Kerry's Place
Autism Services

ENABLING INCLUSIVE FUTURES

RESOURCE GUIDE

An Introduction to Providing Accessible and Inclusive Services and Supports for Autistic Persons

Ontario

Message to the Reader:

The right to be able to access and feel included within the variety of services, programming, and supports available in our communities is one that should be enjoyed by all people, including the roughly 135,000 Autistic Ontarians identified by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Despite this, the needs of Autistic people are often overlooked in conversations about promoting accessibility and inclusion.

This resource, created in collaboration with Autistic self-advocates whose voices and perspectives have helped shaped the content found within, is intended as an introduction for those looking to learn more about what they can do to make the services they provide more accessible and inclusive to persons with Autism. This includes providing information about Autism, the barriers to accessibility and inclusion most commonly experienced by Autistic individuals, and the strategies that organizations and service providers can take to overcome these barriers. Those looking for more detailed information are encouraged to review 'Next Steps to Learn More', found on page 19 of this guide.

Kerry's Place encourages readers to consider how concepts and strategies discussed here could be applied within their own contexts to increase accessibility and inclusion for the Autistic persons they aim to support. By considering the needs of neurodiverse people, we can make our province one in which all people can participate and feel included.

About Kerry's Place:

Envisioning a world in which persons with Autism are full and equal members of their communities.

Since opening our doors in 1974, Kerry's Place has been supporting Autistic persons and their families for over fifty years and today serves as Canada's largest Autism services provider. Kerry's Place recognizes that, just like Autistic individuals themselves, every Autism diagnosis is unique, and offers a wide range of customized services and supports for persons with Autism and their families, from childhood to adulthood and every transition in between. Through our various locations and partnerships across Ontario, we've helped Autistic individuals of all ages and ability build skills, gain independence, make friendships, and achieve their goals.

At Kerry's Place, we firmly believe in the importance of accessibility and inclusion, and see these factors as essential in achieving our vision of a world in which persons with Autism are able to participate as full and equal members of their communities. Motivated by our core value of continuous learning, Kerry's Place is pleased to share this resource with you in hopes that we can build awareness and understanding of Autism and the Autistic individuals with whom we interact.

We thank you, the reader, for working with us to help create an Ontario in which *everyone* can feel welcome, included, and that they belong.

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The Power of Language

Exploring the importance and impact of the words we use to describe persons in our care

"Language is powerful. It does not just describe reality, it creates the reality it describes"

> \- Desmond Tutu, human rights activist

The words we use when speaking to or about other people are extremely important. This is especially true when discussing marginalized groups such as people diagnosed with Autism. It's crucial to remember that our words have power and we need to be mindful that the language we use does not stigmatize, otherize, or define the person in limiting ways based solely on their diagnosis.

On Accessibility and Inclusion:

The words we use send a powerful message that can impact a person's perceptions of whether or not a program or service is one in which they can participate safely and show up as their authentic selves.

When we fail to be mindful of the power of our words, we can create unintentional barriers that limit the positive impact of the services we aim to deliver. In order to truly promote accessibility and inclusion for Autistic individuals, we need to consider not
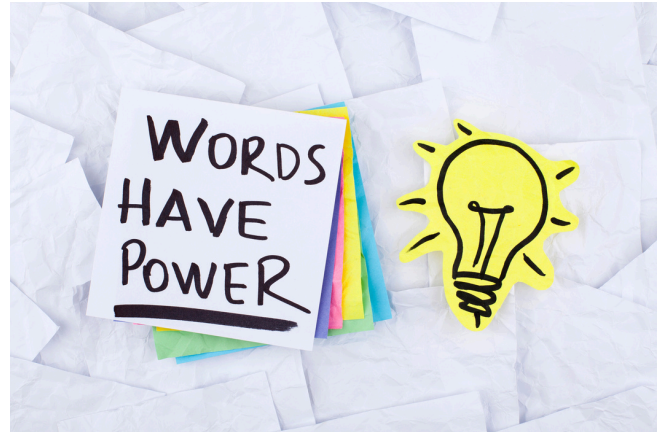
The words we use have tremendous impact on the listener. They can be empowering, or feed into stereotypes.

just what we *say,* but the way those words may be received by those who may be listening.

