



making a difference

Disability Services Commission

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2006-2011

This plan is available upon request in alternative formats such as large print, electronic format (disk or emailed), audio or Braille.

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Acknowledgements

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BACKGROUND

Disability Services Commission

The Commission was established in 1993 through the *Disability Services Act 1993* (DSA) and has statutory responsibility for policy and program development, and service planning in all areas that affect the rights and needs of Western Australians with disabilities.

The Commission provides leadership to:

- support local communities welcome and assist people with disabilities, their families and carers;
- achieve access to quality support and services for people with disabilities; and
- protect the rights of people with disabilities who are especially vulnerable and support them to live a full and valued life.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) is pivotal in ensuring that the Commission's services, information and buildings are accessible for people with disabilities.

Functions, facilities and services (both in-house and contracted) provided by the Disability Services Commission

The Commission comprises six directorates that undertake a range of different functions:

- Accommodation Services Directorate (ASD) – manages the Commission's provided accommodation services for people with an intellectual disability, short-term emergency accommodation, community-based assistance, and training and development in the areas of accommodation support;
- Corporate and Business Services (CABS) – undertakes the Commission's key internal corporate functions such as finance, human resources, audit and risk management, and web-based information services;
- Country Services Coordination (CSC) – focuses on issues that affect people with disabilities living in rural and remote areas of Western Australia. Services and programs provided through CSC include Local Area Coordination, the Country Resource and Consultancy Team, Country Autism Service, and the Health Resource and Consultancy team;
- Metropolitan Services Coordination (MSC) – focuses on issues that affect people with disabilities living in metropolitan Western Australia.

Two key programs provided through MSC are Local Area Coordination and Individual and Family Support;

- Policy, Planning and Information (PPI) – sets the policy and strategic direction for disability services, promotes access and community awareness, and coordinates the Commission’s information and awareness strategies; and
- Service Purchasing and Development (SPD) – procures services consistent with the strategic direction of the Commission, manages and evaluates contractual arrangements, guides all sector development and the implementation of services.

In 2004-05 the Commission employed 1,564 FTE staff and spent \$281.8 million to advance the rights and support the needs of Western Australians who have a disability. The Commission has metropolitan and country based offices across Western Australia.

Planning for better access

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2003), 20.6% of Australians or more than 1 in 5 people, identify themselves as having some form of disability.

It is a requirement of the *Disability Services Act* that public authorities develop and implement a DAIP so that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the Commission’s services, facilities and information.

Other legislation underpinning access and inclusion includes the Western Australian *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. A DAIP may also satisfy the *Disability Discrimination Act’s* requirements for an Action Plan. While Action Plans are not compulsory under the Disability Discrimination Act, they can assist organisations become more accessible and inclusive, and can provide some clarity during disability discrimination proceedings.

Progress since 2000

The Commission is committed to the inclusion of people with disabilities through the improvement of access to its services, facilities and information. The Commission’s third Disability Service Plan (DSP) covered the period from 2000-2005 to address the barriers for people with disabilities. Progress under the DSP was reviewed in 2005.

The Commission has implemented many initiatives and made significant progress towards better access. Some of these are highlighted in the Appendix under the relevant key outcome headings of the 2000-2005 DSP.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION POLICY STATEMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, THEIR FAMILIES AND CARERS

The Commission is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities, their families and carers are able to access the Commission's services, facilities and information, providing them with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities enjoyed by all other people in the community.

The DAIP provides a framework for the identification of areas where access and inclusion can be improved and for the development of strategies to best improve access and inclusion. These strategies work towards a number of access and inclusion outcomes, which are defined in the Act as the minimum standard for DAIPs. The six access and inclusion outcome areas specified in the Act aim to provide a means of ensuring that people with disabilities:

1. have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the relevant public authority;
2. have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the relevant public authority;
3. receive information from the relevant public authority in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it;
4. receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the relevant public authority as other people receive from the staff of that authority;
5. have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the relevant public authority; and
6. have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the relevant public authority.

