cna

COLLEGE OF THE
NORTH ATLANTIC

Accessibility Plan
2024

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2024

This Accessibility Plan is available on our website and available in alternate formats upon request by emailing info@cna.nl.ca or calling 1-888-982-2268.

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Welcome Message / Introduction

Message / Introduction

College of the North Atlantic is Newfoundland and Labrador's only public college. We have 17 campuses throughout the province and enroll approximately 6,000 students annually. Of that student body, between 15–18% register with accessibility services. The fall of 2023 saw the number of students requiring accessibility supports reach 898, the highest we've ever seen at CNA and nearly a three-fold increase from a decade ago.

The need for accessibility services, to accommodate both visible and non-visible impairments, is growing. And CNA is well prepared to meet these needs.

On behalf of the entire college community, I am pleased to present our Accessibility Plan. In it you will see the advancements we've made in providing accessibility services and accommodations to our students – and to our staff – and goals we've set for ourselves to continue improving the services we currently provide, and identifying new methods, tools and services we can implement going forward.

Thank you,
Liz Kidd
President and CEO

Advancements to Date

CNA has a history of working with students and staff presenting with a disability to reduce barriers. It is important to ensure students and staff achieve success during their time at CNA. CNA has an Accessibility Services department within Student Services that assesses student needs and provides supports in a variety of means. The Occupational Health and Safety department with CNA's Human Resource division provides support to staff through a Disability Management Committee. In addition, CNA has a Respectful Workplace Coordinator and a Manager of Culture and Engagement who manage a number of programs and initiatives that provide, encourage and support an equitable and inclusive work environment where employees can feel valued, heard and engaged.

Students

Accessibility Services Coordinators (ASC) and Resource Facilitators (RF) play a critical role in providing academic/classroom accommodations to reduce barriers faced by students as a result of a disability. This can take the form of additional time to write test/assessments, sit/ stand desks, space to write tests, and assistive technology as examples. This department also:
- Serves as a consultant for faculty around a student's accessibility needs
- Advocates for supports from funding agencies, for example, purchase of accessibility related equipment, financial support for tutoring or extended program plans,
- Makes referrals for assessments,
- Trains students to use support tools/software, for example Read&Write software, and
- Requests electronic copies of textbooks and other course materials from publishers.
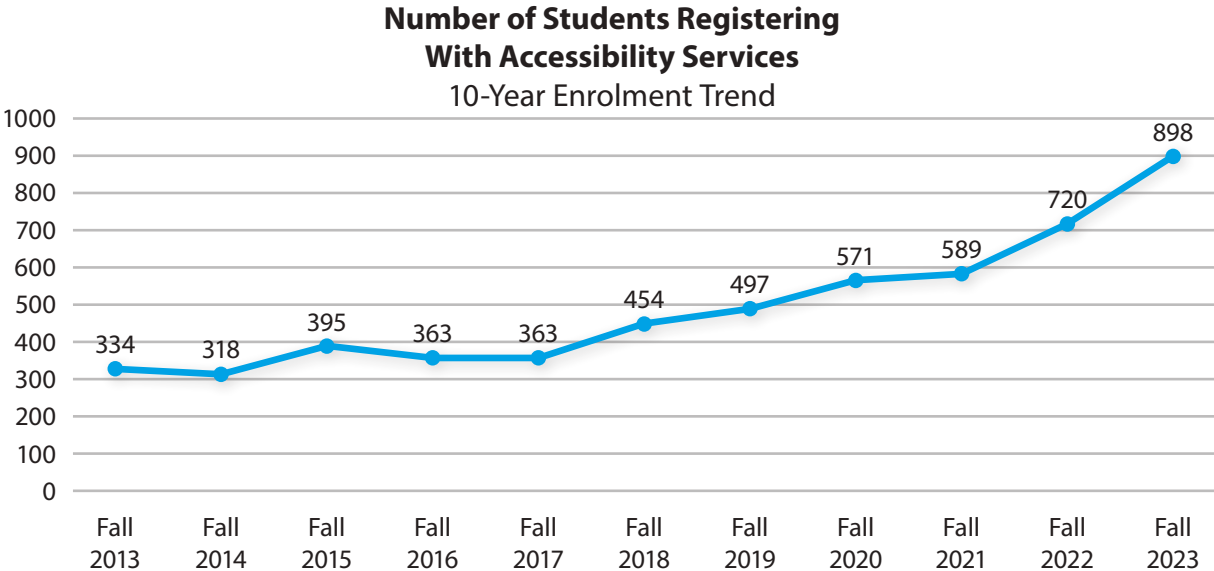
CNA has a Students with Disabilities Policy and Procedure – SS-207.

