

Inclusive Bathroom Design Considerations

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Design Considerations for Inclusive Bathrooms in Child Care Settings

The design guide builds on the *Furnishings & Equipment Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Facilities* (2003) that accompanies the BC Child Care Licensing Regulation ([Child Care Licensing Regulation, 2007](#)). This resource is not regulation, it is intended to guide best practice and promote inclusive bathroom design. The guide will include questions and considerations when building, renovating, or furnishing bathroom spaces intended primarily for use by children of various ages and stages.

The design guide is separated into categories closely reflecting the requirements for 'Washroom Equipment' outlined in the *Furnishings & Equipment Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Facilities* (2003, p. 10).

The basic principles of inclusive bathroom design for child care settings are:

- **Considerate of size-specific needs** – A bathroom should have inclusive furnishings accommodating different sized users¹, particularly the size-specific needs of children.
- **Adaptable** – As individual needs vary greatly, the bathroom space should be readily adaptable for people, including small children, with support needs.
- **Considerate of sensory sensitivities** – Bathroom infrastructure and equipment choices should be considerate of sensory sensitivities, whether auditory, visual, olfactory, or otherwise.
- **Simple and easy to use** – The design of the bathroom and the available adaptive equipment are easy to understand and use.

¹ Although offering both child-size and regular-size toilets and furnishings may be beneficial, other design considerations and adaptive equipment can be as effective and used as cost-effective alternatives in child care settings.

INCLUSIVE BATHROOM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

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Infrastructure	
Lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the lights adequate for illuminating the bathroom? • Is it possible to dim the lights, replace the bulb or turn only some of the lights on to accommodate people with sensory sensitivities? • Is the height of the light switch accessible to smaller children and people in wheelchairs? Consider an extension piece for ease of access. • If there is a lot of natural light, are window coverings available?
Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is a fan in the bathroom, can it easily be turned off to accommodate people with sensory sensitivities? • Are the lights and fan controlled by the same switch, or can one be used but the other left off? It is preferable if the light and the fan are not integrated.
Physical Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there enough space for people to comfortably use the bathroom, both alone and with help from an adult? • Is there enough space around the toilet to transfer from a wheelchair or to have another person help? Consider the turning radius of a wheelchair. • Is the bathroom large enough to accommodate additional equipment stored? (For example, changing table, lifts, cabinet, etc.) • If the bathroom has stalls, is there a clear opening with adequate space to comfortably use the bathroom, both alone and with help from an adult? If the stalls have doors, do they swing outward and is there enough space so the door can fully swing open? Consider the width of a wheelchair.

INCLUSIVE BATHROOM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Infrastructure (continued)	
Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there enough visual contrast between the walls, floor and furnishings? Effective colour contrast between surfaces, such as bright solid colours, can make the bathroom easier to understand and navigate. • Consider incorporating a horizon line around the toilet to help people orient and balance themselves if dizzy. A horizon line can be decorative tile running horizontally on the wall. • Can the walls support grab bars, lifts, shelves, etc.? Consider reinforcing the walls to support bathroom fittings such as vertical and horizontal grab bars.
Floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the flooring safe? (For example, non-slip, non-glare, easy to clean, etc.) • Are there any obstacles, furnishings, or equipment creating potential trip and fall hazards? Avoid loose carpets or bathmats to improve safety and to facilitate wheelchair use.
Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the bathroom door easy to use? Consider the weight and resistance of hydraulic or automatic doors. • Is the door handle accessible for differing abilities and easy to use? Consider using a lever handle or a push plate/door pull, rather than using knob handles or thumb-latch handles. • Does the bathroom door create any barriers for entry? If the door swings inward, does it open against the wall to not obstruct access to the toilet, sink, lift, etc.? Doors that swing outwards and against a wall promote ease of entry.
Furnishings	
Toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the toilet height appropriate for the intended user? For smaller toilet learners, toddlers, and other young children, consider offering child-sized toilets where possible. • If child-sized toilets are not possible or appropriate, are there sufficient alternative adaptive equipment available to adapt the toilet height? (For example, a toilet step stool) • Is a toilet seat adapter provided to offer a more secure place for a child to sit? If so, is it securely attached to the toilet to prevent slipping? • Is the person using the toilet able to choose when to flush or is it an automatic/sensor driven mechanism? • How loud is the sound of the toilet flushing? Can you adjust the water flow? Is there the option of a quieter toilet model?