In addition to these six prescribed minimum standards for DAIPs under the Act, the Commission has included an additional outcome in its DAIP that:

7. people with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to seek employment with the Commission.

The Commission's DAIP will be implemented over 5 years, guided by an overarching set of strategies which drive individual tasks to support the achievement of each outcome area. Each year an *Implementation Plan* will be

developed and implemented to improve access to Commission services, buildings and information. The *Implementation Plan* will outline the:

- individual tasks being undertaken;
- timeline for completion of the individual tasks;
- directorates of the Commission with responsibility for completing the individual tasks; and the
- broad strategy that the individual tasks are supporting.

Developing and implementing annual Implementation Plans throughout the lifespan of the DAIP provides the opportunity to manage strategies carefully across a five year timespan and respond to emerging access and inclusion barriers.

The Commission is committed to implementing its DAIP in a manner that progresses the principles and objectives of the *Disability Services Act* including recognition that people with disabilities:

- have the inherent right to respect for their human worth and dignity;
- whatever the origin, nature, type or degree of disability, have the same basic human rights as other members of society and should be enabled to exercise those basic human rights;
- have the same rights as other members of society to realise their individual capacities for physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development;
- have the same right as other members of society to services which will support their attaining a reasonable quality of life in a way that also recognises the role and needs of their families and carers;
- have the same right as other members of society to participate in, direct and implement the decisions which affect their lives;
- have the same right as other members of society to receive services in a manner that results in the least restriction of their rights and opportunities;
- have the same right as other members of society to pursue any grievance concerning services;
- have the right to access the type of services and supports that they believe are most appropriate to meet their needs;
- who reside in rural and regional areas have a right, as far as is reasonable to expect, to have access to similar services provided to people with disabilities who reside in the metropolitan area; and
- have a right to an environment free from neglect, abuse, intimidation and exploitation.

In recognising the community's need for access to the many different functions of the Commission, the DAIP will be implemented by all directorates of the Commission.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES REGARDING THE ACT'S REQUIREMENTS FOR AGENTS AND CONTRACTORS

The *Disability Services Act* requires agents and contractors of public authorities to conduct their business in a manner consistent with the contracting public authority's DAIP.

Relevant sections of the Act and associated Regulations regarding DAIPs and agents and contractors include:

- *Section 28. Disability access and inclusion plans* - Each public authority must have a disability access and inclusion plan to ensure that in so far as its functions involve dealings with the general public, the performance of those functions furthers the principles in Schedule 1 and meets the objectives in Schedule 2;
- *Section 29B. Public authorities to ensure implementation of a disability access and inclusion plan* - A public authority that has a disability access and inclusion plan must take all practicable measures to ensure that the plan is implemented by the public authority and its officers, employees, agents or contractors; and
- *Regulation 8. Information in reports about disability access and inclusion plans (s. 29)* For the purposes of section 29(4) of the Act, a report about a disability access and inclusion plan must include information relating to —
 - a) progress made by the relevant public authority and any agents and contractors of the relevant public authority in achieving the desired outcomes specified in Schedule 3; and
 - b) the strategies implemented by the relevant public authority to inform its agents and contractors of its disability access and inclusion plan.

The intent of the Act is to increase awareness so that consideration is given to the needs of people with disabilities when providing a service to the public and to encourage 'agents and contractors' to conduct that service in a manner consistent with the DAIP of the contracting authority. The Commission seeks to encourage 'agents and contractors' to be sensitive to the needs of the community.

DAIP requirements relating to 'agents and contractors':

- apply only to new contracts or contract variations;
- apply to services provided to the public; and
- do not apply to services provided directly to the public authority, like cleaners, rewiring of telephones etc.

Following the work of the Department of Treasury and Finance, in conjunction with the State Solicitor's office, a clause will be developed to be inserted into relevant authority tender and contract documents. This clause seeks for tenderers to identify which DAIP outcomes they can support in providing their service to the public.