CNA hosts regular meetings of the Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities which includes representation from key organizations, including the Learning Disabilities Association, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, Autism Society, Inclusion Canada Newfoundland and Labrador, Immigration Population Growth and Skills, Newfoundland & Labrador English School District, and Student Financial Services Division. The team also works closely with relevant partner organizations to support the specific student needs at their campus (e.g., Student Aid, Autism Society, etc.).

Barriers identified by students in accessing our services, programs and facilities include:
- Obtaining current documentation to verify a disability – some students may not have a health care provider or updated assessments if leaving high school.
- Online students having to travel to a nearby campus to receive testing accommodations and supports.

CNA has seen an increase in the number of individuals identifying with a disability on their application. The chart below provides data on the 10-year trend. This data does not include students who register with accessibility services once enrolled in their program.

**Number of Students Registering
With Accessibility Services**
10-Year Enrolment Trend

Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
334	318	395	363	363	454	497	571	589	720	898

Staff
A Disability Management Consultant position was established in 2021. The Disability Management Consultant works to reinforce and continually improve CNA's disability management processes and to facilitate successful outcomes for the stay-at-work/return-to-work of employees. The incumbent provides support to all sites and regularly collaborates with and guides campus leaders, management and employees in matters related to disability management. The incumbent is required to communicate with employees at all levels of the organization as well as with external stakeholders (primarily health care providers).

CNA's Disability Management Committee provides support to employees who present with a disability that is affecting their capacity to perform the duties of their position. Individual circumstances are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine if an employee requires an accommodation. In some instances, an employee's accommodation request could include a need for specialized equipment and/or accessibility considerations. The Committee meets weekly to review and action its open case files.

The HR Staffing and Recruitment Team ensures that interviews are physically accessible to candidates and makes virtual interviews available wherever possible. Requests from candidates have included additional interview time, adjusted lighting, presence of a sign language interpreter, assistive communication devices, and the provision of questions in writing in real time.

The Flexible Work Arrangements Policy was revised in 2021 to include access to telework options for employees wishing to work from home where operational requirements and personal office set up are conducive to off-site work. These policy and procedures also provide flexible and compressed work-week options to employees seeking an alternate work schedule which provides flexibility to those who are required to attend frequent outside appointments. Depending on the nature of the position, employees can avail of these options without having to access the disability management/accommodation process.

CNA has several policies and procedures that support accessibility for staff including:
- CNA's Early and Safety Return to Work Policy: Policy No HR-407 (cna.nl.ca)
- CNA's Early and Safety Return to Work Procedure: Policy No HR-407-PR (cna.nl.ca)
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Disability Accommodation Policy: Disability Accommodation Policy - Treasury Board Secretariat (gov.nl.ca)
- CNA's Collective Agreement (both faculty and support staff) have provisions preventing discrimination: Collective Agreements - Treasury Board Secretariat (gov.nl.ca)
- CNA's Flexible Work Arrangements Policy: Policy No HR-411 (cna.nl.ca)
- CNA's Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure – Flex, Compressed and Telework: Procedure No HR-411-PR-1 (cna.nl.ca)
- CNA's Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure – Ad Hoc Telework: Procedure No HR-411-PR-2 (cna.nl.ca)

It has been identified that we do require individuals to provide in-classroom course delivery for many programs. This can create a barrier for some staff with disabilities and the ability to instruct in-person.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Committee
CNA has established an EDI Advisory Committee that includes representation from all areas of the organization. Through their formation, they have established Mission, Mandate and Commitment statements as follows:

Mission: To support CNA in creating an organizational culture that welcomes and empowers diverse perspectives, celebrates the uniqueness of the individual, and fosters a sustainable shared commitment for the advancement of EDI in our college community.