For this reason, it's crucial that we strive to ensure our language is welcoming, respectful, and sends the message that all persons are valued for their differences.

Identity-First Versus Person-First:

One aspect to consider about the language we use is whether to use identity-first or person-first language. Identity-first language emphasizes the identity of the person being described (e.g., an Autistic person), while person-first language emphasizes the

personhood of the individual (e.g., a person with Autism).

While person-first language is often considered to be the more respectful and inclusive option, there are those within the Autism community who feel as though their identity is a core feature of who they are and who prefer identity-first language. Therefore in order to use language respectfully, it's important to ask the person you're supporting how they wish to be described.

Please note: Out of respect for the diversity of opinions as to which form of language is preferable, this guide makes a conscious effort to use both identity-first and person-first language.

Language Changes Over Time:

It is also important to recognize that language considered to be appropriate (and inappropriate) can change over time.

Terms that were once used to describe Autistic individuals are no longer considered respectful today (e.g., high or low functioning). Similarly, language will continue to evolve in the future and therefore there are terms in this guide that one day may feel outdated. For this reason it is important to keep up to date on what language is preferable, and to listen to the voices of those being discussed when they express their preferred terminology.

An Opportunity to Reflect:

Take a minute to reflect on some of the language you may currently be using to describe those you support. Are you using terms that create distance between yourself and those who rely on your care? Are you using terms that unnecessarily pathologize their needs? What other words could you try using instead?

Some suggestions are included below:

"Deficit"	➡	Difference
"Normal"	➡	Typical
"They…"	➡	We…
"Disorder"	➡	Autism

It is important to periodically reflect on the words we use, and to listen to feedback from others regarding the impact of those words on those listening.

Intro to Neurodiversity

Understanding neurodiversity, its meaning, history, and implications for accessibility and inclusion

Human beings are a diverse group. No two people are ever exactly alike, no matter how closely they may be related. This diversity includes the way people think and experience the world as a result of differences in their respective neurology.

What is Neurodiversity?:

Simply put, the term neurodiversity refers to the natural variability that exists in human brains and how they work. Neurodivergent people include those with Autism, as well as those with ADHD, dyslexia, synaesthesia, and numerous other conditions that impact the way in which a person's brain processes information.

The Importance of Neurodiversity:

"The world needs all kinds of minds."
- Dr. Temple Grandin, author / advocate

The term "neurodiversity" was first coined in the 1990s by Judy Singer, an Australian psychologist who is herself diagnosed with Autism. The movement launched by Dr. Singer's work is, at its core, a social justice movement that seeks to promote equality for all kinds of minds.
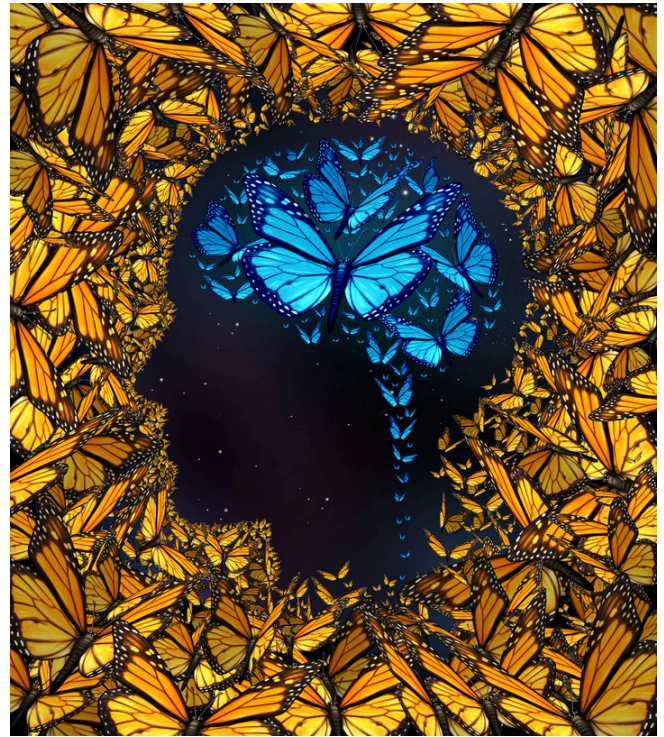
Neurodiversity adds to the rich mosaic of human thought and experience. This diversity may be just as important to the human race as biodiversity is to life on Earth.

