

The SIX A's of Inclusive and Accessible Dragon Boating

Dragon boat Canada is an inclusive community and has opportunities to participate anywhere from the recreation level to representing Canada in international competitions.

Para Dragon racing is included in the Canadian Dragon Boat Championships.

In 2019, the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) announced a new Paradrakon division for teams either fully or partially composed of individuals of varying abilities. In doing so, they made a critical step in recognizing the true power of athletes with disabilities for the fierce competitors they are.

Despite advances in inclusive policies and social awareness, the participation of people with disabilities in mainstream sports remains limited due to numerous barriers. This document is meant to be a resource to support you and your club to consider ways to become more inclusive by eliminating obstacles that get in the way of full paddling participation.

The following SIX A's for more inclusive and accessible paddling clubs are suggestions for your consideration.

1. Awareness/Acceptance

- Consider if there is a seat for everyone/anyone on the boat. Have you thought about how you could be inclusive by design?
- Types of disabilities [Disability and Health Overview | Disability and Health | CDC](#)
- Everyone is unique. No two people experience a disability the same. Treat each person as an individual paddler. Avoid making assumptions. Be curious before being judgmental.
- Check your bias
- Relevant information sharing- recognition that disclosure of a person's disability is a private matter. Providing opportunities for safe and secure methods of disclosure as it pertains to participating fully should be offered. For example:
 - You might include an area on your membership form that respectfully asks, "Do you have any current or pre-existing medical conditions that you would like us to know about? If so, how might we support your paddling experience? If you would like to discuss privately, please contact _____"

- Option to carry a credit card size “medical card” that could list name, emergency contact, medication or support protocol. Each paddler (not just those with a disability), carries the card in their pfd only to be used in case of emergency.

2. Adapt

- All-inclusive philosophy. Does your team have “eligibility” requirements that may be an obstacle or barrier for anyone to join?
- Check your recruitment materials- examples of recruitment- social media, photos you use, wording. Are you reflecting an inclusive community of paddlers on your social platforms?
- Specific Training- check the resource section below for a variety of training offerings to increase your knowledge of inclusivity.
- Be ready and willing to pivot and be creative to ensure all can be successful in their paddling pursuits.

3. Accessibility

- Think “big picture” – universally designed to ensure access for all
- **Physical** – how we design buildings, outdoor space, parking and public access.
 - **Attitudinal** – the stereotypes we believe, the assumptions we make, and how we treat people with disabilities.
 - **Policy** – how we design programs and the rules we create.
 - **Information and communication** – the ways we share information, including verbal instructions, text, and online formats.
 - **Technology** – the websites we design, the software and programs we purchase, and things like online application forms.

4. Assist

- Consider implementing a Mentor/Buddy system
- Resources- paddling can be expensive. Do you have support for those that may face financial barriers to participation?

- Financial- example grants
- Customized equipment

5. Accommodate

- Be willing to make adjustments and modifications unique to each person
 - Examples- stirrups, swing chair, adaptations to paddles, seat, paddle comfort (getting in and out of boat etc)
- Check out the resource section below

6. Ambition

- No limitations to reach the highest level of competition
- DBC National team [National Team - Dragon Boat Canada](#)
- IDBF Para Athletes Commission [IDBF Rules for Paradrasons Racing - Edition 1.3 \(b-cdn.net\)](#)
- DBC Para-program-orientation-2025.pdf

Definitions

Accessibility-Historically, our society has tended to view disability as a problem for the individual and looked to solve through accommodation, but that is changing. We now acknowledge that accessibility is the work we do to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in society and sport on an equal basis with others.

It is not necessarily the health condition that creates barriers for people with disabilities but rather it's the physical barriers, the rules we create, the attitudes we hold that get in the way.

Canada's Accessibility Act [Summary of the Accessible Canada Act - Canada.ca](#)

UNCRPD article 30- 5. [Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport | United Nations Enable](#)

Accommodation- changes or adjustments that permit a person with a disability to participate, perform and enjoy benefits and privileges equal to those without disabilities.

Impairment- can be physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, sensory whether permanent, temporary or episodic. Impairments happen when a person with an impairment interacts with a barrier.

Barrier- Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with an impairment.

- **Physical** – how we design buildings, stores, and other public spaces.
 - **Attitudinal** – the stereotypes we believe, the assumptions we make, and how we treat people with disabilities.
 - **Policy** – how we design programs and the rules we create.
 - **Information and communication** – the ways we share information, including verbal instructions, text, and online formats.
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Some barriers have many possible solutions, including ones that require less effort or time.

It's important to test your assumptions about possible solutions to a barrier. First ask the person who is impacted by that barrier for suggested solutions.

Disability- disability means the inability to participate fully and equally in society due to the interaction between an impairment and a barrier. (Accessibility BC Act)

27% of Canadians 15 years and older have at least one disability. 70% of disabilities are non-apparent. [The Daily — Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017 to 2022 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

Disclosure- to reveal or expose information that has previously been kept a secret

Discrimination- the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex or disability.

Resources

www.Tetrasociety.org

Tetra Society builds innovative solutions for people with physical disabilities to overcome environmental barriers, providing greater independence, quality of life and inclusion.

From DBC Website

IDBF-Coaching-Paradragons-2021-01-27.pdf

Diagnosis Certificate (not sure the year it was revised)

NCCP Coaching impaired athletes-48 page manual from 2005

Online PST Program for athletes.

Training

Safe Sport Training [Safe Sport Training | Coaching Association of Canada | Association canadienne des entraîneurs](#)

Creating a culture where everyone can thrive is a shared responsibility. The Safe Sport Training module developed by the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) will help anyone involved in sport identify and prevent a situation of maltreatment.

Mixed Ability Sport- [Mixed Ability Sports | Abilities Centre Whitby](#)

An innovative approach to sport participation enabling individuals of all abilities and life experiences to participate on the same team together.