



BECOMING PARA READY:

**RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARA ATHLETICS INCLUSION
AND INTEGRATION IN CANADA**

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Project Leads:

Dr. Tim Konoval, Deakin University

John Lofranco, Coaching Education Manager, Athletics Canada

Fannie Smith, Manager, Para Development, Athletics Canada

Additional Contributors:

Sarah Black, Para Performance Manager, Athletics Canada

Nathan Braggs, Communications Coordinator, BC Wheelchair Sports Association

Jennifer Brown, Paralympian National Team Athlete, Athletics Canada

Andrea Carey, Chief INclusion Officer, INclusion INcorporated

Jenny Davey, Manager, Paralympic Pathways, Canadian Paralympic Committee

Jessica Ferguson, Athlete Development Coordinator, The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement

Ana Karanovic, Program Coordinator (Para Athletics), BC Wheelchair Sports Association

Melissa Lacroix, Lead, Physiology, Canadian Sport Institute Ontario

Jennifer Leo, Director, The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement

Lisa Myers, Director of Para Athletics, Cruisers Sports

Kyle Smith, Coach Education Coordinator, Athletics Canada

Chris Winter, Director, Domestic Programs & Safe Sport, Athletics Canada

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PREFACE

The Becoming Para Ready resource is designed primarily for coaches and administrators who support Athletics in Canada; however, useful information is included that will be relevant to anyone that interacts, supports, and engages with Para athletes. This resource is intended to guide organizations and programs to become more inclusive and develop understanding of the nuances of Para Athletics to better support athletes with a disability.

It's important to note that terms and concepts discussed in this resource are in a constant state of flux and evolution, specifically when it comes to language. Additional links, check lists and guides will be updated periodically and be available on the Athletics Canada website.

Becoming Para Ready should be considered a baseline: a starting point and guide in your journey to make Athletics integrated and inclusive to all.

Starting from a place of good intent and desire to learn and break down barriers to equitable access to Athletics is always the right place to start.



Thomas Normandeau runs at the 2019 Para Pan American Games in Lima. Thomas competes in the T47 Sport Class.



GLOSSARY

Additional definitions and concepts are defined and described throughout the document, however, the following are key terms to understand before you start.

Able-bodied: Used to describe non-disabled persons or may be used in reference to an Olympic-stream sport (i.e., able-bodied club, able-bodied track and field). The use of non-disabled may also be used in some instances to imply the same. This is a term in flux. Avoid using words like mainstream or normal when referring to the counterpart of Para sport.

Ableism / Disablism: Disablism and ableism are words that are used to describe disability discrimination and prejudice. Like sexism and racism being used to describe discrimination against women and different races or ethnic groups, respectively. Both terms describe disability discrimination, but the emphasis is different. Disablism emphasises discrimination against disabled people. Ableism emphasises discrimination in favour of non-disabled people. www.scope.org.uk

Athletes / participants: “Athlete(s)” is used most frequently within this resource. Not everyone may consider themselves an athlete and some grassroots sport programs may refer to their members as participants. For the purpose of this resource, they are interchangeable.

Athlete with a disability / Para athletes: These are used interchangeably. Para athletes is commonly used in reference to athletes who partake in sports that are part of the Paralympic program such as Athletics.

Branches: Athletics Canada refers to their Provincial and Territorial organizations (PTSO) that manage Athletics as “branches”.

Disability and impairment: Disability and impairment are used throughout the document. In some cases, it may seem like they are used interchangeably. The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) uses the term impairment when it comes to classification of Para athletes into sport, however disability is more commonly used in day-to-day environments.

Disability: Implies a social component and is a general umbrella term. A person’s disability may or may not be caused by an impairment.

Impairment: Refers more to the medical condition that affects one’s function and ability to do certain activities or how they interact with the world around them.

Disability Sport Organizations (DSO): Organizations in some Provinces and Territories that manage the development of single or multiple sports specific to athletes with disabilities. They may serve multiple disability groups (wheelchair sports organizations for example) or be disability specific (blind sports, cerebral palsy (CP) sports, Special Olympics etc.)

Disability sport / Para sport: May be used interchangeably. Disability sport is most often used in reference to sport or recreational activities for people with disabilities that may or may not be part of the Paralympic program or involve a competition component. Para is an abbreviation of Paralympic and may refer to sports that are part of the Paralympic program.

Para sport / Parasport: May be spelled in these two different ways. Often Parasport as one word is associated with Disability sport as defined above. For the most part, these terms are interchangeable. We use Para sport throughout this document in line with the International Paralympic Committee style guide.

People / Persons with a disability / Disabled people: In some instances when quoting a specific article or reference, disabled people may be used instead of people or persons with a disability. When speaking generally, person-first language is preferred and will be addressed later in the document.



INTRODUCTION

Why Becoming Para Ready?

Athletics Canada's Vision, Mission and Values are as follows:

Vision: Excellence for ALL in the Sport of Athletics

Mission: Lead, Develop and Deliver a Positive Experience, for all Canadians, in the Sport of Athletics

Values: Excellence – Integrity – Engagement – Inclusivity – Fun

In 2021, a survey was conducted of Athletics Canada's Provincial and Territorial Branches, Disability Sport Organizations, athletes, coaches, and other key partners in the delivery and development of Para Athletics, within the domestic landscape in Canada. The results of this outreach highlighted systemic gaps and barriers that may prevent athletes and participants with a disability from having a positive and inclusive experience in sport.

Using the "Becoming Para Ready" framework developed by the Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement, a national Para Athletics strategy will focus on building a strong foundation at the Provincial and Territorial level, creating greater capacity, support and alignment of Para Athletics, including integration and inclusion at all levels.

Barriers such as limited capacity, knowledge, confidence, funding, and alignment can make it difficult to know where to begin. There are also misconceptions and stigma around integration. It's often assumed that it's hard and complicated to be integrated when it can be quite simple. The goal of this resource is to provide a starting point for organizations to support and contribute to the growth of Para Athletics within Canada.



Before you begin, know that learning about Para integration is an evolution and it's okay to not fully understand the nuances of Para sport right away. Also, it's important to be open and honest in conversations and ask questions to help determine needs and better understand individuals with disabilities in your program.