The neurodiversity movement teaches us that there is no "correct" way of learning, interacting or experiencing the world. It emphasizes the concept of strengths over deficits. Perhaps most importantly, it forces us to confront the reality that people with different ways of thinking are all capable of accomplishing incredible things, not in spite of, but *because* of their differences.

Understanding Autism

An overview of Autism, the diagnostic criteria, and the importance of acknowledging strengths

Autism Spectrum Disorder (Autism) is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts persons of all backgrounds and identities. People with Autism have physical differences in regions of their brains that impact the ways in which they learn, communicate, interact, and experience the world around them.

Autism is characterized by both:
- differences in communication and social interaction
- the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviours

Despite the differences that define Autism, it is crucially important that we recognize that Autistic people are individuals with their own strengths and needs, just like anyone else.

*"If you've met one person with Autism, you've met **one** person with Autism"*
    - Dr. Stephen Shore, researcher / advocate

Social Communication:

Autism may affect the way in which people communicate and interact with others. These difficulties may make it more challenging for Autistic people to have positive social encounters.

People with Autism have their own likes, wants, needs and strengths - just like anyone else!

Social communication differences may include:

- differences in reciprocal emotional and social interactions
- differences in the use of non-verbal forms of communication
- differences in the ability to develop and maintain friendships

Repetitive and Restrictive Patterns of Thought and Behaviours:

Autistic individuals, may engage in repetitive or restrictive behaviours, thoughts, use of objects and speech. For many with Autism, engaging in these behaviours can be calming, or provide them with a sense of control

over an otherwise unpredictable environment.

The differences we may see in Autistic people relating to repetitive and restrictive behaviours include:

- repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech
- an insistence on sameness and/or inflexible adherence to routine
- highly restrictive, fixated interests of unusual intensity or focus
- sensory responsivity differences, or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment

Features of Autism:

In addition to the criteria that must be present for diagnosis to occur, there are several features which are commonly observed in persons with Autism, but which may not be present in all persons diagnosed.

These features include, but are not limited to:

- differences in processing time
- literal and concrete thinking styles
- differences in theory of mind
- differences in executive function
- the presence of anxiety

Being aware of these features is essential to better understanding the needs of Autistic persons and for providing support that is both more meaningful and effective.

Recognizing Strengths:

It's important to recognize that many characteristics of Autism, while often described as "deficits" in the DSM-5, can actually be considered strengths in the right context. For example, a special interest could make it difficult for a person to make friends if it's all they ever talk about, but open up opportunities for employment in areas of interest or expertise.

"My mom knew I was different, but she believed I was different in the best of ways."
          - Dr. Temple Grandin, author / advocate

Promoting accessibility and inclusion for Autistic persons requires that we not just focus on areas of need, but that we also identify, build upon, and celebrate the potential strengths found in Autism. People with Autism have numerous strengths. Examples of potential strengths we could expect to see in an Autistic individual might include:

- honesty
- rule following
- empathy
- memory
- punctuality

- creativity
- attention to detail
- routine following
- logical thinking
- systematizing

Take a moment to reflect on the strengths of the Autistic persons in your own life. What are their areas of strength? How might you leverage strengths to create more accessible and inclusive services and supports?

Autism and the Law

Understanding the legal requirements for providing accessible and inclusive services in Ontario
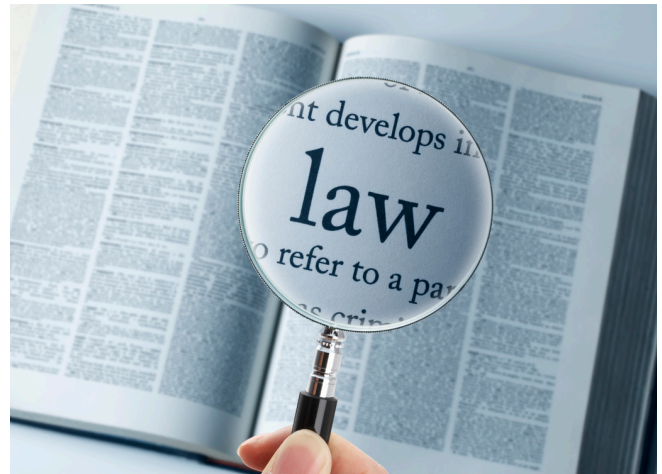
Providing accessible and inclusive services is essential for allowing neurodiverse people to participate as full and equal members of their communities. In Ontario, this need is backed up by a legal obligation that applies to every person and organization in both the public and private sectors operating within the province.

