples include the interaction of race, gender, social class and sexuality to create unique experiences of privilege and oppression.

Kimberle Crenshaw (Feminist Legal Theories, 1997); Britannica Dictionary

Invisible (or non-apparent) disabilities

Something that you likely can't tell a person has by looking at or communicating with them. These disabilities are not visible—or at least not initially. Some examples are chronic pain and diabetes, or mental health conditions like depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder. Learning disabilities, ADHD and autism are also considered invisible disabilities.

Concordia University

Sensory-friendly environment

An environment that is designed to be more calming to the senses and benefit everyone. These senses are sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, balance and body awareness.

Early Childhood Intervention Australia Victoria/Tasmania

Stigma

A set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something.

Britannica Dictionary

Universal design

Design that's usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Ron Mace—the architect who coined the term (via Universal Design)