5-time Paralympian and 11 time Paralympic medallist **Brent Lakatos**. Brent competes in the T53 Sport Class.



PART 1: PARA PROFICIENCY

Sport leaders are often proficient in coaching, policies, rules, and regulations. This comes with years of experience, training, and practice. The same goes for working with athletes with a disability and Para sport, which presents a unique context. To begin to understand disability sport contexts, it's important to first examine how disability is understood in our society.

Understanding Disability



A 2017 Statistics Canada survey on disability indicates that **1 in 5 (22%)** Canadians over the age of 15 have at least one disability.

There are three main ways to understand disability in society.

1. The medical model of disability puts the emphasis on the person's disability and links the body to a diagnosis and places emphasis on medical intervention as a way of solving or eliminating the impairment or condition (Leduc, Disfigured, 2020). The impairment is seen as the problem and something that needs to be fixed rather than finding ways to break down barriers and looking to make society more accessible. This could present itself in Para athletics with misconceptions around what an athlete can or cannot do because of their disability and wanting to fit them into a mould that currently exists.

2. The social model of disability challenges the medical model and shifts our lens on the disability of individuals being maintained by systemic barriers, exclusion, and discrimination toward disabilities more than the actual limitations of the impairment. For example, becoming a wheelchair racer and succeeding in the sport of Para athletics would be limited to someone not because this person uses a wheelchair, but a barrier in place such as the track or facility only being accessed by stairs. The social model of disability looks at addressing this barrier by installing a ramp or elevator versus trying to fix the fact that this person can't walk to access the building in another way.

3. The social relational model of disability is the most contemporary understanding of disability. This model aims to find a middle ground (i.e., relational) between impairment effects and how social structures can limit the impact of full inclusion. In moving too far towards a social model, an individual's view of disability can disregard the 'lived experiences' of people with a disability. The lived experience of disability is critical to acknowledge and understand. It's also not always possible to remove a barrier in a social environment. However, a conversation with the individual, coming from a place of trust, will help educate on what barriers can be removed and what can be done to improve their training and competition experience. In moving too far towards a medical model, too much emphasis is put on how the disability impacts an individual or what they can't accomplish in training or competition because of the condition. Finding the balance between the two is important in order to best support an athlete along their pathway. Removing barriers for an athlete while considering how their disability might impact their training occurs through open conversation and co-planning.



Models of Disability

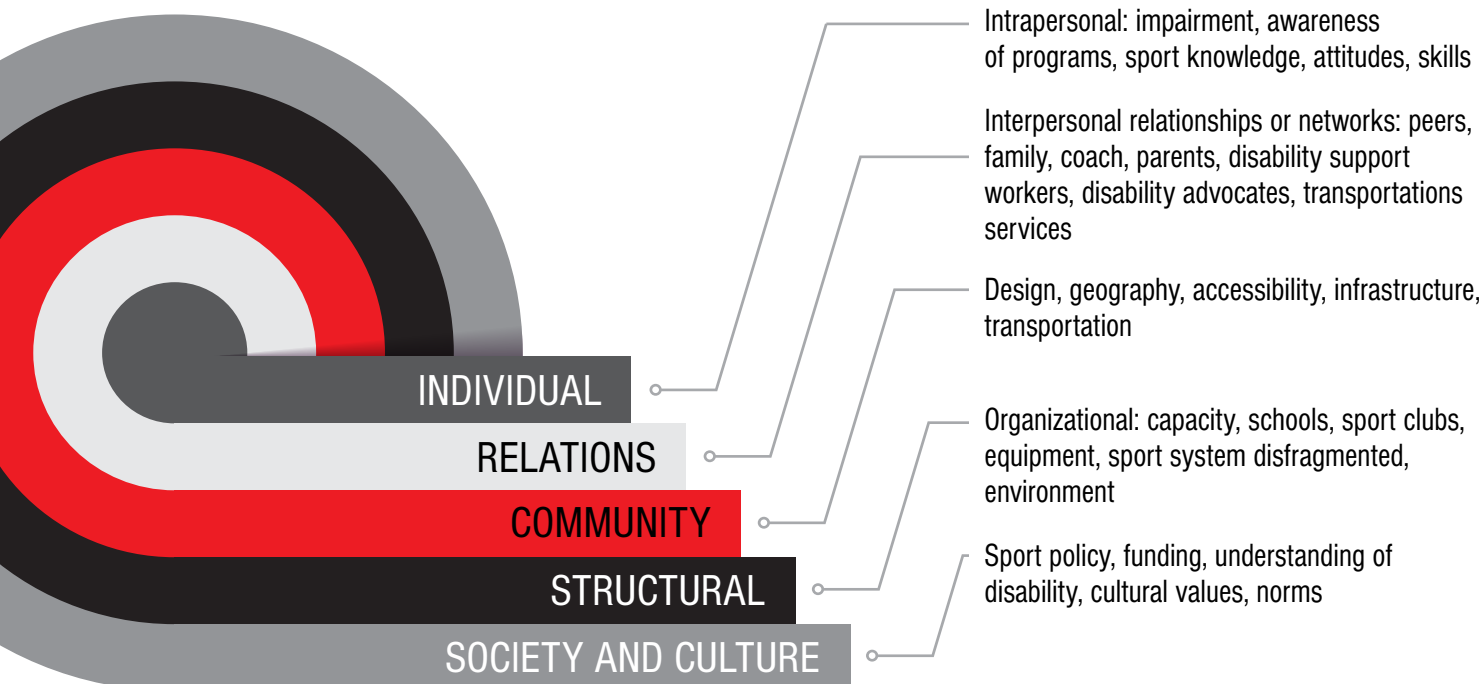
<<< Continuum >>>

Medical Model — Social Relational Model — Social Model

Understanding disability also means understanding ableism and disablism¹. “Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require ‘fixing’ and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, ableism classifies entire groups of people as ‘less than,’ and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities.”²

Now that you have more information about how disability is positioned in society; it is important to acknowledge how disability sport fits within other social institutions. Research in disability sport contexts has clearly shown that there are several social, cultural, organizational, economic, community, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors that clubs, managers and coaches need to consider. See the “Becoming Para Ready Table” for examples.