The Ontario Human Rights Code:

Enacted in 1962, the Ontario Human Rights Code protects citizens of the province from discrimination based on membership within protected groups. These protected groups include people with developmental disabilities (like Autism).

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA):

First signed into law in 2005, the AODA provides a framework for identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities. The AODA accomplishes this by developing, implementing, and enforcing accessibility standards with the goal of creating a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

Providing accessible and inclusive services and supports isn't just a nice thing to do - it's the law!

Implications for Services Providers:

The rights and standards established in legislation require that all service providers and the organizations they work for accommodate the needs of Autistic employees and service users. This includes accessibility and inclusion in services provided, but also in how information is delivered and how physical spaces are designed to meet *everyone's* needs.

For more information about the AODA, or to report a violation, contact the Ministry by dialing
1-866-515-2025
1-800-268-7095 (TTY)

Accessibility and Inclusion

**Defining accessibility and inclusion, and explaining
why it is a necessity for Autistic individuals**

In order to foster a sense of belonging for Autistic individuals, it is necessary for service providers to consider what steps can be taken to ensure both accessibility and inclusion in the services they deliver.

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."
 - Audre Lorde, author / civil rights activist

What is Accessibility?:

Accessibility means ensuring spaces and services are tailored in a way that allows all people, regardless of their differences, to participate and benefit. In relation to Autism, accessibility means creating environments that respect, welcome, and (where needed) accommodate for the unique needs of neurodiverse people.

What is Inclusion?:

Inclusion means ensuring that people of all backgrounds are provided equal access, opportunities, and resources. For Autistic people, inclusion is what ensures they are able to feel safe, accepted and appreciated, not despite, but *because* of their differences.

Importance and Impact:

Accessibility and inclusion together are what empower Autistic individuals to participate in, enjoy, and benefit from the services and supports they may want or need to improve their lives.

However, ensuring accessibility and inclusion for individuals with Autism is about so much more than this. Being able to access and be included in all areas of life is a human right that should never be denied simply because a person is Autistic. By honouring this right, we ensure that neurodiverse people are treated and understood as full and equal members of the communities in which they learn, play, grow and live.

Including Autistic people in their communities helps create a better world for everyone.

Identifying Barriers

Exploring potential barriers to accessibility and inclusion that impact the Autism community

Providing accessible and inclusive services to the Autism community requires service providers and professionals to first identify the factors that serve as barriers to accomplishing this goal. By doing so, steps can be taken to allow people with Autism to participate and benefit from community programs and services in the same way as anyone else.

"Much of what 'disables' a person is not the disability itself, but rather an inaccessible environment created without the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mind"
 - Tanya DeMello, Equity and Inclusion Expert

Knowledge Barriers:

Service providers lacking knowledge about the unique needs and abilities of Autistic persons can serve as a major barrier to accessibility and inclusion. Professionals who lack knowledge may exclude individuals with Autism in the programs they deliver because they may not know what kind of accommodations are most important, or because they feel they are not sufficiently informed to apply these strategies effectively.

Identifying barriers is the first step to finding strategies that allow them to be overcome.

Attitudinal Barriers:

Autistic service users frequently find themselves subject to the personal biases held by those they interact with, as well as assumptions about their abilities or lack thereof. Beliefs about what people with Autism can or cannot do for example, irrespective of the unique talents and strengths of the individual, may lead some Autistic persons to be excluded from the services they need to reach their full potential and live fulfilling lives.

"Autistic people are individuals. We are not all math geniuses, we don't all like trains... There is no 'typical Autistic'. But I think we probably all like being respected and validated."
                 - Yenn Purkis, author / self-advocate

Systemic Barriers:

Organizations that fail to develop and implement policies and practices to support and accommodate the needs of all persons serve as another major barrier for members of the Autism community. Without guidelines that promote equal opportunity, as well as dignity, independence, and integration for Autistic service users, accessibility and inclusion are simply impossible to achieve.

