

Accessibility Policy

May 2023 Edition



Including & Safeguarding People with Disability in Cross-Country Skiing

1. Many people with disabilities can join in cross-country skiing with little need for the activities or events to be modified, although Nordiq Alberta (NA) recognises that people with some forms of disability will benefit from thought being given to how activities can be modified to enhance their experience of cross-country skiing.
2. Clubs and volunteers organising activities and events need to find a balance between meeting the needs of the larger numbers of participants without disabilities whilst trying, where it is feasible, to meet the needs of participants with disabilities.
3. In regard to children, NA recognises that “children with disability are children first; they need the opportunity to experience cross-country skiing in a safe environment, in the same way as children without disabilities”. To help achieve this, children and their families may need additional information, help, and support. Clubs, coaches, and volunteers may require training to ensure they act inclusively and in a safe way towards children and young people with disabilities.
4. NA encourages clubs to provide appropriate opportunities to those who wish to participate in cross-country in whatever capacity they choose, whether it be as a participant, coach, official or volunteer.

Assistive Devices

5. NA is committed to serving persons with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the organization’s goods and services. NA will ensure that staff are trained and are familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods and services. Assistive devices will be permitted and may be used by persons with disabilities when participating or benefitting from the goods and services pertaining to NA. Assistive devices may not be permitted if the use of the device poses risk to the health and safety of the person using the device or to others using the goods and services of the organization.

Service Animals and Support Persons

6. NA is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal and/or a support person. Service Animals will be permitted entry for use by persons with disabilities to NA in all areas except for those prohibited by law. Where a service animal presents an unacceptable risk, other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with a disability.

Support persons for people with disabilities are allowed to enter NA’s premises. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises. Fees will not be charged for support persons for admission to NA’s premises.

Clubs

7. A club which is inclusive of people with disabilities is one that has planned proactively the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of club life and has taken practical steps to increase inclusion. This means a club which has:
 - a) Adopted a positive attitude towards the inclusion of people with disabilities;
 - b) Planned how people with disabilities can best participate in all aspects of the club's activities, for example participating in cross-country skiing, coaching and club administration; and,
 - c) Pro-actively implemented an action plan.

Considerations

8. Clubs should consult with NA about the options for including different people with disabilities in cross-country skiing activities. Participation options available in cross-country skiing include:
 - a) **Mainstream Participation:** Participants with disabilities training and competing in a mainstream club or event (e.g., a deaf individual or an upper limb amputee taking part in local activities and events organised by a club).
 - b) **Integrated Participation:** Disabled and non-disabled people participating in cross-country skiing with some adaptations to rules, or equipment, or choice of course (e.g. a blind person being accompanied by a 'buddy' in local events).
 - c) **Disability Specific participation:** Disabled performers competing in a competition solely for that disability group (eg., Ski for Light).

Communication

9. The club should work with disabled people and if appropriate their family/carers to understand disabled peoples' needs and identify barriers to participation. Once this has been achieved the club should work toward eliminating or overcoming barriers where possible so that disabled people can be integrated into mainstream cross-country skiing where possible. The disabled individuals, and if appropriate their parent or carer, will have information they can share with the club on how the club could work towards meeting their needs to allow them to access cross-country skiing activities. Some disabilities progress with the age of the person and may need the club to review the situation. It is important that clubs work continuously with disabled people to ensure they reduce any increased risk of harm to the person whilst engaged in cross-country skiing.

Plan

10. To attract people with disabilities, NA clubs will need to pro-actively plan the inclusion of people with disabilities in their programmes. Ideally, this should be done as part of the club's development plan.

Make Activities Accessible

11. Cross-country skiing for everyone with or without a disability needs to be accessible. For children cross-country skiing also needs to provide the opportunity, irrespective of disability, to participate fully in a manner that accepts them as "a child first" with the disability second. To

accomplish this clubs, coaches, and event volunteers may need to modify the rules and areas used to meet the requirements of some disabilities. Clubs may, increasingly, be able to fully integrate a disabled person into club activities and events. This will in part depend on the disability concerned.

