






This fact sheet is for general information only and does not replace professional medical advice. If provided to clients and their family, it must be reviewed with them to ensure understanding and address any questions or concerns.

| Description                     | Impairment   | Environment   | Disability  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
|                                 |  <p>A limitation of body and/or mind</p>  |  <p>Anything around the person</p> |  <p>Challenges in daily activities and roles</p> |
|                                 | <p><i>*Explanations on this factsheet are taken from the Social Model of Disabilities<sup>1</sup>.</i></p>   |   |   |
| <b>What is an impairment?</b>   | <p>An impairment is a limitation that can affect a person’s body and/or mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can happen because of an illness, an injury or be congenital (i.e. the person is born with it)</li> <li>• Can be physical, motor, intellectual or related to communication</li> <li>• Can be related to a person’s senses (e.g. vision, hearing)</li> <li>• A person may experience one limitation or a combination of limitations</li> </ul> <p><i>*Impairments are not always noticeable, some are invisible</i></p>  |   |   |
| <b>What is the environment?</b> | <p>The environment is everything that is going on around us. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People and their perceptions /judgements towards us</li> <li>• Configuration of streets and buildings in a community (i.e. accessibility)</li> <li>• Services, rules, and laws</li> </ul> <p><i>*The environment may help or limit what we are able to do.</i></p>   |   |   |
| <b>What is a disability?</b>    | <p>A disability is present when the environment limits a person’s ability to participate in activities and/or take on desired roles. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person using a wheelchair, who cannot get into the grocery store independently because there are stairs at the entrance.</li> <li>• A person who is deaf or hard of hearing, who cannot enjoy a favorite TV show because there is no captioning (i.e. text to read).</li> <li>• A person with autism, who is being refused a job interview because the employer has false beliefs about autism.</li> </ul> <p>In these examples, the environment is limiting the person, <b>not</b> the person’s impairment.</p> |   |   |
| <b>Prevalence of disability</b> | <p>According to the World Health Organization<sup>2</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 15% of all the people in the world have a disability that create very important difficulties in their life.</li> <li>• “Almost everyone will have a temporary or permanent impairment at some point in life.”</li> </ul>  |   |   |



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|---|--|
| <b>What is a diagnosis?</b>   | <p>A “diagnosis” is a technical description of someone’s impairments (limitations of someone’s body or mind).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two people with the same diagnosis will experience different challenges and have different strengths.</li><li>• A diagnosis <u>does not</u> describe a person.</li></ul>   |
| <b>How can we help people with disabilities and their families?</b>                   | <p>A disability <u>does not</u> define a person. Shift the focus to what the person CAN do!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get to know the person.</li><li>• Ask about the person’s <u>abilities</u>, strengths and interests.</li><li>• Check with the person or their caregiver to learn how much help is truly helpful.</li><li>• Ask simple questions such as “is there any way I can help?”</li><li>• Check in with caregiver(s) to see if <b>they</b> need support and what that may look like.</li><li>• Ask about what is needed and include everyone when planning activities or events.</li><li>• Imagine yourself in their shoes. Ask yourself “what would this feel like if it was happening to me?”.</li></ul> |
| <b>Who can help in community?</b>   | <p>Even small acts of kindness, support and connection can lead to big changes in your community. If you want to help, here are some ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact your clinic to see what services and support are available in your community.</li><li>• Other organizations in your community may be able to provide support, help with adaptations, and guidance towards activities or work opportunities.</li><li>• Friends, family and neighbors can be helpful. No offer of help is too small! Calling them to check how they are doing, bringing them a meal, shoveling their walkway, etc. can make a big difference.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Where can clients and caregivers get more information?</b><br>(click on the links) | <p><a href="#">CDC Communicating with and about people with disabilities-Factsheet</a></p> <p><a href="#">Disability Programs Specialized Services-Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Empower the Disability Resource Centre</a></p>   |

“People are disabled by society, not just by their bodies. These barriers can be overcome, if governments, nongovernmental organizations, professionals and people with disability and their families work together.” – World Health Organization<sup>3</sup>

## References:

<sup>1</sup>Goering, S. (2015). Rethinking disability: the social model of disability and chronic disease. *Current reviews in musculoskeletal medicine*, 8(2), 134-138.

<sup>2</sup>World Health Organization (2020). Disability and health. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

<sup>3</sup>World Health Organization (2018). 10 facts on disability. <https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/disabilities>

Oliver, M. (2017). Defining impairment and disability. *Disability and equality law*, 3.

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