Section 29 of the Act requires the Commission to provide an annual report to the Minister for Disability Services about DAIP progress, including progress by 'agents and contractors'. The Commission will meet this reporting requirement, using the information provided by agents and contractors when initially providing a tender to provide services to the public. Data regarding the Commission's DAIP progress will be provided annually and will be aggregated into the overarching Statewide report for the Minister for Disability Services.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DAIP

Responsibility for the planning process

The Commission's Disability Access and Inclusion Planning Reference Group has had an ongoing role in guiding the implementation of the DSP and its subsequent review. The Reference Group has overseen the development of the Commission's DAIP 2006-2011.

The Reference Group comprised representatives from all Commission directorates and the Board, as follows:

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Director, Policy, Planning and Information Directorate | Jenni Perkins |
| Commission Board member | Mallika Macleod |
| Manager, Service Development and Monitoring | Peter Batini |
| Manager, Strategic Asset Management | Sonny Mak |
| Local Area Coordination District Manager (Metropolitan) | Lorraine Dockerill |
| Local Area Coordination Regional Manager (Country) | Marilyn Novak |
| Project Officer, Accommodation Services Directorate | Neil Paynter |
| Principal Access Officer, Community Access and Information Branch | Tim Doncon |
| Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy Branch | Steve Eadie |

Community Consultation Process

In 2005, the Commission undertook to review its DSP, consult with key stakeholders and draft a new DAIP to guide further improvements to access and inclusion. The process included:

- examination of the initial DSP and subsequent review reports to see what has been achieved and what still requires work;
- examination of other relevant Commission documents and strategies;
- investigation of contemporary trends and good practice in access and inclusion;
- consultation with key staff; and
- consultation with the community.

The *Disability Services Act Regulations* set out the minimum consultation requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIPs. State government authorities must call for submissions (either generally or specifically) by notice in a statewide newspaper or on any website maintained by or on behalf of the state government agency.

The Commission has a well established practice of community consultation and the following strategies were used in the consultation:

- Focus groups, comprising Commission staff across the State, people with disabilities, their families and carers, the disability sector and local government. 38 people participated in the seven focus group sessions;
- A survey, provided to Commission staff, people with disabilities, their families and carers, the disability sector and local government. 41 people participated in the survey; and
- The community was informed of the consultation through advertisements in the *West Australian* newspaper, *Community* newspapers, the Commission's website, a blanket email to the disability sector and local government, and registration of the consultation on the State Government's *Consult WA* website.

Findings of the consultation

The review of the DSP measured the success of the Plan from 2000-2005 and had two terms of reference:

- ascertain the success of the DSP in improving access to Commission services, facilities and information for people with disabilities; and
- identify access barriers that need to be addressed in the Commission's new DAIP.

In addition to community and staff consultation the review analysed Commission data to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the DSP. The review identified that nearly all of the initial objectives in the DSP had been achieved and the plan had improved access to Commission services, information and facilities, characterised by:

- quality service delivery through the adaptation of existing services;
- accessible buildings and facilities;
- information that met the information needs of people with disabilities;
- a high level of disability awareness demonstrated by Commission staff;
- consultation processes, grievance mechanisms and decision-making processes that were in the main accessible; and
- generally accessible employment opportunities and flexible workplace practises.

The review and its consultations identified significant work that is already underway to improve access and also identified a number of remaining barriers to access and inclusion. These future opportunities for reducing access and inclusion barriers have been incorporated into the Commission's DAIP 2005-2010 in accordance with the DAIP development process outlined in the Act.

The Commission is aware that the new plan should not only address current barriers but also reflect contemporary values and practices, such as striving for inclusion, meeting more than the minimum compliance with access standards and the importance of keeping abreast of legislative and regulatory changes.

Access Barriers

While the review and consultation noted a great deal of achievement in improving access it also identified a range of barriers that require redress.