12. Clubs, coaches, and event volunteers have a duty to provide access and an environment conducive to people with disabilities if it is feasible to do so.

Promote and Inform

13. Clubs should encourage more people with disabilities to participate in their activities by consulting with local disability groups, and by specifically targeting people with disabilities when promoting the club's programmes and activities. Local disability groups, special schools and adult centres will usually help with this by distributing information on behalf of your club. All club promotional literature should also make it clear that people with disabilities are welcome at the club. It is a good idea to use positive images of people with disabilities participating in cross-country skiing.

Medical Information

14. The club will need to maintain medical forms for people with disabilities who take part in club activities. It is particularly important the form is completed as early as possible when a person with disabilities joins the club. Some disabilities such as asthma may require minimal or no specific action by the club or coach. However, the knowledge of that disability will allow the club or coach to have an awareness of what action to take in an emergency, i.e., a severe asthma attack brought on during an activity. Most clubs will ask their coach to gather and maintain this information.

Assessing Needs

15. From the information received on the medical form, and through discussion with the people with disabilities and, if appropriate, their parents or carer, the club can identify how to best meet the person's needs to enable them to access the sport in full. Again, most clubs, will delegate such responsibilities to one of their coaches.

Coaches

16. Coaches play a significant part in welcoming people with disability to the activity sessions that they run – and in motivating them to return. Coaches may feel that additional training will be beneficial and enable them to deliver a better service to people with disability. Clubs should support coaches with this training.
17. Coaches should work with the disabled person and if appropriate their family/carers to understand the disabled person's individual needs and identify barriers to participation. Once this has been achieved the coach should work toward eliminating or overcoming barriers where possible so that the disabled person has an opportunity to be integrated into mainstream cross-country skiing where possible. The person and if appropriate their parent or carer will have information they can share with the coach on how best to meet the person's needs to allow

them to access cross-country skiing activities. Additionally, some childhood disabilities progress with the age of the child and need constant reassessing medically. It is important that the coach work continuously with the person and parent or carer, if the person is a child, to ensure they are kept aware of relevant changes to reduce any increased risk of harm to the person whilst engaged in cross-country. Some people may have multiple disabilities. If so, the coach should look at the needs of the person in a holistic manner and consider how to meet all the needs, not just in one area of disability.

Assessing Needs

18. Below are some points to consider in completing an assessment of need:

- a) Does the club provide adequate accessibility to club activities and events for the young person?
- b) When attending activities or events delivered by other clubs does the organising club provide adequate accessibility to club activities and events for the young person?
- c) Have transport arrangements been considered in response to participant's disabilities?
- d) Does the coach have the necessary information about the young person to establish effective communication strategies based on their level of understanding and preferred communication style?
- e) Do the coaches (and club) have the required training?
- f) Does the child or young person need additional help from a "support person" to access cross-country skiing activities?
- g) What aids are required, and can they be provided? Do the parents have aids that can be used?
- h) Does the young person need personal care and if so who will provide it? Bear in mind the requirements of safeguarding children to meet this need.
- i) Medication – see above.
- j) What advice can the parent/carer give to avoid/deal with possible problems in behaviour?
- k) How will the coach (and club) ensure the young person with a disability is safeguarded from harm or injury while taking part in cross-country skiing activities?
- l) Is an agreement with parents on the child attending activities or events required?
- m) What action should be taken if a medical emergency occurred relating to the disability?

Note: this is not an exhaustive list.

Modifying Rules

19. Below are suggestions for modifying rules:

- a) Make the activity easier or harder by altering some of the rules.
- b) Adjust the size of the area used for the activity.
- c) Vary the ease with which the control points can be located – make sure the points are large enough for participants with disabilities to see and find.
- d) Create different activities for participants of different abilities.
- e) Alter the ways to compete; for instance, using 'score' type cross-country skiing can be beneficial.
- f) Allow the participants to do the activity in teams or with support.
- g) If participants have mobility challenges make sure activities are accessible.
- h) Vary the distance that needs to be covered.
- i) Allow the practice of skills from a static position before introducing movement.