Figure 1 is an adapted version of the social ecological framework. Athletics Canada’s Para Ready framework provides a general overview of key factors that can influence participation and performance in Para Athletics.



Building a more “Para Ready” Athletics community in Canada requires looking at our policies, program structures and environmental (including virtual) settings to break down barriers (and develop holistic solutions) to participation, development, and performance.

The term “people or persons with disabilities” is used to refer to a group or population, it’s important to remember that they are not a monolith but a diverse group with different needs and wants. Two people with the same type of disability and/or impairment may experience different barriers and have different needs.

Some disabilities are invisible or harder to see. Communication is key to fully understand every individual’s needs. It is also worth noting that some individuals may experience more than one disability.

Language and Interactions

Words matter and language is an important part of inclusion, in the disability spheres as well as other areas of diversity and inclusion. Using derogatory, outdated terms and ableist language to describe or interact with athletes with disabilities enforces disrespectful stereotypes.

There are individual preferences on how one self-identifies and some athletes may prefer an identity-first language (i.e., deaf or Deaf, autistic, disabled, blind). This preference is emerging more and more but how one identifies is personal and will differ from one person to another.

Person-first language emphasizes the person and not the disability.

Examples: Athlete with a disability, individual with a vision impairment, etc.

It is recommended to start with person-first language, followed by having a conversation with the individual about their preference. It’s important to respect this and follow an individual’s preference. Disability doesn’t have to be a bad word or need to be avoided.

Other guidelines to consider adapted from the Disability Language Style Guide:

- **Refer to a disability only when it’s relevant.** Consider if referring to someone including their disability as a descriptor is needed.
- **When possible, ask the athlete how they would like to be described.** Remember to ensure trust and rapport are present before. You can also ask a trusted family member or relevant organization that works with them or has more knowledge.
- **Avoid made-up words** like “diversability” and “handicapable” unless using them in direct quotes or to refer to a movement or organization. In addition, colloquialisms like “special needs”, challenged, handicapped, etc. are not recommended.
- **Avoid comparisons that refer to people without disabilities as “normal” or able-bodied sports as “normal” sports.** Using people with disabilities vs able-bodied or people without disabilities is appropriate.



Here are a few additional considerations regarding disability etiquette for communication and interacting with people with a disability adapted from Respect Ability & United Cerebral Palsy.

- **Speak directly to a person with a disability**, not to their companion, training partner or guide, parent, or sign language interpreter. A lack of immediate response does not indicate that the person can't or won't respond.
- **If you are unsure of how you should interact with a person with a disability, just ask them.** Just because someone has a disability, do not assume they need help. Do not give assistance without asking first if they want it. You can ask if the person would like help, but don't ask repeatedly or qualify their response with "are you sure?" Respect someone's choice even if it looks like they're struggling. If there is a dangerous situation, help just as you would help someone without a disability.
- **When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands.** People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.) You can also offer a fist or an elbow.
- **When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you.** When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
- **Do not be embarrassed** if you happen to use common expressions like "See you later" or "Got to be running along" that seem to relate to the person's disability.
- **A person's mobility equipment, such as a wheelchair, scooter, or cane, is part of their personal space.** Do not touch or move it without permission, even if someone puts it down or chooses to leave it somewhere. Leaning on someone's wheelchair is like leaning on their shoulder. Don't sit or use someone's wheelchair or mobility device. It is vital that the owner knows where their equipment is always.
- **Listen attentively when you are talking with a person who has difficulty speaking.** Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short or close-ended questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.

A reminder that it's okay to not fully understand the nuances. Don't pretend that you do. Building a relationship and trust with the participant or athlete is the best place to start. Once trust has been established, be open and honest in conversations and ask permission to seek more information by asking them questions. **Don't make assumptions.**



Disability Groups

The Coaching Association of Canada breaks disabilities and impairments down into five different categories in their module Coaching Athletes with a Disability. It's important to note that this is a general model of categorizing disabilities and that the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) uses different terminologies and definitions as it relates to classification categories as noted in the classification section.

Content adapted from Coaches Association of Canada's Coaching Athletes with a Disability

Sensory impairment

- Visual impairment: Including blind, visually impaired, deafblind, and blind with additional disabilities
- Hearing impairment: Limited or complete hearing loss
- Multisensory impairment: A diagnosed visual and hearing impairment with at least a mild loss in each modality or deaf blindness

Behavioural disability is an emotional disability characterized by one or more of the following:

- Challenges in or difficulties with building or maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or supervisory adults
- Challenges or difficulties to learn that cannot be adequately explained by intellectual, sensory and/or health factors
- A consistent or chronic inappropriate type of behaviour or feelings under normal conditions
- A displayed pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- A displayed tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains and/or unreasonable fears associated with personal problems

Learning disability affects a person's ability to understand written or spoken language. The person may have difficulty reading, writing, listening and/or speaking despite having an IQ level that is average or above average. Remember, challenges with verbal communication are not an indicator of intellect or ability.

Intellectual disability affects a person's ability to think, problem-solve and/or take care of him/herself/themselves. A person with an intellectual disability has a below average IQ.

Physical disability impacts a person's muscle function, mobility, physical capacity, coordination, stamina, dexterity and/or other movements. It may be visible or invisible. It may be permanent or fluctuating, congenital (at birth) or acquired (as the result of an illness or injury). Physical disabilities may include but are not limited to spinal cord injuries, spina bifida, amputees, short stature, cerebral palsy and limb differences. Physical disabilities can include impairments to different parts of the nervous system (both somatic (voluntary- muscle and sensory) and autonomic nervous systems (mainly unconscious- heart, respiratory, bladder/bowel, sexual function etc.) Some physical disabilities might include impairments to their autonomic system but not their somatic (muscle function).



What is the Difference Between Disability and Impairment?

According to the World Health Organization, Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual during involvement in life situations.

Disability can be related to conditions that are present at birth or acquired later in life and may affect functions later in life, including cognition (memory, learning, and understanding), mobility (moving around in the environment), vision, hearing, behavior, and other areas.

An impairment in body structures and functions impacts one's ability or function in sport-related movements such as running, jumping, throwing or wheeling.