Mandate: To advise and assist in the identification, development, and implementation of mechanisms to ensure there are no groups excluded from the structure and systems comprising CNA workspaces. This includes:

- Identifying ways to eliminate barriers in policies, procedures, and practices.
- Supporting the implementation and monitoring of EDI initiatives.
- Informing the development of an EDI plan.
- Being a catalyst for new initiatives that will help our college community develop an understanding of, and commitment to, EDI.
- Communicating CNA's clear commitment to EDI for employees and students.

Commitment: At CNA, we recognize that through diversity, we grow stronger and are better able to support those we work with and serve. EDI empowers an organizational culture to welcome and amplify diverse perspectives, nurture belonging, and actively foster a shared commitment for the advancement of these principles in our college community.

From our workplaces to our learning spaces, we take inspiration from the values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as outlined below:

Equity is about being treated fairly, without bias or favoritism. It focuses on actively working to recognize and remove barriers to give everyone the same opportunities. It is about ensuring all individuals have the necessary tools to be on an even playing field to contribute meaningfully, knowing that we are not all starting from the same place.

Diversity is about each one of us. It is about the uniqueness we all possess from our lived experiences and perspectives. This can include gender identity, ethnicity, race, ancestry, place of origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, religion, belief system, marital status, family status, class and socio-economic difference, appearance, language and accent, physical or cognitive dis / ability, neurodiversity, mental health, education level, workplace role and experience, and learning preferences. These aspects are fluid and intersecting. An individual has a right to self-identification, knowing that no one way of being is innately superior to another.

Inclusion is about the collective. It is about creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects and values diversity, allowing us to show up just as we are. It focuses on people who have been previously excluded and embraces their perspectives. It is about belonging and feeling safe.

Academic
The Adult Learning and Teaching Innovation (ALTI) program was recently developed by CNA as an equivalency to the Post-Secondary Instructor Certificate (PSIC) previously required to be taken by faculty without official education credentials. This program is made up of courses that are delivered through a series of microcredentials. One of the courses included is TL1020 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Classroom. The microcredentials included are:

- Accessible Instruction
  - » Explore ways to accommodate students with disabilities, adapt materials to meet accessibility needs, and explore the role of the instructor in providing accommodations.

- Mental Health & Wellbeing
  - » Recognize signs of common mental health conditions, explore methods to support students who are struggling with mental health, and discuss ways for instructors to maintain their mental wellbeing.
- Gender Inclusion in the Classroom
  - » Examine their own unconscious biases, identify dimensions of diversity in the classroom, examine exclusionary practices in gendered workplaces, and incorporate inclusive and affirming language in the classroom.
- Culturally Inclusive Teaching
  - » Examine their own biases, explore the impact of racism on education in Canada and explore culturally inclusive strategies to support students from all backgrounds.
- Reconciliation through Education
  - » Examine the history of colonization and its presence in educational materials, discuss ways that post-secondary instructors can contribute to reconciliation, and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning into lesson plans.
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
  - » Interpret the principles of UDL, examine the link between UDL and engagement, representation and expression in adapting learning resources or assessment to support inclusivity.

Facilities

Improvements are also being made in our campus environments to improve accessibility. Over the last several years, improvements have included:
- Stair lift replacement at Carbonear Campus.
- Steps at Prince Philip Drive Campus replaced and fashioned with tactile markers for safer operation, particularly for those with vision impairments.
- Renovations to Bay St. George's residence to create accessible washrooms.
- Learning commons renovations across most campuses with furniture selection that is adaptable and accessible including motorized height adjustable furniture.
- Established office furniture standards for future purchases with ergonomic and adjustability features in design.
- Adopting signage through campuses to be more inclusive, for example, converting single occupancy washrooms to gender neutral with appropriate signage.

Accessibility Goals

The Accessibility Plan for CNA covers the period January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2026. This plan applies to all offices, departments, campuses, and buildings of CNA. In some areas, the work will be led by an administrator or manager. Building related actions will be discussed with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure as the buildings occupied by CNA are operated and maintained by this department except for the Prince Phillip Drive Campus which is maintained and operated by CNA. However, there are some larger core infrastructure projects that are completed through Transportation and Infrastructure including, but not limited to envelope improvements and the addition of a wing to house the Health Sciences programs. Goals and actions are expected to be completed within the time frame indicated. Some delays may occur if the action is impacted by budgetary requirements.

