
From: Ontario Human Rights Commission | Commission ontarienne des droits de la personne
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To: Bill White
Subject: A message from the OHRC | Un message de la CODP



**Ontario
Human Rights Commission**
**Commission ontarienne des
droits de la personne**

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OHRC releases new policy and recommendations on accessible education



Today, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released its new *Policy on accessible*

education for students with disabilities, along with recommendations on how to best meet legal obligations under Ontario's *Human Rights Code*.

The policy:

- recognizes that education is vitally important to a person's social, academic and economic development
- reflects a broad definition of disability
- provides students and families with up-to-date information about their human rights and responsibilities
- offers practical guidance to education providers to meet their legal duty to accommodate
- reminds schools of their obligation to maintain accessible, inclusive, discrimination and harassment-free spaces.

The recommendations set out actions the government, schools and post-secondary institutions should take to make the education system inclusive, function effectively and allow students with disabilities to thrive.

"All students have the right to an education that allows them to meet their full potential and contribute to society, and yet students with disabilities continue to face obstacles accessing education services in Ontario," said OHRC Chief Commissioner Renu Mandhane.

"Our policy and recommendations call on key players in the sector to take proactive steps to remove barriers and put an end to discrimination in education, so that all students can gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed."

Organizations that support our recommendations

"The gap between the promise of our school system and the lived experience of students from the Disability community is a chasm. Student voices have exposed the severity of this gap, and I am glad that the OHRC has echoed these voices. We fully support the essential recommendations contained in the OHRC's policy."

Irwin Elman

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth

"We value the recommendations that the OHRC released. Inaccessibility and ableism in Ontario's education system is an unresolved issue that many students with disabilities experience time and time again. These recommendations further communicate the need for immediate action and genuine transformation."

Josh Lamers and Rana Nasrazadani, Amplifiers

We Have Something to Say, Ontario Child Advocate

"Ontario falls short of providing education to students with disabilities in a way that is fully inclusive and free from discrimination. The OHRC has taken an important and necessary approach to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Its Recommendations are comprehensive, grounded, achievable, and accurately reflect the barriers and discrimination that students with disabilities face. ARCH applauds this release and urges all stakeholders to advance these recommendations so that all students in Ontario have an equal opportunity to learn."

Robert Lattanzio, Executive Director

ARCH Disability Law Centre

"The bulk of this report's recommendations would produce a positive impact for students with learning disabilities. Most crucial is for timely accommodations, consistently delivered, to prevent crisis interventions later."

Lawrence Barns, President and CEO
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

"The comprehensive list of recommendations produced by the OHRC will guide the provincial government, school boards and post-secondary institutions toward the shared goal of enhancing education for students with disabilities. These recommendations will ensure that all students who require support for disabilities can fully participate, with dignity, in Ontario's education system."

Sharmaine Hall, Executive Director
Human Rights Legal Support Centre

"As a society, we know that equality of access to opportunity, participation and accommodation are core components of both the Ontario Human Rights Code and Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They are also key concepts in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Canada is a signatory. Yet in Ontario, students with disabilities and their families, still face incredible challenges in accessing education on an equal footing and alongside students without disabilities. This policy provides Ontario's Ministry of Education, a perfect opportunity to take decisive, positive action to improve the educational outcomes of students with disabilities. If successful, all Ontario students will benefit as will the society in which they live."

Chris Beesley, Chief Executive Officer
Community Living Ontario

"The current educational system is failing the 1 in 5 children in Canada living with dyslexia. Dyslexia Canada supports the recommendations of the OHRC as a start to ensuring that all children receive an equitable education."

Christine Staley, Executive Director
Dyslexia Canada

"Decoding Dyslexia Ontario welcomes the OHRC's updated Policy & Recommendations meant to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Including the term *dyslexia* is an important step. As the most common learning disability, present in every classroom, early identification, accommodation, accessible curriculum and effective instruction are critical for our kids."

Annette Sang
Decoding Dyslexia

"ONBIDA is pleased to see OHRC's document that provides clear direction to the government and educational institutions that students with dyslexia, and other learning disabilities, have legal rights under the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, and must be provided with early assessment, early and effective intervention, and other appropriate accommodations."

Jill Kearney, Vice-president
Ontario Branch of the International Dyslexia Association

See also:

- Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities (2018)
- Recommendations to improve education outcomes for students with disabilities
- Letter to education providers re: recommendations to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities
- Letter to Ministers re: accessible education for students with disabilities