A person may have a disability but not be eligible to compete in Paralympic Sport, including Para Athletics. Refer to the classification section on Page 18.

There are few differences with the general approach of supporting athletes with a disability compared to able-bodied athletes. Para athletes want access to the same opportunities as their non-disabled counterparts, with the focus on their abilities. That said, taking the time to learn more about each athlete as an individual, while including their unique needs, will help you support them in a safe, inclusive, and effective way.

Although each athlete is different, there are some general considerations to be aware of for different impairment types. For example, an athlete with a spinal cord injury will have additional considerations in the heat due to changes in thermoregulatory function; a runner who uses a prosthetic may need additional time after travel to recover due to swelling in their amputated limb; an athlete with an intellectual impairment may have a specific way they like to receive instructions; an athlete with a visual impairment may need more tactile feedback during training or to receive voice messages or documents in an accessible format when communicating.

A wealth of information and expertise is available in Canada to help support athletes with disabilities in sport. More considerations for specific disabilities are available through training resources like the Sport Scientist Canada Para Sport Module - www.sportscientistcanada.ca/en-CA/Programs/Parasport-Module and the Active Living Alliance Tip Sheet - www.ala.ca/disability-tip-sheets. Additional resources are also linked in the “Becoming Para Ready” table found on page 23.



Importance of Sport for People with Disabilities

People with a disability get involved in sport for the same reasons most athletes do. The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) identifies four reasons all people participate in sport.

Achievement: A wish to improve, master new skills and pursue excellence

Affiliation: A desire to have positive and friendly relations with others

Self-direction: A wish to feel a sense of control, to feel in charge

Sensation: A desire to experience the sights, sounds and physical feelings surrounding a sport or the excitement in a sport

In addition, the Canadian Disability Participation Project (CDPP) in their Quality of Participation Blueprint, speaks to six building blocks that lead to positive sport experiences for people with disabilities:

Belonging: Feeling part of a group, included, accepted, and/or respected by others

Autonomy: Having independence, choice, and control

Mastery: Experiencing achievement, competence; having a sense of accomplishment

Challenge: Feeling appropriately tested

Engagement: Feeling focused, in-the-moment, and absorbed; experiencing flow

Meaning: Contributing toward obtaining a personal or socially meaningful goal; feeling a sense of responsibility to others.

What makes a positive experience for one athlete is unique and individuals will place importance on different areas.



Athlete Testimonials

We asked athletes to tell us why Para Athletics was important to them.



“It is my outlet both physically and mentally letting go of frustrations associated with my injury.”

“Because it keeps me healthy and has taught me to trust my body again.”

“I am worthy of the opportunity to excel in my sport. As I continue to do so it’s also important to me, as I recognise my privilege, to help better the system for those alongside and that follow.”

“It is important to let people with physical disabilities participate in sports and feel included because they deserve the same opportunities as any able-bodied person does.”

“Physical activity, created a peer group, an avenue to build confidence as a person with a disability.”

“Para athletics and the ability to train and compete was a complete “game changer” for my son. His coaches were tremendously supportive and the running community that grew up around my son was so humbling and amazing.”

“Para Athletics has taught me so much about myself and my world. It has really become a big piece of who I am. I love racing, I love training, and I love getting new people involved. I have a big dream of going to the Paralympics!”



It’s not sufficient to have a blanket “everyone is welcome” approach. Inclusion must be **explicit**. Athletes with a disability may assume your programs are not accessible, that knowledge around their needs is insufficient or that there is no desire to accommodate athletes with disabilities if information is difficult to find and they don’t see themselves reflected in your promotions, programs and events.

Importance of Awareness and First Involvement

Being aware of opportunities to participate in sport is crucial to the process of getting involved in that sport. The first few introductions to the sport are also very important to determining whether someone will stay involved. For individuals with a disability, we need to consider additional barriers that may exist for a person with a disability. Barriers start with trying to find info on programs, transportation to that program, having access to facilities and programs, having appropriate equipment, the opportunity to connect with a trained and supportive leader or coach, and finding a sport they enjoy. If all these barriers are addressed and they try the sport, a negative experience may quickly turn them off and they may give up sport all together.

Sport for Life offers some additional information on the importance of these two stages and checklists to address Awareness and First Involvement. www.sportforlife.ca

Supporting athletes with a disability at all levels of your organization, at the core, is the same: Focus on their abilities but understand their unique needs; provide a safe and supportive environment to train, compete and flourish as an athlete; guide them along the pathway to the level they want to reach.



PART 2: PARA ATHLETICS IN CANADA

History of Para Athletics

Para Athletics has been part of the Paralympic Games since 1960 and is governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletics Canada is the National Sport Organization (NSO).

Team Canada

Canada has a rich history in Para Athletics and its athletes have reached the podium at every Paralympic Games since 1968. Wheelchair racer Chantal Petitclerc is the most successful Canadian track Paralympian with 21 medals earned at the Games.

Since their debut at the Paralympic Games, Canadian athletes have had tremendous success on the International stage. To date (including the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games) Canadian Para Athletes have brought home; **197 Gold Medals, 166 Silver Medals and, 167 Bronze Medals.**



Chantal Petitclerc, left and Diane Roy, right at the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens. Chantal, now retired, competed in the T54 Sport Class. Diane is still active and also in the T54 Sport Class.

Photo credit: Copyright Canadian Paralympic Committee Comité paralympique canadien.

Para Athletics Development and Growth

As the National Sport Organization (NSO) for Athletics and Para Athletics, the high-performance program within Athletics Canada is responsible for the development and support of high-performance within both the Olympic and Paralympic streams.

Athletics Canada's integrated approach to high performance combines Para Athletics and able-bodied programs specifically targeting all aspects of athlete preparation for major games whether it is Olympic or Paralympic. This integrated approach is meant to trickle down into domestic and grassroots programs. Athletics Canada has identified that further work needs to be done at the domestic level to support the development and growth of Para athletics across Canada. As a result, in December 2020, two new domestic roles were added, Director, Domestic Programs and Safe Sport, and Manager, Para Development.

Integration has a place in the Para Athletics ecosystem in Canada, but it is not the only effective approach in providing meaningful sport experiences for people with disabilities and supporting athletes to reach their best potential.



Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations and Disability Sport Organizations

Domestic and grassroots programming are delivered and managed by Provincial and Territorial Sport Organizations (PTSO), also called branches. PTSO's are responsible for the development of Athletics throughout their respective Provinces and Territories. Integration at the PTSO level varies across the country.

Disability Sport Organizations (DSO) deliver programming and provide support throughout Canada to participants and athletes with a disability for a variety of different sports, including Para Athletics. DSO's provide coaching and programming in Para Athletics at varying levels.

Partnership, alignment, and collaboration between PTSO, DSO and Athletics Canada is essential to build a strong foundation and develop Para Athletics.

Athletes taking part in Para Athletics in Canada are supported by various stakeholders at different points along their pathway and all have unique needs and development rates. Their training and sporting journey may fit one or more of the Sport Inclusion Models described in the Inclusion Spectrum. As a sport administrator or coach, you may implement more than one model in your support of an athlete.

Sport Inclusion Models

The inclusion spectrum is comprised of five approaches that encourage athletes with and without a disability to engage in appropriate, quality sport opportunities: Open, modified, parallel, separate, disability specific. As with any group you coach, you'll adapt your approach to Para athletes depending on their event group and individual needs. The descriptions of each model highlighted below has been adapted from the Inclusion Spectrum.

Integrated (Open): Training/Programming takes place within an Athletics club without modification or Para-specific coaching

Included (Modified): Training/Programming takes place within an Athletics club with modifications and coaching specific to your needs

Parallel: Training/Programming takes place alongside the Athletics club (same time and place), but with modification and a dedicated Para Coach

Separate: Training takes place and is supported by the Athletics club but is Para focused and takes place at a different time and place

Disability Sport: Training/Programming is supported entirely by a Disability Sport Organization



Working with Athletes with an Impairment

Sport Scientist Canada (www.sportscientistcanada.ca) offers the following considerations for working with athletes with an impairment in their Parasport Module.

- The physiological impacts of the impairment on their performance, including heart rate, breathing, muscle function, cardiac output and thermoregulation.
- Any medical issues that are common among athletes with the particular impairment.
- Practical considerations for supporting athletes during training, travel and competition.
- Take into account and keep records of medication and medical history.

While this may seem daunting at first glance, there is a lot of information and resources available online, through Athletics Canada, the Canadian Paralympic Committee, as well as many Para coaches willing to share their knowledge. You are also encouraged to collaborate with the athlete as a resource; they know their level of function and how to maximize their participation and performance. They know themselves best and you'll learn more from them than from any resource available.

Disability in the Context of Paralympic Sport

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC), the governing body for Paralympic Sport and classification internationally, uses the definition of impairment types as defined by the World Health Organization when addressing athletes with a disability and determining their eligibility for participation in a Paralympic Sport.



Athletics Canada's integrated support team (IST) works with athletes at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games staging Camp.



Classification

Classification is the system that “determines which athletes are eligible to compete in a sport and how athletes are grouped together for competition. This, to a certain extent, is similar to grouping athletes by age, gender or weight” (International Paralympic Committee). The classification system has been designed so that athletes who succeed in competition do so on the basis of their sporting ability including their technical skill, fitness, mental focus, and tactical ability. Athletes are classified according to their activity limitation resulting from their disability which is termed “impairment” in the context of classification as outlined in Disability in the Context of Paralympic Sport section. (www.paralympic.ca)

Classification is required to compete in Para Athletics at certain levels of competition, including National Championships and International competitions; however people who may not classify can still enjoy Para Athletics and reap the benefits of being active and playing sport. Please refer to the section on Quality Participation on page 13.

Eligible Impairments

The IPC identifies ten eligible impairment types for sport.

Table 1: 10 Eligible Impairments for Para Athletics (source: International Paralympic Committee)

Impairment	Description
Impaired muscle power	The muscles in the limbs or trunk are completely or partially paralyzed as a consequence of conditions such as spinal cord injury, polio or spina bifida
Impaired passive range of movement	Range of movement in one or more joints is permanently reduced due to trauma, illness or congenital deficiency (e.g., conditions such as arthrogyrosis or joint contracture resulting from trauma)
Limb deficiency	A total or partial absence of bones or joints, from birth, as a consequence of trauma (e.g., traumatic amputation) or illness (e.g. amputation due to cancer)
Ataxia	Lack of muscle co-ordination due to problems with the parts of the central nervous system that control movement and balance; typical of conditions such as traumatic brain injury and cerebral palsy
Athetosis	Repetitive and more or less continual involuntary movements caused by fluctuating muscle tone arising from problems in the central nervous system; typical of conditions such as cerebral palsy
Hypertonia	Abnormal increase in muscle tension with reduced ability of muscles to stretch, joint stiffness, slowness of movement and poor postural adaptation and balance due to problems in the central nervous system; typical of conditions such as cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke
Short stature	Standing height and limb length are reduced due to conditions such as achondroplasia and osteogenesis imperfecta
Leg length difference	Minimum of 7cm leg length difference due to trauma, illness or congenital conditions
Visual impairment	Vision is impacted by either an impairment of the eye structure, optical nerve / pathways or the part of the brain controlling vision (visual cortex)
Intellectual impairment	Limited intellectual functions and adaptive behaviour which must be diagnosed before the age of 18





Jessica Frotten, made her Paralympic debut at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games and was part of the universal relay team, an event unique to Para Athletics. Jessica's eligible impairment as outlined in the table above is "impaired muscle power". She races in the T53 sport class.

Athletics is open to athletes with an eligible physical, intellectual or vision impairment.

In athletics the sport class consists of a prefix "T" or "F" and a number. The prefix T stands for "track", marathon and jumping events, and F stands for "field" i.e. throwing events. It indicates for which events the sport class applies, either for track/jump/marathon or for throwing events. Classes are divided in terms of impairment type (indicated by the first digit) and description of impairment (indicated by the second digit). Classification is a two-step process that includes a medical review and an observation in competition. Para Athletics is open to athletes with a range of impairments and there is a sport event for all ten eligible impairment types at the Paralympic Games.