- j) Allow participants to take part in different ways
- k) Give participants time to do the activity.

Adapting Equipment

20. Below are suggestions for adapting equipment

- a) Educate on the operations of a sit ski (straight leg vs. bent leg design)
- b) Consider course maps that are easy to see and read (bright colours, big letters)
- c) Walker with skis

Communicating with People with Physical Disabilities

21. Coaches should communicate with people with physical disabilities in the same way as they would with anyone else. However, you may find the following practical communication tips useful:

- a) Speak in a manner appropriate to the age of the participant. Be careful not to patronise adults by being simplistic or over familiar.
- b) When adapting skills or techniques, discuss them with the participant – the individual person with the disability will know how their body moves best.

Communicating with People with Learning Disabilities

22. Communication tips for with people with learning disabilities

- a) Speak in a manner appropriate to the age of the participant with a learning disability.
- b) Always ask the participant for specific information. Only speak to their carer/parent if they are unable to supply the information themselves.
- c) When giving instructions, use simple straightforward words and language and avoid jargon. If possible, use symbols and colours instead.
- d) Break skills/drills down into easily learned steps and repeat them often and in a variety of ways.
- e) Avoid drills that rely heavily on numeracy skills.
- f) Always demonstrate skills/drills.
- g) Be patient and give participants time to learn skills.

Communicating with Blind or Partially Sighted People

23. Communication tips for people with impaired vision

- a) Remember most blind/partially sighted people have some degree of sight so the use of equipment/maps with good colour contrast will help most participants.
- b) Use the person's name to gain attention and make sure the participant knows when you are finished and when you are moving away from them.
- c) It is important that participants hear your instructions clearly. To achieve this always face the person and speak directly to them.
- d) Before beginning your coaching sessions always familiarise the participant with the environment. This includes explaining the layout of the area, the number and location of other participants and the location of potential hazards (equipment etc.).

- e) Give clear, accurate descriptions of each task/drill and always ask the participant if they understand your instructions.
- f) If possible, supply written information in suitable formats. For example, large print, tape, CD or Braille. Ask individual participants what format they find most suitable.

Communicating with people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

24. There are varying degrees of deafness. Some people have no hearing (deaf) but most have some level of hearing (hard of hearing). The following tips will be useful when talking to most deaf or hard of hearing people:

- a) Make sure you have the listener's attention before you start speaking.
- b) Position yourself in front of the participant and maintain eye contact. Remember not to turn your face away from the person.
- c) Speak clearly but not too slowly and don't exaggerate your lip movements.
- d) Don't shout. It's uncomfortable for a hearing aid user and it looks aggressive.
- e) If someone doesn't understand what you've said, don't just keep repeating it. Try saying it in a different way and check they understand what you said.
- f) Where possible, use visual aids to explain technical points.
- g) Where possible, use demonstrations to explain skills/drills.

Use of language

25. There are language considerations to keep in mind when you talk about disability and accessibility. Be aware that the words you use can be very powerful: they can both help and hurt. Some words can make people feel welcome, included, and respected. Other words can make people feel angry, ignored, or hurt. See Appendix A for things to avoid when choosing your words.

Check Your Behaviour

26. Below are things to consider about checking your behaviour:

- a) Treat people with disabilities as adults: make appropriate contact with disabled people according to the situation. Do not be over familiar and only call a person by their first name if you are doing the same to others present.
- b) Talk directly to people with disabilities: do not assume anyone companying this person is a 'carer'. Relax and talk directly to the disabled person.
- c) Don't be embarrassed about using everyday expressions such as 'see you later' or 'going for a walk' in the company of disabled people. Most disabled people also use these phrases.
- d) Offer assistance to people with disabilities, but only if they appear to need help and always wait until your offer of help is accepted. Do not assume you know the best way of helping – ask the person and listen.
- e) Don't be over-protective; people with disabilities are not fragile – do not underestimate their capabilities. If you're not sure ask the person concerned.

