

**Report on the
Issue of
Inclusion**

For the Social Prosperity
Project for Dufferin County
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Report on Inclusion

What is inclusion?

Inclusion is when all people have the freedom to do what anyone else can do, access to anyplace that anyone else can go, where full participation is available to everyone and all people embrace differences, and feel accepted, valued and respected for who they are (Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada [CCAAC], 2004; The Roeher Institute, 1999; Government of Canada, 2002; Edwards, 2001; Gartin & Stockall, 2002; Soodack, 2003).

Perspective on Inclusion.

When considering the concept of inclusion one needs to be aware of the source of exclusion. The difference between inclusion and exclusion lies not with the individual, but within the society where the person lives. With this knowledge, the causes and strategies used to achieve inclusion the onus must fall upon societies. The causes and challenges of exclusion result from social barriers that exist within society as such, society is where the problems must be addressed (Oliver, 1996).

The Social Model of Disability has been noted as a perspective to examine inclusion. This model identifies disability as being socially constructed (Oliver, 1996). This model identifies attitudinal barriers as the root cause of other barriers in society. It is the presence of these barriers that perpetuate exclusion within a community (Bach, 1999; Finkelstein and Stuart, 1997). The focus of the Social Prosperity Project is to increase social prosperity, health and well-being. In order to do this, the issue of inclusion must be addressed. This socially focused model is a direct way to evaluate inclusion and to create change for increased inclusion for people with disabilities and other excluded groups in the County of Dufferin.

Why be concerned with inclusion?

There are many reasons for everyone to be concerned with the issue of inclusion. First, there are serious negative effects for people who experience exclusion. Exclusion creates division within a community and separation of people causes vulnerability among the excluded groups, whether it is because of disability, race or class. This vulnerability puts people at risk of negative experiences in their lives. Lack of inclusion also leads to and exacerbates social disparity (Randolph, 2004), which, furthers the devaluation of these groups and reduces their quality of life (Osburn, 1998).

A lack of inclusion within a community creates an atmosphere of inequality, which prevents people from having equal access to all things that should be available to them in their society. This prevents those who are excluded from getting what they need to live effectively (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). The areas often affected include access to employment and as a result, reduced financial status which creates the risk of people not being capable of acquiring their basic needs (CCAAC, 2004). Those who are excluded are at increased risk of participation in many types of unhealthy behaviours and reduced overall health (Hayward & Coleman, 2003; Health Canada, 2003).

Beyond the implications of exclusion on the individual and groups in society, there are also effects, which touch society as a whole in a negative way. A reduced level of inclusion leads to the marginalization and segregation of groups, which emphasize differences, and creates separation within a community (Edwards, 2001). A community divided in this way, is a weaker society in its humanity (Parmenter, McVilly & Yazbeck, 2004). Separation also leads to power differentials, which create divisions, segregation and inequality within a community. These concerns develop into power imbalances and oppression of groups in communities (Allison & Hibbler, 2004).

What are the Contributing factors to exclusion?

There are a number of issues which contribute to exclusion. The biggest contributing factor is attitudinal barriers held about a group of people because of difference such as disability, race, or gender (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). This type of barrier has been

identified as leading to lack of acceptance (Parmenter et al. 2004), perpetuation of negative stereotypes (The Roeher Institute, 1999) and adherence to certain norms, habits and societal rules. These rules are designed by and for the dominant group in society and the belief that if people do not fit they should not be included (Allison & Hibbler, 2004, CCAAC, 2004). Finally, attitudinal barriers are the root cause of a number of other factors which contribute to exclusion such as access barriers, power imbalance, superficial service inclusion and policy barriers.

One of the barriers that are caused by the presence of attitudinal barriers is lack of accommodation of differences (Government of Canada, 2002). This includes physical barriers that prevent access. Lack of accommodation and accessibility contribute directly to the exclusion of people (Soodack, 2003). Not only are these physical barriers an issue as they exist, but they also affect efforts to remove them and stifle willingness to prevent future barriers from being created (The Roeher Institute, 1999). Voluntary measures are limitedly successful. Project and policy directives need to be put in place to assist with the elimination of barriers, so an environment of inclusion can occur (ODA Committee, 2000).