INCLUSIVE BATHROOM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Furnishings (continued)	
Adapted Toileting Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the equipment adequately spaced from the toilet? Is the equipment at an appropriate height? It is recommended that railings and grab bars are within arm’s reach when seated on the toilet. • Does the equipment interfere with the placement of other bathroom items? (For example, by installing a grab bar, is access to the toilet paper or flusher blocked?) • Can the grab bars and railings be adjusted or swung away if needed to create more room? Ambulatory grab bars that are rear wall mounted can be easily pulled down for security and transfers and pushed back up when extra space is needed. This is particularly helpful for non-corner mounted toilets.
Change Table or Change Mats as Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the change table be easily accessed by children and adults? Can the height of the change table be adjusted? Can older children get onto the change table/mat by themselves to prevent lifting injuries? • If the change table is not easily accessed, is there a lift available to help people onto the table/mat? • Are changing supplies readily within reach? (For example, diapers, scent-free wipes, change of clothes, etc.) • Are there any privacy concerns regarding the change table/mat? Is there a wall divider or curtain available to improve privacy? • Is the space clean and comfortable? Avoid changing people directly on the floor, the use of a change mat is recommended.
Sinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the sinks an adequate height and wall depth for children of various ages and abilities to use? Consider wall-mounted sinks with no cabinet underneath. • Is the faucet easy to use and understand? • Does the faucet provide an opportunity to learn about mixing warm and cold water?
Mirrors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the mirrors installed at an appropriate height for hand washing? Consider an angled mirror or a long mirror to allow smaller children and people in wheelchairs to see themselves.
Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has bathroom storage been considered? (For example, storage space for change of clothes, toileting supplies, wet bags, etc.) • Are lockable cupboards or storage available for other bathroom products and supplies? (For example, toilet brush, plunger, cleaning supplies, etc.)

INCLUSIVE BATHROOM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Equipment ²	
Toilet Paper Dispenser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there one toilet paper dispenser available per toilet? • Is the toilet paper dispenser within reach? Consider the needs of smaller children or people with limited mobility. • Is the toilet paper easy to access from the dispenser? (For example, easy to pull, easy to tear) • Could a familiar type of toilet paper dispenser be used to help with consistency between home and child care?
Potty Chairs for Toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the potty chair easy to clean? • Is the potty chair comfortable and easy for the child to use?
Sturdy Step Stools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a step stool provided to facilitate access to the toilet, change table and sink? • Is the step stool sturdy and does it have a wide enough platform for safety and security? • Is the step stool an adequate height for appropriate and comfortable positioning? Can the height be adjusted to accommodate children of different sizes? • Does the step stool have railings or grab bars to promote balance?
Container for Soiled Diapers as Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the container within reach from the change table? • Is the container sealed to prevent children accessing it? Does it have a lid?
Liquid Soap Dispenser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is at least one soap dispenser available per sink? • Are the soap dispensers accessible? With both hands, if necessary? Wall-mounted dispensers are often too deep for all children to safely reach. • Does the soap have a strong scent that could overwhelm a person with smell sensitivities or sensory challenges? Products should be scent-free. • Antibacterial soap is not necessary or encouraged.

² Equipment and furnishing in the bathroom should be slip-resistant, securely installed, and anything that could possibly be leaned on must be sturdy. E.g. towel bar, grab bars, step stools, potty chairs, mirrors, etc.

INCLUSIVE BATHROOM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Equipment (continued)	
Paper Towel Dispenser, Individual Towels, or Electric Hand Dryers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the towels/dispenser easily accessed? • If a paper towel dispenser is used, are the paper towels easy to pull out or tear? • If electric hand dryers are the main method of hand drying, how loud are the hand dryers and is there the option of using paper towel if preferred? Consider people with hearing aids, sensory challenges or bathroom fears.
Garbage Receptacle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the garbage easy and sanitary to use? Avoid hand or foot-pedal operated lids to accommodate people of all ages and abilities. • Is the garbage cleaned regularly to avoid strong scents that could overwhelm people with smell sensitivities or sensory challenges? Are the products scent-free? (For example, scent-free garbage bags)
Privacy and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a lock on the door or an occupied sign? Is the lock easy to use and at an accessible height for independent access? For safety concerns, can the door be unlocked from the outside by adults? • If toilets are not in individual bathrooms or stalls, is a curtain surrounding the toilet available to allow some privacy if other children or staff member are also in the bathroom? • Is a monitor or call bell available so people can call for assistance in case of an emergency? Consider an emergency call system that rings/signals the need for staff assistance in the office or staff room.
Educational Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there suggested resources for bathroom use posted on the walls? (For example, how to use the toilet or step-by-step hand washing graphics)