

## Universal Design Recommendations for Accessible Playgrounds

- A more comprehensive approach to Universal Design would address items such as:

1. What type of ground surface is the playground installed on?
2. What are the wayfinding elements that would help with navigating the play area? Is there a tactile map of the play area or equipment? Are colors used to facilitate wayfinding? Are smell and textures used (via landscaping used to facilitate wayfinding)?
3. Are there tactile indicators at play zone entries to help children find where they would like to play?
4. Is the equipment accessible by children from different heights?
5. Is there sufficient space within and around the playground for wheelchair users to maneuver?
6. Is there enough extra space between play zones to prevent a child with a visual impairment from accidentally entering a fall zone?

- Regarding the selection of the playground equipment:

1. Designing a horizontal playground which limit the number of elevated surfaces to a minimum and mainly rely on individual components laid-out at grade.



2. Using 'crawl tunnels' between transfer stations or with a slight slope to allow children with limited mobility to move through the playground.
  3. Provide a variety of play opportunities rather than focus on one. For example, spinning, sliding, rocking, swinging, climbing, crawling, strengthening, balancing, or bouncing.
  4. Using transfer steps instead of regular steps. These steps are lower in height and allow people who cannot use their legs to move through elevation changes.
  5. Using ramps or the topography around the equipment as a way to allow wheelchair bound children to experience the higher levels of the playground.
  6. Avoiding glossy materials which can confuse people with vision impairment.
  7. Providing high contrast hand grips.
  8. No open platforms as this is a high safety risk for children with vision impairments.
- We recommend having a minimum of 50% of the play structure accessible via both ramp and transfer stations, as well as the inclusion of sensory equipment and features.
  - Pathways surrounding the play structures should be wheelchair friendly, with more ground features for interactive play along the way.
  - Surface that is level, stable, firm and slip-resistant.
  - Seating and shelter to allow caregivers and children to rest and relax, and to be protected from sun and other weather elements, especially for people with limited mobility. Seating should provide for variation of both armrests and no armrests.
  - Convenient and accessible pedestrian pathway to the playground from accessible parking, transit stop and nearby accessible washrooms, to ensure that all aspects of the experience are easy and safe.
  - Tactile indicators around playground equipment area to provide safe wayfinding for people who have visual impairments.

- Aromatic plants and tactile indicators on path borders to provide wayfinding to various areas such as entrance and seating area for people who have visual impairment.
- Picnic tables with accessible design to welcome people using wheelchairs.
- Animal relief area for service dogs.