Power imbalances also result from attitudinal barriers and contribute to exclusion. People within the dominant group make decisions, as they possess the power to do so, for those outside the dominant group there is often a lack of support needed and feelings of inequality develop (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). When power is held by one dominant group those outside are more likely to be excluded and their needs are left unheard and unmet (Edwards, 2001).

Attitudinal barriers about the excluded contribute to superficially inclusive services and systems. These types of systems may have the best intentions but a lack of belief in and respect for people leads to the excluded being silent recipients of services (CCAAC, 2004). This superficial type effort often leads to generic approaches which are ineffective for everyone (Edwards, 2004). This also applies to segregated programs which do not provide an opportunity to promote inclusion and perpetuates the separation

of people and the belief that they are different and should not be part of the mainstream of society (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). Service language of benevolence and gifting sends very strong messages to the people served and to the community. This perspective can lead to perpetuation of attitudinal barriers, negative self-images, and negatively impacts on the service and community environment (Allison and Hibbler, 2004; Randolph, 2004).

The final area where attitudinal barriers affect the exclusion of people is around policy barriers. Commonly held negative attitudes influence the political agendas that support negative policy development for excluded groups (Parmenter, et al. 2004). The outcome of this type of policy development is patchwork ineffective programs that do not address the needs of the people they were created to support (Randolph, 2004). It is these barriers which prevent adequate funds and resources from being directed to the efforts of inclusion in service and accessibility supports (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). Negative attitudes and beliefs have a major effect on the production of legislative disincentives in their programs, which put up another barrier for the excluded to overcome (Government of Canada, 2002).

What can be done to promote/facilitate inclusion?

Raise Awareness & Shift Attitudes

One of the most effective ways to promote inclusion is to raise awareness about the excluded groups such as people with disabilities (Parmenter et al. 2004). Not only do people need to know that there are excluded groups within their community but education is required to promote the understanding of their experience of exclusion (Stacy & Spencer, 2003). Education is also important to address misconceptions, stereotypes and dispel myths about different excluded groups. This is the only way that people can move beyond ignorant assumptions, fears and overcome preconceptions to accept those who may be different (Stacy & Spencer 2003, Parmenter et al. 2004, Edwards 2004, Keating 2003). Through education the concept of inclusion can move into the mainstream of society allowing the acknowledgment of the value and contributions of those from excluded groups (Randolph, 2004; Edwards, 2004).

In order to begin to speak about inclusion, people need to hear inclusive language, it is imperative when discussing a community or a group of people that positive inclusive language is used. By using inclusive language, there is a feeling of respect for people, which can be spread simply by adjusting the type of language used (Parmenter et al, 2004 Allison & Hibbler, 2004).

Being aware of power imbalances is also an important factor in the facilitation of inclusion. People need to be aware of what power they hold, and ensure that it is used responsibly. People who have been excluded have not been afforded access to power, by listening and responding to these groups, power can be shifted and shared for the mutual benefit of all involved (Allison & Hibbler, 2004, Government of Canada, 2002).

Structural/Service Considerations

In order for inclusion to occur communities need to ensure all resources are accessible to all citizens (Randolph, 2004). To eliminate barriers within a community, they must be identified (Edwards 2004, Government of Canada, 2004). This can contribute to the elimination of service/system disincentives for all people so they can think and act inclusively (Government of Canada, 2002).

Beyond access, there are structural issues that contribute to effective inclusion initiatives. To be effective in inclusion efforts communities need to work together in multi-sectoral ways, working as individuals and as groups in a committed way towards inclusion. No one person, group or organization can eradicate exclusion in isolation; it must be a coordinated effort (Keating 2003, Randolph 2004, Allison and Hibbler 2004). Another structural aspect which can promote inclusion is to ensure there are supports present to facilitate all aspects of inclusion and simultaneously impact policies, systems and services to promote adequate opportunity for inclusive social participation (Edwards, 2004; Government of Canada,2002; CCAAC 2004).