Promoting Accessibility Awareness
To increase awareness, the Accessibility Plan will be included on the CNA website. It will also be circulated to all college staff. A team will be established to advance the goals and actions identified.

Glossary of Terms
Defined in the Provincial Accessibility Act, a disability includes "a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communications or sensory impairment or a functional limitation that is permanent, temporary or episodic in nature that, in interactions with a barrier, prevents a person from fully participating in society".

A **barrier** has been defined in the Act as "anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, or a barrier established or perpetuated by an Act, regulations, a policy or practice. The following expands on each of the barriers:
- **Physical/Architectural Barriers** - Physical and architectural barriers happen when features of buildings or spaces limit people's access.
- **Information and Communication Barriers** - Information or communication barriers exist because not all people read or understand in the same way. When information is not communicated in a way that all persons can access or understand it, it presents a barrier.
- **Attitudinal Barriers** - Attitudinal barriers happen when people do not understand how disabilities affect people's lives. These misunderstandings can lead to false assumptions about what persons with disabilities can do, want, or need. Attitudinal barriers come from an unconscious bias. Attitudinal barriers happen because of stereotypes, lack of awareness and discrimination.
- **Technology Barriers** - Technology barriers happen when technology is not accessible to persons with disabilities.
- **Legal Barriers** - A barrier established by or perpetuated by an Act, regulation, policy or practice. This may be a legal barrier within legislation, or within departmental policies and procedures.

Inclusion
As defined in the Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology, inclusion is the practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcome, respected, and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.

Network of Disability Organizations
The Network of Disability Organizations comprises a number of community groups that work to provide advocacy, programs, and services for persons with disabilities. These organizations include: the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Mental Health Association NL, Cerebral Palsy Association

of Newfoundland and Labrador, LifeWise, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador, Empower NL, Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador, Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador Brain Injury Association, Inclusion Canada NL, Newfoundland and Labrador Down Syndrome Society, NL Association of the Deaf, People First of Newfoundland and Labrador, Schizophrenia Society of Canada, and Spinal Cord Injury Newfoundland and Labrador.

Statement of Commitment

CNA is committed to improving accessibility to its services and programs through the goals and actions identified in this plan.

Promoting CNA's Accessibility Plan will be critical to raising awareness and achieving goals established. All employees of CNA will be responsible for promoting accessibility and providing support in all situations where a barrier is preventing an individual from achieving their program or work achievements. The work of CNA's EDI committee, Disability Management Committee and the Accessibility Services Team will also enhance this awareness through its ongoing activities and services.

The work of this plan will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. Annual progress updates will be documented. An annual review of the plan will be conducted to understand any barriers to achievement of the actions identified. Updates may be required should new legislation or regulations related to accessibility be established. In the last year of this plan, a full review of the plan with consultation will occur to inform the development of subsequent plans. This and subsequent accessibility plans will be made public on CNA's website.

Focus Areas

CNA has reviewed the focus areas that have been identified through the Accessibility Act and related documentation and have identified goals and actions for the following areas identified:
- Programs and Services
    - » Ensuring the design and delivery of programs and services provide equitable access for all persons (Universal Design for Learning).
- Built Environment
    - » Ensuring buildings and public spaces are accessible for all persons.
- Information and Communication
    - » Ensuring all people can receive, understand, and share the information provided by a public body.
    - » Use Inclusive Language.
- Procurement of Goods and Services and Facilities
    - » Ensuring the procurement of goods and services is equitable for all persons.
- Employment
    - » Making an accessible workplace.
    - » Supporting persons with disabilities to find and maintain meaningful employment.

Actions / Outcomes

Focus Area One: Programs and Services
As a post-secondary educational institution, it is critical to CNA's mandate that we ensure that our programs and services are accessible to all persons. CNA will work to consult with community partners and the Network of Disability Organizations noted previously to ensure that programs and services are reviewed with a lens on accessibility.

Goals
Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:
- Review results of feedback surveys for items identified as barriers to programs and services.
- Define a standard assessment guide for the review of programs and services from an accessibility lens.
- Implement the assessment guide to select programs and services to ensure expected outcomes are obtained.
- Provide training to employees in departments responsible for the oversight and ongoing review of programs and services listed in the assessment guide.