These access barriers include:

- Flexibility of service;
- Difficulty in travelling to Commission facilities;
- Inappropriate parking;
- Inappropriate signage;
- Inadequate design;
- People with disabilities may not be able to access information;
- Staff may not have knowledge to provide an appropriate service;
- Consultative processes may not meet the needs of people with disabilities;
- Staff may not have adequate complaints process information;
- People with disabilities may not have adequate complaints process information;
- People with disabilities may not know how to inform the Commission of positive experiences; and
- People with disabilities may have limited access to Commission employment opportunities.

Responsibility for Implementing the DAIP

It is a requirement of the *Disability Services Act* that public authorities must take all practical measures to ensure that the DAIP is implemented by its officers, employees, agents and contractors.

Accordingly the implementation of the DAIP is the responsibility of all areas of the Commission. Some strategies in the DAIP apply to all areas of the Commission while others apply to specific directorates. The Implementation Plan sets out who is responsible for each individual action under each broad strategy.

The Commission will inform its 'agents and contractors' of their responsibilities under the DAIP. The Commission will continue to encourage best practise in the accessible provision of services to people with disabilities.

Communicating the plan to staff and people with disabilities

In September 2005 the Commission placed copies of the draft disability access and inclusion plan on the Commission website and informed all interested stakeholders to provide feedback through the *West Australian* newspaper, all *Community* newspapers, a website news item and the *Consult WA* website.

In June 2006 the DAIP was finalised and formally endorsed by the Commission's Board.

The Commission has advised, through the media – newspaper and Internet, that copies of the plan are available to the community upon request and in alternative formats if required, including hard copy in standard and large print, electronic format, audio format on cassette or CD, by email and on the Commission's website.

Review and evaluation mechanisms

The *Disability Services Act* sets out the minimum review requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIPs. The Commission's DAIP will be reviewed at least every 5 years, in accordance with the Act. The DAIP Implementation Plan will be updated annually to reflect progress and address remaining access and inclusion issues. If the DAIP is amended, a copy of the amended plan will be lodged with the Disability Services Commission.

The Commission's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan will be reviewed and monitored through a range of ongoing means, including:

- The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Reference Group will meet every quarter in the first year and as required thereafter to review progress on the implementation of DAIP strategies;
- A review report of what has been achieved through the Commission's DAIP 2006-2011 will be included in the DAIP 2012-2016, to be submitted in 2012;
- Description of DAIP activities undertaken will be included each year in the Commission's Annual Report;
- The DAIP Reference Group will prepare the DAIP progress report that is required to be submitted to the Commission each year. This report will be aggregated with the progress reports of other public authorities to provide a statewide DAIP progress report for the Minister for Disability Services.

Evaluation of the Commission's DAIP will be undertaken through:

- Any reports on the disability access and inclusion implementation process provided to the Commission's Corporate Executive;
- Once a year prior to 31 July the Commission will provide advice regarding the progress of the DAIP;
- A notice about consultation processes will be placed in the *West Australian* and regional newspapers, posted on the Commission's website, announced on regional and Information Radio and circulated to key disability service providers;
- In seeking feedback the DAIP Reference Group will also seek to identify any additional barriers that were not identified in the initial consultation;
- The DAIP Reference Group will use some of the consultation processes used during the initial consultations including: questionnaires, meetings with people with disabilities and disability organisation phone-ins; and
- Commission staff will also be requested to provide feedback on how well they believe the strategies are working and to make suggestions for improvement.