Behavioural Barriers:

Autistic people may behave in ways that could be considered unexpected (e.g., hand flapping, lining up objects, yelling, etc.). This can lead the person to be misunderstood or result in false assumptions regarding the person's level of ability. Lack of clarity on the part of service providers about the causes and meaning of behaviour can therefore lead to individuals being isolated or excluded from services.

Social Barriers:

Differences in social understanding can serve as a barrier to inclusion as they can make it more difficult to build relationships with peers and service providers. Uncertainty about social expectations can also make it difficult to participate in available services and programs. Service providers should remember that a lack of social skill is not equal to a lack of social interest.

Communication Barriers:

Differences in the ability to exchange messages with others may serve as a major barrier that can make it difficult for Autistic people to communicate fully about their needs and wants to those who support them. Roughly 25% of individuals with Autism are non-verbal and even those who can use verbal speech may require information delivered in ways designed to promote comprehension.

Sensory Barriers:

Many Autistic people have differences in the way they process sensory input. These differences can contribute to stress, anxiety and may even lead to physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. Spaces that don't consider the variable sensory needs of Autistic service users may inadvertently make it extremely difficult for some to focus, participate, or find enjoyment in the programs or services offered.

Understanding and supporting the sensory profile of the individual helps to overcome a major barrier for Autistic individuals.

Strategies for Success

Effective and actionable strategies for promoting accessibility and inclusion of autistic persons.

"Autism is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced with joy"
        - Gilles Tréhin, Autistic artist / author

Identifying the barriers that get in the way of accessibility and inclusion for Autistic individuals allows us to reduce or limit their impact by beginning to modify how services and programs are delivered. While there are countless strategies that can be considered, some of the most effective and easily applied are listed below.

Policies and Procedures:

Implementing and adhering to neuro-affirming policies and practices within your organization is a great way to reduce the frequency and impact of systemic barriers that Autistic service users are forced to overcome. This might include, but is in no way limited to, the following examples:

- anti-discrimination policies to protect the rights of neurodiverse service users
- intake forms and procedures designed to be easily understood by those who learn and interact in atypical ways
- alternate funding options for Autistic service users who may face financial barriers to participation
- a strengths-based approach to service delivery for individuals with Autism

Training and Education:

Many of the barriers faced by Autistic individuals stem from a lack of training or knowledge about Autism and the needs of Autistic persons in those providing services and supports. While not every member of an organization needs to be an Autism expert, having a shared foundation of knowledge about the needs of those in the Autism community goes a very long way. This knowledge not only empowers service providers to deliver more meaningful services, but also helps to reduce attitudinal barriers that serve to impair accessibility and inclusion.

Consider completing the **Accessibility Standards Checklist** to see how you and your organization are doing, and to help identify factors that may be limiting accessibility and inclusivity in the services and programs being delivered.

Click here to download the checklist now.

Organizations and service providers can obtain information about Autism and the needs of Autistic services users in the following ways:

- scheduling employee trainings offered by Kerry's Place and/or our community partners (see 'Next Steps to Learn More', page 19 for details on Kerry's Place trainings)
- seeking out and listening to the voices of Autistic self-advocates (many of which are featured in this guide and the accompanying workshop)
- providing methods for Autistic service users to provide open and honest (i.e., anonymous) feedback about their experiences in programs and services

Importantly, education allows service providers to embrace a social model that views disability not as a result of impairment in the individual, but a failure to accommodate for the barriers they face.

Enhancing Communication:

To overcome barriers that can prevent Autistic service users from expressing their needs, preferences and concerns about the programs available to them, service providers must think about how information is delivered. Many Autistic people are visual learners, making visual supports an important tool for promoting understanding. To promote communication, organizations should aim to provide the following:

- agendas, timetables and schedules to provide structure and predictability

- checklists and instructions to promote skill development and independence
- clocks and visual timers to visualize the passage of time
- models and diagrams that make abstract concepts more concrete
- staff trained in alternative methods of communication (e.g., sign language), to support non-verbal persons

Notably, by enhancing communication, service providers can also reduce the anxiety experienced by many Autistic service users, which in turn can help to reduce the kind of behaviours that can occur when a person is dysregulated.