First **Letter** Represents:

T/F TRACK OR FIELD

Typically T identifies a track event and F for a field event. There are certain exceptions (i.e. Long Jump is a T event)

First **Number** Represents:

1-6 IMPAIRMENT TYPE

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 = Visual Impairment | 5 = Impaired muscle power or range of movement |
| 2 = Intellectual Impairment | 6 = Limb deficiencies with the use of prosthetic |
| 3 = Co-ordination Impairment | 7 = Severe motor and coordination impairments |
| 4 = Upper Limb Deficiencies; Lower Limb Deficiencies without the use of prosthetic; short stature | |

Second **Number** Represents:

1-8 DESCRIPTION OF IMPAIRMENT

The number 1 through 8 specifies the description of the impairment as per the classification rules

= T12

Sport Classes in Para Athletics

T/F11, T/F12 and T/F13	Athletes with a vision impairment
T/F20	Athletes with an intellectual impairment
T/F31-38	Athletes with coordination impairment (involuntary movements, uncoordinated movements and/or muscle tension) often due to cerebral palsy or brain injury. 31-34 sport classes compete using a wheelchair or throw seated. 35-38 sport classes compete standing.
T/F40 and T/F41	Athletes of short stature
T/F42, T/F43 and T/F44	Athletes with a leg deficiency, leg length difference, impaired muscle power or impaired passive range of movement in the legs, with athletes competing in a standing position
T/F45, T/F46 and T/F47	Athletes with arm deficiency, impaired muscle power or impaired passive range of movement in arms, with athletes competing in a standing position
T/F51, T/F52, T/F53, T/F54, T55, T56 and T57	Athletes with impaired muscle power, restricted range of movement, limb deficiency or leg length difference, with athletes competing in seated position e.g. with cervical cord injury, spinal cord injury, amputation, functional disorder
T/F61, T/F62, T/F63 and T/F64	Athletes with a leg amputation, who compete with prosthetics in a standing position
T71, T72, T73	Athletes with Cerebral Palsy with severe motor and coordination impairments

For more information on classification and the eligible impairment types, please refer to the classification section on the Athletics Canada website (www.athletics.ca/our-sport/para-athletics)





Ness Murby throws the Javelin at the London 2017 World Championships. He has a vision impairment and throws in the F11 Sport Class.

Events

Para Athletics, also known as track and field, is the largest competition at the Paralympic Games. Events are available for physical impairments – both seated and standing - athletes with vision impairments, as well as those with intellectual impairments.

Contested events confirmed for the 2020 & 2024 Paralympic Games are (additional events may be available at the domestic level.):

Track events: 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m, 5,000m, 10,000m), 4x100m

*Para Athletes may compete in some of these events using a racing wheelchair or frame runner

Road event: Marathon

Jumping events: High Jump and Long Jump

Throwing events: Discus, Shot Put, Club Throw and Javelin

*Para Athletes may compete in some of these events using a seated throws frame

Rules of Para Athletics

The rules of Para Athletics are almost identical to those of its Olympic counterparts. Allowances are made to accommodate certain impairments (for example, blind and visually impaired runners may compete supported by guide runners attached to them by a tether at the wrist).

(www.paralympic.ca/paralympic-sports/para-athletics). General rules and regulations can be found on the World Para Athletics website.



PART 3: BECOMING PARA READY

The following resource was informed by *Becoming Para Ready*, a resource developed by The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement to introduce club and school sport administrators, coaches, and policy makers to what it means to be para ready and the many ways it can be achieved. Konoval, T., Leo, J., & Ferguson, J. (2019). *Becoming Para Ready: A Resource to Help Club and School Athletics Programs Support More Effective Integration*. Edmonton, AB

Provincial / Territorial Branches, Clubs, Coaches, and other stakeholders in Para athletics can use this as a starting point in becoming ready to welcome and support Para athletes within their programs.

Being Para ready is a continuum and doesn't mean that a program needs to start a Para program. Instead, programs can be Para ready by either providing inclusive programming or connecting athletes to programs that do!

Athletics Canada is committed to supporting organizations and programs in the development of your *Becoming Para Ready* strategy with further resources and guides. Reach out at any time for help along the way.

Para Ready Continuum

Getting Ready <<< Continuum >>> Total Readiness

Connector ——— Contributor ——— Collaborator



Additional guides and resources will be developed to help support the different “P”s of Para Readiness. Refer to our website for up to date content. This list is not exhaustive, and you are not required to address every item. **Becoming Para Ready is an active and fluid process that evolves and develops over time.**

THE 10 P’S OF BECOMING PARA READY

PROACTIVE			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Overarching philosophy	Be prepared and explicit about inclusion	Don't assume that athletes with a disability know they are welcome. Don't assume you know the persons abilities, ask the athlete what their needs are.	www.viasport.ca/learning-centre/accessibility-audit-tool
		Consider seeking out Para Athletes as you would able bodied athletes through recruiting starting with disability categories that most easily work in your club or training environment	www.sirc.ca/blog/creating-quality-sports-programs-for-kids-with-disabilities/ www.cdpp.ca/resources-and-publications/blueprint-building-quality-participation-sport-children-and-youth
		Approach Para Athletes as athletes first and communicate how your team's plans and programs adjust to all athletes including para athletes	www.respectability.org/inclusion-toolkits/etiquette-interacting-with-people-with-disabilities/ www.ucp.org/resource-guide/disability-etiquette/
POLICY			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Inclusive Policies	Inclusion and support of Para Athletes is embedded in your policies	Have an explicit and visible statement online including how you will provide programming (Simple short version: XYZ Track & Field is committed to providing programming for all athletes with a disability in our community)	www.ala.ca/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/Words-with-Dignity-Final-1.pdf
		Ensure your program activities are accessible and use inclusive language	
		Include athletes, coaches, and technical leaders with a disability on your Board of Directors, Athlete council or committees	www.aoda.ca/individualized-workplace-emergency-response-plan/
		Ensure your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) takes accessibility into consideration (i.e. use of elevators or lack thereof)	