The final structural piece which would help to facilitate/promote inclusion is the conscious effort in all areas of the community to ensure that inclusion happens and that there is a quality of interaction, which provides the opportunity for differences to be overcome and acceptance to be achieved (Government of Canada, 2002). People need to

be assured that they can access a position in society, not merely be a presence in it (Gartin & Stockall, 2002).

Why should the Social Prosperity Project be concerned with inclusion?

The purpose of the Social Prosperity Project is to increase social prosperity, health and well being in Dufferin County. Social Prosperity is defined as “people’s ability to maintain good life outcomes in terms of standard of living and quality of life...It encompasses adequate housing, income support, and community funding...Social prosperity is also influenced by a range of inter-related factors such as income levels, education status, health status and access to justice” (Gov of New Zealand, 1999). In order for social prosperity to exist all people must be able to access the good things in life. This must include access to all resources. Based on this definition and the information previously presented about the impact of exclusion, the committee should take this issue into consideration as it works through issues in this community. If unaddressed, the social capital of a community is reduced and people are put at risk of social and economic exclusion. In addition, barriers to work and education causes stressors that contribute to unhealthy coping habits and reduced health status (Hayward and Coleman, 2003).

Closely connected to the achievement of social prosperity is a community having high level of social capital as defined by The World Bank (2002) “social capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interaction. There is increasing proof that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of institutions which underpin a society, but the glue that holds them together”. By definition, social cohesion is based on the ability of all members of a community to contribute and this cannot occur if groups within a community are excluded. It has been identified that reduced social capital occurs when communities are divided and when members of a community experience inequality. As identified by Keating (2003) inequality is in direct relation to exclusion. This project, by using the philosophies of social capital, must work towards the inclusion of all people in order to strengthen social

cohesion and increase its capacity to improve quality of life for all. These things are necessary for the committee to achieve its goal.

The last aspect of the vision of the Social Prosperity Project is health and well-being. In order for services to ensure the development of a healthy community, all people need to be part of the process to make sure the needs of all are identified and met (Allison and Hibbler, 2002). Without this, barriers to access are created and access to resources in the community is not possible for all citizens which compromises their ability to achieve overall health and well-being. Well-being is the social determinate of health and high social capital, one of the major contributing factors is social inclusion. Without this the health and well-being of the entire community is limited (Hayward and Coleman, 2003). These limitations create deficiencies in its ability to achieve social prosperity.

**Inclusive Processes
Checklist**

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Guidelines to Inclusive Process
for the
Dufferin County Social Prosperity Project

Questions to consider to ensure that the work of the committee is inclusive in its projects and processes:

- 1) Language impact attitudes held about all people. Does the language being used negatively reflect on any group in the community? Is the language positive and inclusive to all members of the community?**
- 2) To be successful information needs to be acquired from those with the experience of being excluded. Input from those who will be affected is also necessary for successful initiatives. Is there participation from the right people for the committee to make fully informed decisions about the process (disabled, minority groups, seniors, etc.)? Are all different people considered and respected for their contribution to the process? Is participation of people involved one of shared power and equal participation?**
- 3) Barriers are a creation of society and therefore must be addressed within society. Is the focus on addressing issues in the environment/community? Will barriers be created through this process? Will this process promote the opportunity for mainstream participation of all people?**
- 4) Recognition of different groups in society and different needs of these groups helps to keep processes open. Does the process focus on the dominant society only? Are all people and their needs considered in the process (disabled, minorities, economically disadvantaged)?**
- 5) Inclusion requires a multi-sectoral approach to be successful. Does the process promote committed partnerships with all groups that are required to make the initiative effective?**
- 6) What are the risks to people/groups and the community if this aspect of the project is not inclusive?**

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