To assist the Commission measure the progress made through the DAIP a set of performance indicators will be drawn upon as mechanisms for detailed analysis of the DAIP's success. The Commission will use the following performance indicators for each year of the DAIP to measure:

- ❖ Outcome 1 - Access the services of, and any events organised by, the Commission:
 - Use the Commission's Consumer satisfaction surveys to ascertain service users' satisfaction with the services they receive; and
 - Percentage of events that complied with the *Creating Accessible Events* guidelines.
- ❖ Outcome 2 - Access the buildings and other facilities of the Commission:
 - Percentage of Commission buildings (leased and owned) that meet the prescribed access standards across the lifespan of the DAIP.
- ❖ Outcome 3 - Receive information from the Commission in a format that will enable them to access the information:
 - Percentage of Commission publications that meet the State Government's Access Guidelines for Information Services and Facilities; and

- Percentage of successful webpage downloads on the Commission's website.
- ❖ Outcome 4 - Receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Commission:
 - Use the Commission's Consumer satisfaction surveys to ascertain service users' satisfaction with the services they receive.
- ❖ Outcome 5 - To make complaints to the Commission:
 - Develop a question about consumer satisfaction with the accessibility of the Commission's complaints processes for inclusion in the *Consumer Complaint Data Form*, currently used to assess satisfaction with the process and outcomes of complaints.
- ❖ Outcome 6 - To participate in any public consultation by the Commission:
 - Percentage of public consultations undertaken that have complied with the *Consultation Policy* for accessibility by people with disabilities.
- ❖ Outcome 7 – Same opportunities as other people to seek employment with the Commission:
 - Percentage of people with disabilities employed by the Commission.

REPORTING ON THE DAIP

The *Disability Services Act* sets out the minimum reporting requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIPs.

The Commission will report annually on the implementation of its DAIP using a prescribed proforma that will be used to aggregate information about DAIP progress into a report for the Minister for Disability Services. This report proforma will provide information about:

- progress towards the desired outcomes of its DAIP;
- progress of agents and contractors towards meeting the six desired outcomes; and
- the strategies used to inform agents and contractors of the DAIP.

The Commission will also provide information about the progress made through the DAIP in its Annual Report.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND INCLUSION

As a result of the consultation process the following overarching strategies will guide tasks, reflected in the *Implementation Plan*, that the Commission will undertake from 2006-2011 to improve access to its services, buildings and information. The six desired outcomes (and an additional Commission outcome) provide a framework for improving access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

Outcome 1: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|-----------|
| Ongoing workforce planning to ensure staff continuity and reduce workforce turnover | June 2008 |
| Review of existing funding parameters to maximise flexibility to meet individual needs | June 2007 |
| Improved communication about the availability of funds, funding processes and timelines | June 2007 |
| Increase opportunities for people with disabilities to engage with the Commission in respect to decisions that affect them directly | June 2008 |
| Foster ongoing opportunities for responding to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people with disabilities, particularly new and emerging communities, and Indigenous people with disabilities, and their families | June 2008 |
| Ongoing implementation of the Remote Area Strategy | June 2007 |
| Ensure that Commission events are accessible for people with disabilities | June 2007 |

Outcome 2: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the Commission

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|-----------|
| Produce information about public transport options for people with disabilities to commute to Commission offices | June 2007 |
| Identify, in conjunction with the Public Transport Authority (PTA), the need and potential for buses with appropriate wheelchair access to be allocated to routes that pass Commission facilities | June 2007 |
| Ensure that Commission facilities meet prescribed standards for access | June 2011 |
| Ensure that pathways to Commission buildings are accessible by working with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o private owners if the pathway is on private land; or o Local Government if the pathway is on public land. | June 2008 |
| Ensure that the height of front reception desks in Commission buildings and offices meet access standards | June 2007 |

Outcome 3: People with disabilities receive information from the Commission in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Continue to explore opportunities for use of technology, including new and emerging technologies | Ongoing |
| Ongoing development and maintenance of the Commission's website to improve information access for people with disabilities | Ongoing |
| Produce publications in languages other than English taking into account cultural perspectives for CALD and Indigenous people as required | June 2007 and ongoing monitoring |
| Ensure that publications are readily available at key access points | June 2008 |

| Strategy | Timeline |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Commit to making publications as accessible as possible (written in plain English, succinct, publicly available) | June 2007 and ongoing monitoring |
| Ongoing implementation of communication strategies to inform Commission funded agencies about the DAIP and their responsibilities under the DAIP | June 2011 |