PROMOTION			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Website Accessibility	Inclusive and accessible website	Perform a website accessibility audit and make adjustments as required	www.viasport.ca/learning-centre/8-ways-make-your-website-more-inclusive-and-accessible
		Consider an accessibility plug in	
		Consider inclusive practices on your digital platforms	www.andhumanity.ca/insights/5-important-things-to-consider-when-starting-your-inclusive-marketing-journey/
Key Content	Para Athletics content may need to elaborate further and include more information	Para Athletics info is easy to find	www.viasport.ca/sites/default/files/Parasport_hand-out.pdf
		Be clear on which athletes you can support in terms of disability, age, interest, and so on.	
		Lay out program info (including available equipment, cost, times, coach qualification, accessible facility features)	www.athleticsontario.ca/sports/para-athletics/
Social Media & Emails	Communications plan and channels are inclusive and accessible	Use inclusive language	
		Be aware of language and review tips on interviewing athletes with disabilities	www.healthjournalism.org/blog/2017/10/some-dos-and-donts-when-interviewing-people-with-disabilities/
		Use Alt Text, image descriptions and text reading in your posts	www.ncdj.org/resources/interviewing-tips/ www.perkinselearning.org/technology/blog/how-write-alt-text-and-image-descriptions-visually-impaired
		Diversify your content by including examples and images of para athletes, coaches and technical leaders	www.specialolympics.ca/sites/default/files/Complete%20Infographic%20Series_0.pdf
		Make sure you use images that promote inclusion by showing the diversity of athletes involved in your program	www.inclusivesportdesign.com/resources/guide-for-using-images-to-promote-inclusion-in-sport/
Awareness	Recruitment and welcoming of new athletes	Create and/or collaborate on strategies to attract new athletes (try-it days, open clinics, meet the coach)	



PART 3: BECOMING PARA READY

PROGRAMMING			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
General programs	Visibility of Para ready programs	Identify how you can support athletes (see inclusion spectrum p. 16)	
		List “Para ready” clubs, coaches, programs etc.	www.athleticsontario.ca/sports/para-athletics/ www.viasport.ca/news/it-truly-inclusive-what-people-disabilities-want-know-participating-your-program
Coaching / Clubs	Coaches Para Proficiency	Encourage your sport leaders to take the Coaching Athletes with a Disability module	www.coach.ca/nccp-coaching-athletes-disability
		Consider athlete to coach ratio (some athletes with a disability require more individual coaching)	www.cdpp.ca/resources-and-publications/blueprint-building-quality-participation-sport-children-youth-and-adults
		Use an athlete-centred approach to better understand your athletes’ unique needs and co-design training plans with athletes	www.ala.ca/disability-tip-sheets www.ualberta.ca/steadward-centre/media-library/resources/10ps-tsc_checklist-v2.pdf www.activityalliance.org.uk/get-active/at-home/adapting-activities
		Make sure to understand the uniqueness of the Para Athletics pathway to guide progress and training plan.	www.inclusivesportdesign.com/tutorials/the-inclusion-spectrum-planning-sport-activities-for-everyone/ Steadward Centre’s Becoming Para Ready document illustrates great examples of different models of support
Try it days	First experiences are crucial to retaining athletes	Design, partner and/or deliver try-it days for new people to discover para-athletics.	
		Consider “then what” if an athlete becomes interested. You don’t need to provide the whole range of services, but knowing where to connect an athlete will ensure a positive experience	
Run Jump Throw Wheel /Introduction programs	Inclusive and accessible to all	Include Para modifications in all activities	www.letsplaybc.ca/toolkit
		Ensure your coordinators/program delivery staff are knowledgeable and comfortable speaking to and delivering these components	
		Partner with a DSO in your province or territory for support	
		RJTW and introduction programs are a great way to raise awareness and offer opportunities for children with disabilities. Make sure to talk about the modifications even if no child with a disability has been explicitly identified	
Equipment	Specialized equipment is required in some Para events	Specialized equipment includes seated throws platforms, racing wheelchairs, running frames and (but not limited to) club throws	www.ala.ca/adapted-equipment-ideas
		Be creative with storage space for equipment - for example, ask the training facility if you can access space	
		Consider applying for grants such as the Para Sport Jumpstart Fund and the Canadian Paralympic Committee Sport Development Fund	www.jumpstart.canadiantire.ca/
		Work with your local DSO to collaborate on equipment needs	www.paralympic.ca/funding-opportunities
		Proper use of equipment is crucial from a technical and safety perspective. Seek help from more experienced Para Athletics coaches, athletes, and practitioners if you are unsure	



PART 3: BECOMING PARA READY

PEOPLE			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Administrators	Review capacity	Consider hiring a Para coordinator or partnering with another organization to job share	
		Para integration and inclusion benefits from dedicated attention	
		Identify a Para “champion” within your organization	
Coaches	Coaches are first point of contact	Invest in your coaches’ Para proficiency	www.coach.ca/coaching-athletes-disability
		Take Coach.ca Coaching Athletes with a Disability. This will help educate coaches on the disability and how it impacts performance/training	
		Identify mentorship opportunities	
		Support professional development	
Officials	Para Athletics has rule modifications	Ensure officials and meet directors are familiar with Para Athletics rules and modifications	www.athletics.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020_02-World-Para-Athletics-Rules-and-Regulations-2020-2021_0.pdf
		Make a Para technical delegate available to support track meets	
Education	Knowledge is powerful Everyone has a part to play	Make Para proficiency education available for everyone (from boardroom to field of play)	www.ala.ca/disability-tip-sheets
		Seek additional knowledge related to health and wellness of Para athletes and risk and injury management, including: Sport Science Canada Para Module	
Athletes	Nothing replaces lived experience. Engage and consult with athletes with disabilities	Engage athletes with a disability in policy changes, program decisions and input	
		There is value in all training and program inclusion models. Involve the athlete in the process in choosing one for them	
		Treat athletes with a disability as athletes first. All athletes both able bodied and para will have customizations to their programs and training and it is important for athletes to know customizations are not a problem or nuisance	
		Retain athletes in roles post competitive career by offering them roles as coaches, administrators, program volunteers and mentors	
Guides & training partners	Additional consideration for visually impaired athletes	Guides and training partners are crucial to athletes with a visual impairment	www.blindsports.on.ca/sports/athletics/
		Former Provincial or National team athletes can transition into guide roles	
		Advertise the need and opportunity for guides and training partners and work with your Blind Sport association	
		Guides are required to have strong athletic skills in the event the athlete compete in, keep their condition up and be aware of day-to-day needs	www.athleticsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/OB-SA-Guide-Running-Pathway-2018.pdf
		Treat them as you would an athlete	
Parents/ Guardians	Para pathway and opportunities can be overwhelming to parents. They may need additional support	Family members typically have the biggest impact on whether a child with a disability participates in sport.	www.cdpp.ca/resources-and-publications/ability-toolkit www.cdpp.ca/resources-and-publications/ability-insights-winter-2020-issue
		Seek support from Athletics Canada in guiding parents early on	www.cdpp.ca/resources-and-publications/getting-message-across-collaborative-approach-establishing
Teachers	First point of contact Advocates	Provide teachers with RJTW training & resources	www.rickhansen.com/schools-communities
		Teachers can help advocate for inclusion in school programs and competitions	
Support Team/ Volunteers	Vital to Para sport	Support them and keep volunteers engaged	
		Para athletes often require additional support and volunteers are a good way to provide that	
		Communicate with them about what they need and how to best support	



