

## **Inclusion Project Community Belonging Guide**

### **TIPS FOR CREATING A WELCOMING PLACE**

**What is Belonging?:** Belonging goes beyond being physically present, though making sure everyone can use your space is an important first step! Belonging is active—people want to feel welcomed, accepted as they are, and supported to be whoever they want to be.

#### **I feel like I belong when:**

- I'm treated with respect and kindness, just like anyone else!
- People see **me**, not just my disability.
- People ask if I need help instead of just doing things for me.
- People speak clearly and give me time to process and respond.
- People listen to what I need and do their best to respond.
- People are flexible and open to new ideas and ways of doing things.

#### **I don't feel like I belong when:**

- People touch me or my mobility device without asking first, even if they're trying to help.
- People ask very personal questions about me or my disability.
- People are so nervous about making a mistake, they don't talk to me at all.
- People **speak very loudly** or extra...slowly...to me.
- People talk to my family members, staff, or friends instead of me.
- People assume that I can't do things and aren't willing to help me try.

**Why is belonging important?** Belonging is important for everyone, but especially for people with disabilities, who are more likely to feel isolated or lonely. Creating a place where people with different needs can belong isn't as hard as people think it might be—it just takes intention, planning, and a willingness to listen and adapt.

### **Belonging Checklist:**

#### **I feel welcomed when...**

- ✓ I can find information about accessibility on an organization's website so I can plan ahead.
- ✓ People with disabilities are included in leadership and planning.
- ✓ I can tell an organization has already planned for how to welcome people with disabilities.
- ✓ People are willing to work with me to figure things out—and they believe that we can!

## A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES

**COMMUNITIES:** Creating a space where everyone can belong is hard. It's okay to not know where to start! This guide will help you identify what your organization is doing well and what you can improve to create a space where people with and without disabilities feel like they belong.

	YES	NO
Can people with mobility devices get in the building?		
Is accessible equipment available?		
Do people with disabilities participate currently?		
Is there someone people can talk to about their access needs?		
Are you willing and able to identify ways for everyone to participate?		
Are staff comfortable welcoming people with disabilities?		
Are other participants comfortable with people with disabilities?		
Are you prepared to support group members to welcome someone with a disability?		
Are you willing to learn more about disabilities and their impacts on people?		
Are you committed to making a safe space for everyone, physically and emotionally?		
Does the group share responsibility for inclusion?		
Is everyone able to share thoughts and ideas?		
	YES	NO
Do people in the group have ownership over what the group does?		
Can everyone contribute to the group?		
Does the group model friendly, respectful interactions?		
Are you ready to provide direct, consistent feedback to support people?		
Are group members willing to act as a mentor to welcome a new member?		
Does the group value kindness, warmth, and connection?		
Does the group adapt to be more inclusive?		
Is the group willing to and interested in learning everyone's gifts and strengths?		

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