Feedback Process

27. NA is committed to meeting and surpassing the unique needs and expectations of its customers while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcomed and greatly appreciated. Feedback regarding policies, practices and procedures concerning goods and services provided to persons with disabilities

can be made by email, phone, in person or by mail. All feedback should be directed to the NA Director of Operations and/or Chair of the Board of Directors.

Complaints will be addressed according to the NA complaint process, as outlined in the *Discipline and Complaints Policy*

Appendix A – Use of Language

- Below are some things to avoid when you choose your words. Keep in mind that language evolves over time. New terms and descriptions may come into use, and existing terms and descriptions may fall out of favour. While this is not an exhaustive list, it should serve as a reminder that language is important.

Ableism	Ableism is a view or attitude that treats people without disabilities as “normal” and those with disabilities as “abnormal,” “inferior,” or “other.” Ableism can be both intentional and unintentional.
Negative terms related to the characteristics of disability	<p>Ableism is not always intentional, but it can still be harmful. Many common words and phrases may be offensive to persons with disabilities. They may also be misleading or confusing.</p> <p>Here are some examples of ableist, negative words and possible alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “their response was crippled by...”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternatives: slowed, delayed, disrupted • “we were blind to that...”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternatives: not aware of, surprised by, did not account for • “that was tone-deaf...”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternatives: thoughtless, careless, ignorant • “that’s crazy...” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternatives: different, unexpected, unique • “that’s so lame...”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternatives: boring, uninteresting, unpopular
Negative terms related to the experience of disability	<p>You can also find ableism in the words used to explain how people experience disability. For example, a phrase like “falling on deaf ears” could be offensive to persons with hearing disabilities even if you intend no harm. Negative language is very common.</p> <p>Consider these examples of ableist, negative language and alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “they suffered from blindness...”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternative: “they have a visual disability” • “he was afflicted with deafness...”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternative: “he is a Deaf person” • “she was confined to a wheelchair / was wheelchair-bound...”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ alternative: “she is a wheelchair user / uses a wheelchair”

Stereotypical Themes of Disability	Ableism can also affect the kind of stories people tell or expect to be told about the lives of persons with disabilities. These stories can have themes based on assumptions about disability. They often treat persons with disabilities as “characters” rather than people. Even in real life, the stories we encounter can affect how we think of people and how we treat them.
Slurs and Insults	Do not use words or insulting terms that are known to cause harm. Some persons with disabilities might sometimes use such terms as a way to reclaim them, or to describe their own experiences. Your consultations should not introduce such language, and you should set clear standards for courtesy and respect.
Competing views on person-first language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Person-first” language: Instead of saying “disabled persons,” we say, “persons with disabilities.” • Person-first language may also involve using a phrase like “a person with a mobility disability” instead of “an immobilized person.” Another example would be saying “a person with low vision” rather than a “low-vision person.” This kind of phrasing avoids identifying a person with any disability they might have. A person with a disability may have different views of its meaning or significance in their lives. • At the same time, not all persons with disabilities prefer person-first language. You may notice that some individuals, experts, and organizations do not talk about disability the same way we do in these modules. Some might think person-first language places too little emphasis on disabilities that are important parts of their lives. Others might find person-first language involves too much awkward grammar and phrasing.

2. Below is a list of general words about disability to use or avoid. The words on the left are passive, victim words. The words on the right respect disabled people as active individuals with control over their own lives.

Avoid	Use
(the) handicapped, (the) disabled	disabled (people)
afflicted by, suffers from, victim of	has [name of condition or impairment]
confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	wheelchair user
mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal	has a learning difficulty or impairment with learning difficulties/impairments
cripple, invalid	disabled person
Spastic	person with cerebral palsy
able-bodied	non-disabled

mental patient, insane, mad	person with a mental health condition/issue
deaf and dumb; deaf mute	deaf, user of America sign language
the blind	people with visual impairments; blind people; blind and partially sighted people
An epileptic, diabetic, depressive, etc	person with epilepsy or someone who has epilepsy
dwarf; little person	someone with restricted growth or short stature
fits, spells, attacks	Seizures