PLACE			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Accessibility	Keep accessibility in mind every step of the way	Creating a barrier-free environment should be holistic and consider the needs of all athletes, including those who use wheelchairs, those who have a vision or intellectual impairment, and any other needs.	
Competition	Include and integrate Para athletes	Consider a World Para Athletics sanctioning to ensure performances achieved by Para Athletes are recognized.	
		Smooth surfaces to easily access track and field structures are present	
		Building is equipped with ramps and/or elevators	
		All venue and facility spaces are accessible, including competition and training spaces, call room, change room and washrooms	
Office Space	Assess your office space's accessibility	Be clear about accessibility on your website for anyone looking to visit in person	
Transportation	Getting to practice can be an additional barrier	Make sure practice, training, meets and other activities which involve Para athletes have accessible parking available or public transit is available nearby	
		Make sure this information is shared with athletes	
		Planning and communication with the athletes are key to them feeling comfortable when going somewhere new. Communicate as much information as you can to prepare the athlete prior to the event, new venue, etc.	
Planning	Anticipate challenges and barriers to travel	Every track and competition venue/facility is different	
		Take all accessibility needs into consideration when planning for any travel and attendance at out of region and province/territory events	
		Allow for additional transit and transition times	



PATHWAY			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Unique	Every athlete has a unique pathway	Every para athlete will require specific needs and differ from another	
		Individualize and target pathways	
		Not every para athlete will be a Paralympian	
Development to High Performance	Something for everyone	Create opportunities at all levels of the pathway	
		Clearly lay out what you can support	
		Understand the Canadian Athletics Performance Pathway (CAPP) pathway for athletes looking to pursue competitive opportunities	www.athletics.ca/national-team/services/program-capp/
		Consider meaningful ways to be involved in Para Athletics for everyone	
Classification	Important part of Para Athletics but not the entry point	Help coaches, clubs and program staff understand the classification pathway	www.paralympic.org/news/para-athletics-explained-classification
		Identify classification opportunities and include them as part of an athlete's individual pathway	
		Classification can be a big source of stress for athletes. Seek resources to help support the athlete and their network	
		Classification is important but does not trump access to quality training	



PARTICIPATION			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Quality Participation	Consider how to foster quality participation at all levels	Use the CDPP Quality of Participation Blueprint as a tool	www.cdpp.ca/sites/default/files/CDPP%20Quality%20of%20Participation%20Blueprint%20Jan%202020.pdf
		Foster meaning: encourage athletes to offer peer support or mentorship	
		Foster belonging: group athletes together based on shared goals and keep them together over time	
		Foster engagement: encourage family members to get involved by joining a committee (e.g., fundraising) or taking on a sport-related role (e.g., coaches, referees)	
PRICE			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Cost	People with disabilities may face additional financial barriers	Cost is a key barrier to participation for many people with disabilities. Examine your fee structure to see what you can do to make it more affordable.	
PARTNERSHIP			
SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES AND ACTIONS	LINKS AND RESOURCES
Stronger Together	Don't silo an experience or program	Reach out to other programs in your area and beyond	
		Use existing resources and collaborate with others in expanding and sharing them	
		Take part in Branch and Disability Sport organizations (DSO) meetings to learn about what others are doing	
		Many resources already exist, visit Athletics Canada website or reach out to Manager, Para Development for guidance	
		Engage the DSO in your efforts, work together in the best interest of the athletes	



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND LINKS

Please visit www.athletics.ca para athletics page for more information

Disability knowledge

www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/2-what-disability

www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2020/10/25/words-matter-and-its-time-to-explore-the-meaning-of-ableism/?sh=46955b017162

www.hbr.org/2020/12/why-you-need-to-stop-using-these-words-and-phrases

www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/

www.healthjournalism.org/blog/2019/07/identity-first-vs-person-first-language-is-an-important-distinction/

www.ncdj.org/style-guide/

Para Athletics

www.paralympic.ca/paralympic-sports/para-athletics

www.paralympic.org/athletics

www.paralympic.org/news/para-athletics-explained-wheelchair-racing

www.paralympic.org/news/para-athletics-explained-classification

www.paralympic.org/video/sport-z-athletics

Coaching

www.coach.ca/nccp-coaching-athletes-disability

www.sirc.ca/blog/community-parasport/

www.cdpp.ca/resources-and-publications/blueprint-building-quality-participation-sport-children-youth-and-adults

www.jumpstart.canadiantire.ca/pages/coaching-kids-of-all-abilities

www.canucksautism.ca/training-community-engagement/sport/

Accessible Programs

www.viasport.ca/sites/default/files/Parasport_handout.pdf

www.viasport.ca/news/it-truly-inclusive-what-people-disabilities-want-know-participating-your-program

www.everybodemoveshub.ca/resources?search=&field_resource_topic%5B41%5D=41

Accessible Content

www.dreamhost.com/blog/make-your-website-accessible/

www.shondaland.com/act/a26294966/make-your-social-media-more-accessible/

www.blog.hootsuite.com/inclusive-design-social-media/

Classification

www.lexi.global/sports

www.paralympic.ca/classification