Outcome 4: People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Commission as other people receive from the staff of the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|--|-----------|
| Improve knowledge of Commission staff about disabilities | June 2007 |
| Examine specific disability awareness training needs of staff and include in Professional Development Plans as appropriate | June 2008 |
| Provide training and support for staff in their work with CALD and Indigenous people with disabilities | June 2007 |

Outcome 5: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Commission.

| Strategy | Timeline |
|--|-----------|
| Regularly inform staff and people with disabilities about the Consumer Liaison Service | June 2007 |
| Review the Commission complaints processes | June 2007 |
| Undertake complaints awareness training for new Local Consumer Liaison Officers | June 2007 |

Outcome 6: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Commission

| Strategy | Timeline |
|--|-----------|
| Regularly update the <i>Consultation Policy</i> to ensure that the needs of people with different communication needs are met by consultation strategies | June 2007 |

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|-----------|
| Develop means of consulting a broader range of people with disabilities including the use of local community networks | June 2007 |

Outcome 7: People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to seek employment with the Commission ¹

| Strategy | Timeline |
|---|-----------|
| Develop policies and strategies to recruit and retain people with disabilities employed by the Commission | June 2007 |
| Examine means of improving access to employment opportunities | June 2007 |

¹ Note this outcome is not prescribed by the Disability Services Act but has been added by the Commission.

APPENDICES

Progress since 2000

The review of the Commission's DSP determined that many initiatives under the plan were successful in improving access to services, information and facilities for people with disabilities and assisted the work of the Commission.

From the range of consultative and analytical methods used during the course of the review, a pattern of success was identified with implementation of the DSP improving access for people with disabilities characterised by:

- Quality service delivery through adaptation of existing services;
- Accessible buildings and facilities;
- Information that meets the information needs of people with disabilities;
- A high level of disability awareness demonstrated by Commission staff;
- Consultation processes, grievance mechanisms and decision-making processes that are accessible, although in varying degrees; and
- Access to employment opportunities.

Specific examples of activities undertaken by the Commission include:

- Person centred approach focussing on the needs of each individual;
- Introduction and implementation of the Ninth Disability Standard;
- Renovation of country offices to improve accessibility;
- Provision of information in a range of different formats
- Provision of disability awareness training for front counter staff;
- Involvement of people with disabilities in decision-making processes through the Commission's Ministerial Advisory Council and Board, and involvement in selection of Commission staff;
- Participation of people with disabilities in consultations including significant reviews of Local Area Coordination and Indigenous needs;
- Provision of accessible grievance mechanisms that demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the grievance processes in the Commission;
- Implementation of the Commission's *Policy on the Employment of People with Disabilities* to ensure that people with disabilities are encouraged to access employment opportunities, are not discriminated against in employment and enjoy the same benefits and conditions as other employees.

Under the DAIP the Commission will continue to implement strategies to improve access to services, information and facilities.

Schedule 1 — Principles applicable to people with disabilities

1. People with disabilities have the inherent right to respect for their human worth and dignity.
2. People with disabilities, whatever the origin, nature, type or degree of disability, have the same basic human rights as other members of society and should be enabled to exercise those basic human rights.
3. People with disabilities have the same rights as other members of society to realise their individual capacities for physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development.
4. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to services which will support their attaining a reasonable quality of life in a way that also recognises the role and needs of their families and carers.
5. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to participate in, direct and implement the decisions which affect their lives.
6. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to receive services in a manner that results in the least restriction of their rights and opportunities.
7. People with disabilities have the same right as other members of society to pursue any grievance concerning services.
8. People with disabilities have the right to access the type of services and supports that they believe are most appropriate to meet their needs.
9. People with disabilities who reside in rural and regional areas have a right, as far as is reasonable to expect, to have access to similar services provided to people with disabilities who reside in the metropolitan area.
10. People with disabilities have a right to an environment free from neglect, abuse, intimidation and exploitation.