Accommodating Sensory Needs:

Failing to consider sensory aspects of the physical space in which services and programs are being delivered can create significant sensory barriers for Autistic individuals (e.g., lights may be too bright, or noises too loud). Efforts should therefore be made to modify the environment and accommodate the individual with actions such as:

- switching out fluorescent bulbs with quieter LED bulbs on dimmer switches
- incorporating sensory activities into programming (e.g., finger painting)
- providing a 'quiet room' to promote self-regulation after sensory overload

When supporting sensory differences, remember that sensory processing is an extremely individualized process, meaning supports cannot be one-size-fits-all and must instead be tailored to the specific needs of the individual.

From Theory to Practice

A case study on successfully implementing accessible and inclusive services

Even if you know quite a bit about accessible and inclusive practices to support Autistic service users, you may still be wondering about how to actually apply that knowledge within your own setting. To give you a clearer idea of how you can take the concepts discussed in this guide from theory to practice, below you'll find a summary provided by our community partners at Milton Community Resource Centre, of just some of the steps being taken to create a more accessible and inclusive space for those they aim to support.
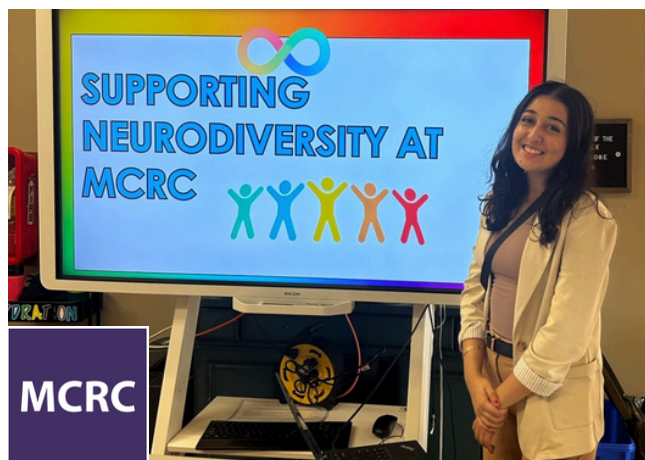
Muskan Arif (she/they), Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Specialist, served as a leader in promoting accessibility and inclusion for Autistic individuals at MCRC.

Supporting Autistic Children at MCRC: Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusion

Milton Community Resource Centre (MCRC) is committed to creating inclusive spaces where autistic children can thrive. Through the **Neurodiversity Project**, funded by Ontario's EnAbling Change Program, they implemented key initiatives to enhance accessibility.

24 staff members completed the Autism Certificate Course provided by Kerry's Place, equipping them with essential skills to support Autistic children. Staff then contributed to three key initiatives:

1. a **one-hour training module** on neurodiversity, now used across MCRC programs and staff
2. **sensory toolkits** in every early learning classroom, aiding emotional regulation and sensory needs
3. **resource bins** at The Halton Resource Connection, providing sensory support for Autistic children
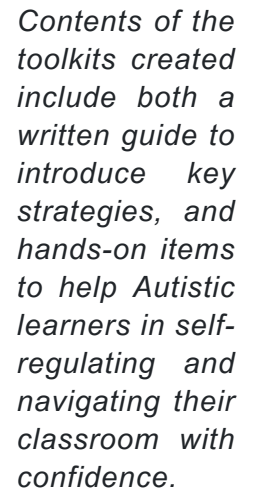
Implementing practices and ensuring access to resources like those now in place at MCRC have a profound impact on both service providers and service users alike. Since putting these initiatives in place, MCRC tells us that educators have increased confidence in supporting neurodiverse children. Even better, they've noticed an improvement in the comfort and engagement displayed by Autistic children registered in their programs.

