



ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

September, 2010

Inclusion International (II) is the organization that provides a voice to people with intellectual disabilities and their families at the international level. Founded over 40 years ago, II is a network of over 200 family-based organizations, with national members in 115 countries worldwide, working to promote the social, cultural, economic, and political rights of people with intellectual disabilities. II is an assembly of the voices of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families that promotes shared values of respect, diversity, human rights, solidarity and inclusion to achieve a vision of *a world where people with intellectual disabilities and their families can equally participate and be valued in all aspects of community life.*

Article 9 of the CRPD is often perceived as state obligations to provide and ensure physical and sensory accessibility. For people with intellectual disabilities, the right to accessibility requires state parties and other stakeholders to apply a broader standard. Article 9 when read in relation to each of the articles in the Convention ensures access on an equal basis with others. In order to achieve real access for people with intellectual disabilities in some situations requires not only that the existing service or environment be made accessible through physical and communication adaptations for the individual but it also requires that the way in which services and environments are organized be adapted.

Article 9. 2 outlines several specific measures that are important to people with intellectual disabilities:

c) Provide training for stakeholders on accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities

d) Provide in buildings and other facilities open to the public signage in Braille and in easy to read and understand forms;

f) Promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information;

COMMUNICATION & PARTICIPATION:

Article 9 and the specific measures listed above require that all public services and environments be made accessible through plain language signage and the use of easy to read and understand language in communications and service delivery. Inclusion Europe has developed European Standards to assist in the development of easy to read and understand materials such as:

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- **Written information** (leaflets, brochures and reports)
- **Electronic information** (written information on computers, for example information on websites or on CD-rom)
- **Audio information** (information you can listen to, for example on a CD or on the radio).
- **Videos** (you can watch on TV or on a computer).

For more information on how to apply these standards go to : <http://www.inclusion-europe.org/LLL/documents/Information%20for%20all.pdf>

These standards may be used and adapted in different jurisdictions and regions and Inclusion International with its member organizations in different countries can assist in developing standards and expertise in this area.

Another important aspect of accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities is accessibility to participation in activities and processes in the community. In meetings or in environments where decisions are being made by committee it is often difficult for people with intellectual disabilities to understand the information and decisions being discussed either because of the language being used or because of the speed of the discussion. With support and with adaptations to the way in which meetings and discussions are organized people with intellectual disabilities are able to participate and contribute on an equal basis with others. People with intellectual disabilities have a right to participate in community groups, political activities, conferences, religious institutions and cultural events. To do so meetings and participants in meetings need to adapt the way in which they communicate. It is helpful to establish rules for meetings that can be adopted by various groups. Attached for example are rules for meetings developed by Inclusion Europe and available in multiple languages.



rules for meetings english-final.pdf

ACCESS TO MAINSTREAM COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SUPPORTS:

For people with intellectual disabilities the realization of **the right to live in the community (Article 19)** depends entirely on the accessibility of communities. Not only in terms of physical access to housing and disability related supports but especially to mainstream community services such as education, employment, health care, justice etc. In order to apply Article 9 in a way that takes into account the needs of people with intellectual disabilities it is important to understanding the interconnection between all aspects of the Convention.

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Article 24 articulates the right to education in an inclusive setting. Yet of the 77 million children out of school at least 25 million of them are children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2006). Building ramps in schools may ensure that children can access the physical building but it is not sufficient to ensure that all children can access the curriculum, participate in the classroom and build relationships with their peers. For more information on **inclusive education** see http://ii.gmalik.com/pdfs/Better_Education_for_All_Global_Report_October_2009.pdf

People with intellectual disabilities often have difficulties to **access health care (Article 25)** because medical systems are complicated and doctors and other health practitioners are poorly prepared to communicate with them. Health professionals will speak to the persons support person and ignore the individuals expressions and communications; they often assume the person cannot make decisions or understand and therefore don't attempt to provide information and support.

Inclusion International's member organization in the UK (MENCAP) has a campaign to promote access to health care for people with intellectual disabilities. The campaign includes public awareness advertisements and training for practitioners. *"They receive fewer health screenings, and are often treated by doctors and nurses who do not understand learning disability. This is despite the fact that people with a learning disability are more likely to have poor health or suffer from serious conditions like epilepsy and dementia". (MENCAP campaign <http://www.mencap.org.uk/externallink.asp?id=53>)*

In developing countries people with intellectual disabilities are more likely to have poor health and to contract disease because they are more likely to live in poverty and poor health conditions. Access to public health information; information about HIV/AIDs and diseases such as malaria are not accessible and people with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from in school health education either because they do not attend regular school or because they are perceived to be sexually inactive or unable to understand information.

People with intellectual disabilities are significantly disadvantaged in **accessing Justice (Article 13)**. While people with intellectual disabilities are more likely to fall victim to violence and abuse many of these abuses go unreported or never go to trial because their voices go unheard. Police and community workers are inadequately trained and many judicial systems do not provide support for people with intellectual disabilities to testify or provide evidence because of their perceived "incompetence".

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A fundamental right that underpins all aspects of the convention for people with intellectual disabilities is **Article 12: the right to Equal Recognition before the Law** . Without the recognition that people with intellectual disabilities have legal capacity on an equal basis with others, access to education; health care and justice (as just a few examples) is not possible. In order to “access” the right to legal capacity many people with intellectual disabilities will require supports to make decisions. These supports sometimes are provided by friends, family and other supporters and other times they need to be provided by a third party (health practitioners, community workers, financial institutions) in the form of information and communication in accessible formats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The examples provided are only a sample of some of the ways in which Article 9 intersects with other rights articulated in the CRPD and they attempt to illustrate some of the accessibility issues which face people with intellectual disabilities all over the world.

In order for people with intellectual disabilities to access mainstream services and supports such as Education; Health Care and Justice on an equal basis with others:

- stakeholders in these systems from teachers, nurses, doctors, policy makers, judges, police and lawyers need to be provided with training;
- services must be organized from the outset to consider and include all people with disabilities (including people with intellectual disabilities)
- communications must be delivered in easy to read and understand formats
- supports to the individual must be made available to ensure that the person is able to access the service or environment

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