Focus Area Two: Built Environment
CNA occupies buildings owned and maintained by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure with the exception of the Prince Phillip Drive Campus. This building is owned by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador but operated and maintained by CNA. CNA will work with representatives from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to assess buildings occupied using the Universal Design Standard adopted.

Goals
Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:
- Create a CNA Accessibility Checklist.
- Distribute Accessibility Checklist to managers to assess buildings/space for completion.
- Review the results of the Accessibility Checklist for areas requiring improvement.
- Review information collected from managers on building improvements needed for items identified to improve accessibility.
- Develop a plan to address accessibility improvements.

Focus Area Three: Information and Communication
Providing information and communication within our CNA community is an integral part of CNA. Information and communication on our programs and services takes many forms including print, website, and social media platforms. As such, it is important for CNA to take steps to ensure that our forms of information, communication and events are developed to be accessible to all persons. For example, CNA has long used adaptive technology to assist those requiring help visiting the CNA website. Currently, we are utilizing "ReachDeck" software. This is a joint effort supported by the Marketing and Communications department and Student Services.

Goals
Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:
- Review all publications and develop a plan for creation of alternate formats and Alt Text.
- Distribute to all college information from the Disability Policy Office on creating accessible documents and accessible communications.
- Continue to review policies and procedures to ensure inclusive language is used and to assess for barriers to persons with disabilities.
- Enhance the development and procurement of new technology to ensure accessibility is considered.
- Review our service delivery models and identify options for stakeholders to access services.
- Review questions asked through surveys on accessibility and expand if necessary.
- Review all feedback provided on accessibility to ensure CNA has a process for addressing accessibility barriers.
- Review the provincial government's Accessible Communications Policy.
- Review the provincial government's Inclusive Public Engagement Policy.
- Establish a training guide on the use of accessibility tools within Microsoft Office 365.

Focus Area Four: Procurement of Goods and Services and Facilities
Through the procurement process various means of communication and platforms are used – email, fax, and MERX. The clients and stakeholders of CNA access its programs and services at multiple locations. As such, expectations are that there would be no barriers to participation for persons with disabilities.

Goals
Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:
- Review process used by Procurement Department to identify the specifications of goods and services required to add language around accessibility as needed.
- Add a section to Request for Proposal templates and Open Call documents to ensure that end user provides information on accessibility requirements.
- Include language on alternate formats on all documentation templates.
- Develop a working committee to review furnishings used in rooms to establish an accessibility standard for use as room furnishings are replaced.
- Meet with Public Procurement Agency on measures they have taken to address accessibility.

Focus Area Five: Education
Educating and increasing awareness of accessibility with all staff and students is critical to the success of this Accessibility Plan. As noted above, awareness is being achieved through the work of CNA's EDI Committee, Disability Management Committee and the Accessibility Services Team. Also highlighted above is work completed through our Student Services, Human Resources, and Academic areas.

Goals
Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:
- Distribute this Accessibility Plan to all employees of the college.
- Distribute the Accessible Communications Policy to all employees of the college.
- Distribute the Inclusive Public Engagement Policy to all employees of the college.
- Distribute Disability Policy Office circulars on creating accessible documents and other checklists to managers to be posted in areas of the college.
- Promote the ALTI microcredential on Accessible Instruction.
- Continue development of a training tool for non-instructional staff on accessibility.

Focus Area Six: Employment
CNA hires staff though the Public Service Commission recruitment process. The recruitment process is typically an individual's first exposure to CNA and needs to be open, transparent, and inclusive.

Goals
Accessibility goals supporting this focus area for the next three years are:
- Review position advertisements:
    » To ensure inclusive language is included.
    » To add language surrounding persons with disabilities.
    » To add language to position advertisements on alternate formats.
- Review employee orientation documentation and sessions to ensure they are accessible and include information for employees on how to access Disability Management.

Conclusion

CNA is, and has always been, committed to ensuring the best possible services and accommodations are in place for our learners and our employees who have the need for such supports.

One of our strategic goals is "Empower through Equity, Diversity and Inclusion." As such we will continue to monitor this plan to ensure we are meeting the needs of our students and staff, and the goals we've set for ourselves. We will also evaluate and adjust these goals as new needs and methods of accommodation are identified.