"The toolkit and toolbox was an amazing addition to the class. It gave us concrete ways to foster inclusivity."
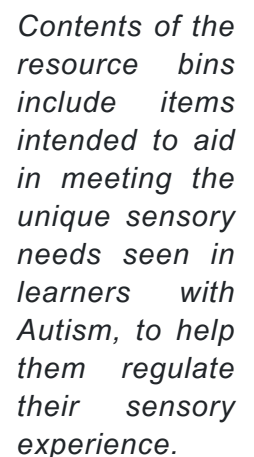*- Educator at MCRC*

Further information on the three key initiatives to promote accessibility and inclusion at MCRC can be found below.

Training Module on Neurodiversity:

Knowledge is the first step to creating accessible and inclusive services for people with Autism. For this reason, after completing the Autism Certificate Course offered by Kerry's Place (for more details about the course see page 19, "Next Steps to Learn More"), MCRC staff collaborated to create a one-hour training module to help share what they'd learned. This training was then delivered internally as well as externally to service providers in their region, thereby empowering educators with practical strategies that they can use to support Autistic learners in their classrooms.

Sensory Toolkits:

These toolkits containing resources to support both sensory processing and emotional regulation for learners of all neurotypes are now available in every early learning classroom at MCRC.

Contents of the toolkits created include both a written guide to introduce key strategies, and hands-on items to help Autistic learners in self-regulating and navigating their classroom with confidence.

Resource Bins:

Resource bins containing items to address varying sensory needs of Autistic learners are now available for MCRC staff, community members and educators across Halton to borrow and use in the programs and the services they offer to individuals with Autism.

Contents of the resource bins include items intended to aid in meeting the unique sensory needs seen in learners with Autism, to help them regulate their sensory experience.

From the Autism Community

Messages on the importance of accessibility and inclusion from within the Autism community

ALEX (THEY/THEM)

"Accessibility and inclusion are non negotiable. [They're] the bare minimum to helping *all* people feel seen, heard, and respected."

- Alex, Autistic Service Provider / Mental Health Manager

KENNETH (HE/HIM)

"What I myself and others who have benefited from inclusion have gained is more self-determination and a confidence boost with being included in the classroom, campus, and community."

- Kenneth Kelty, Author / Speaker / Self-Advocate

CATE (THEY/THEM)

"Inclusive practices ensure equitable opportunity… If you don't see disabled people using your services, it's because you have not done the work to provide us with access"

- Cate, Autistic Service Provider and User

Next Steps to Learn More

**Suggestions for next steps on your learning journey
to better understand the unique needs in Autism**

Kerry's Place is committed to providing innovative and engaging learning opportunities for those who wish to learn more. Through our various workshops, courses, and resources available online, we can help both service providers and family members of Autistic persons build understanding and awareness about Autism and the needs of Autistic persons in our homes and communities.

With continuous learning at the core of our values, Kerry's Place is a leader in offering learning and development opportunities in the field of Autism.

Workshop Menu:

Covering a wide range of topics related to Autism and supporting Autistic individuals, our workshops help to build both knowledge and skills for all participants. Workshops are hosted in-person and virtually, with half-day, full-day, and evening options available to fit your busy schedule.

Click here to view our full workshop menu.

Certificate Course:

For those looking to take a deep dive into learning more, the Kerry's Place Autism Certificate Course offers participants the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills over the course of twelve unique modules. With each module focusing on specific topics related to Autism, this is the most comprehensive training opportunity available.

Click here to learn more.

Resource Portal:

Featuring single page summaries of important topics related to Autism, the Resource Portal on our website provides an option for those seeking opportunities to grow their knowledge independently. These resources can also serve as great refreshers for service providers, and can be shared with the families they support.

Click here to view all one-page resources available.

To learn more about Learning and Development at Kerry's Place please contact:
ASDTrainingRequests@kerrysplace.org

Glossary of Terms

Clear and concise definitions for terms used throughout the guide to ensure understanding

Accessibility: The extent to which services offered are tailored to ensure that all people, regardless of ability, are able to participate and benefit.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Acts (AODA): The legal framework under which standards for accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities are identified and enforced in the province of Ontario.

Autism: A neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by differences in communication, social interaction, and by restricted and repetitive patterns of thought and behaviour. Autism is a spectrum, making each individual with Autism unique.

Autistic Self-Advocate: A person with lived-experienced of having been diagnosed with Autism, who lends their voice to promoting understanding about their community's needs and accomplishments.

Anxiety: A sense of worry or fear of the possibility of a stressful circumstance occurring, or reoccurring. Unlike stress, which can motivate or protect the individual, anxiety is entirely dysfunctional.

Behaviour: An action relating to what a person says or does that can be observed and measured.

Communication: The ability to use language skills (spoken, written or otherwise) to interact with others. Communication is a two-way process involving two or more persons sending and receiving messages amongst themselves.

Developmental Disability: Any condition, whether mild or severe, resulting from atypical mental or physical development that is either present from birth or develops before the age of 18.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM): The text outlining the diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder, as well as numerous other conditions. The most recent edition, DSM-5, was published in 2013.

Executive Functioning: A set of higher order cognitive processes occurring primarily in the pre-frontal cortex, responsible for initiating, directing and sustaining our behaviour towards the completion of a goal.

Expressive Communication: The manner in which a person conveys and shares messages to their communication partner(s).

Emotional Regulation: The ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences, whether positive or negative, necessary to remain in control of one's emotional state.

Identity-First Language: Language and terminology that emphasizes the identity of the person being referred to (e.g., an Autistic person).

Inclusion: The practice or policy of providing equal access, opportunities, and resources to all people, including those who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

Medical Model of Disability: A way of understanding disability based on 'impairment' in the person, often focused on diagnoses and cures.

Neurodiversity: A term used to refer to the natural variability in neurology that leads to the unique ways in which humans think, learn and experience the world.

Neuroinclusivity: The practice or policy of providing spaces that embrace and affirm neurological differences, by providing supports and accommodations that recognize the unique strengths, needs, and perspectives of neurodiverse people.

Neurotype: A term used to refer to groups of differently wired brains that address the way a person learns, interacts, and processes information.

Ontario Human Rights Code: Legislation that prohibits discrimination based on membership within specific groups, including those diagnosed with Autism.

Person-First Language: Language and terminology that emphasizes the personhood of the person being referred to (e.g., a person with Autism)

Receptive Communication: The manner in which a person receives and understands messages from their communication partner(s).

Sensory Processing: A neurological process in which sensory input is received from the environment and interpreted to allow for an appropriate behavioural response.

Social Model of Disability: A way of understanding disability as being the result of societal failure to address barriers, rather than personal areas of need or differences.

Synaesthesia: A condition rooted in neurology that leads to perceptual differences in which stimulation of one sense leads to involuntary experiences in another (e.g., associating numbers with a specific taste, or seeing colours and shapes while listening to music)

References

Full list of literature, resources, and Autistic advocates cited throughout this guide.

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Special Thanks

**Issuing thanks to all those whose contributions
helped make this project possible**

This guide, along with the entirety of the EnAbling Inclusive Futures project, would not have been possible without the generous contributions of our partners both in government and the community. Kerry's Place wishes to extend special thanks to the following groups for their assistance in bringing this resource to life:

Government of Ontario:

Thank you to the Government of Ontario for providing the resources needed for Kerry's Place to develop the workshop, resource guide, and consultation support that makes up the EnAbling Inclusive Futures project. Their assistance was fundamental in helping to launch this initiative and allowed us to turn our vision into a reality.

Milton Community Resource Centre:

Thank you to our community partners at the Milton Community Resource Centre for sharing with us their successes in implementing accessible and inclusive supports and services for their Autistic service users. In doing so they've provided an example of accessibility and inclusion in action to serve as inspiration to other service providers in our province.

Autistic Self-Advocates:

Last, but certainly not least, we wish to extend an extra special thanks to all the Autistic self-advocates, whose voices, perspectives, and lived-experience served as the foundation for the entirety of this initiative. Their input helped to ensure the contents of this guide, and the project as a whole, are accurate, authentic, and speak to the matters most important to members of the Autistic community.

Kerry's Place: Here For You

The power to create an Ontario in which more people can access and feel included in the programs and services in their communities is in all of our hands!

To achieve this goal, Kerry's Place is committed to assisting you on your journey. For more information, or to register yourself or someone you love for trainings, consultation, or services through Kerry's Place, our intake team is here to support you.

To complete an Intake with Kerry's Place Autism Services:

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E: intake@kerrysplace.org

or click here to get started by completing an intake form online