

How our teams at Holland Bloorview help build inclusive spaces

At Holland Bloorview, our teams are committed to building accessible spaces where everyone can thrive. In honour of [National AccessAbility week](#) from May 28-June 3, we spoke with four areas of our hospital who are dedicated to providing inclusive experiences and environments for our clients, families and staff each and every day.

Ronald McDonald Playroom



“The Ronald McDonald Playroom is a free, supervised, drop-in child care space for clients, siblings and families to access when visiting Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital for appointments. Children and youth aged 2.5 to 19 years can spend time in the various play areas while being supported by trained staff and volunteers who have extensive experience working with children and youth with a variety of abilities and diagnoses.

The playroom is open and spacious to allow for children and youth with diverse mobility needs to move around and explore with ease. The play areas encourage independence and exploration with low, open shelving and/or height adjustable tables offering multiple surface levels for play. The assortment of activities and materials in each play area cater to a wide range of interests and development, can be adapted to accommodate each child and youth's needs and offer play opportunities to stimulate each of the senses.

Staff and volunteers encourage participation by following the child's lead and offering suggestions to adapt activities based on their interests.

The uniqueness of every child is valued in the playroom, as we aim to create an inclusive environment that meets children and families where they are at by providing a dynamic space and service for children, youth and families to access and enjoy.”

- **Joanne Daiz, outpatient playroom administrator, early learning and development**

[Bloorview School Authority \(BSA\)](#)



“The BSA is dedicated to equity and inclusion. We partner with community schools as part of our Disability Awareness Program to create authentic interactions between our students and children from the community.

After learning about the concepts of disability, accessibility and ableism, a team of grade 6 girls from Havergal College (HC) turned their compassion and empathy into action. They collaborated with students from BSA to create accessible computer-controlled games. After their initial visit to BSA, the girls worked with their STEM teacher to design and build four prototypes for accessible games. They took into consideration each child's range of motion, grip strength, gross and fine motor skills, sensory and communication needs. Bloorview students tested the prototypes and gave feedback to the "engineers" from HC who began to troubleshoot and modify their prototypes to make them barrier free.

The HC students returned to their school to modify their games. During their last visit to BSA, the two groups of students enjoyed their time playing together, scoring points and having fun.

The students of Bloorview School demonstrated strong self-advocacy skills. They felt heard and knew that they mattered. The students of Havergal College demonstrated strong leadership skills. They felt capable of being agents of change.

In her reflection, one student from HC expressed:

'They are people just like us, but they might need to climb a higher mountain to achieve their goals, and they will.'

- **Rose Monacelli and Bayan Yammout, teachers and project coordinators, Bloorview School Authority**

Music therapy and arts



“Music is an essential human expression. Every child has a right to access music. History has provided a multitude of musical instruments resulting in a variety of different tones, timbres and frequencies for self-expression. Though standardization of instruments has blocked access for some, the practice of adapted music instrument development has persisted - especially with accessibility opportunities provided by the development of electronics.

For the clients we serve here at Holland Bloorview, we have embraced the practice of adapted instrument access and have been developing, modifying and adapting instruments to promote active participation through for all. Of note, we have a long-term collaboration with the [PRISM Lab](#) team to develop award-winning software such as the Virtual Music Instrument (VMI), and are currently developing PRISM Beats, a switch-accessible DJ app. Both products ensure our clients have the opportunity to make music in a meaningful and satisfying way. Developing adapted music technology that embraces a client’s best movements is critical. Both VMI and PRISM Beats are non-invasive and adapted to each individual - whether it is a finger movement, a shrug of a shoulder, or even the blink of an eye. [See our website](#) for more information or [learn more about PRISM Beats](#) (see item 9).”

- **Andrea Lamont, music therapist, music and the arts**

Building services and facilities management



“Your building services team, also known as facilities management, is always seeking ways to further enhance our already highly-accessible facility. [Recently we went through a very comprehensive audit](#) by the [Rick Hansen Foundation](#). Although we scored very well, we needed a couple of immediate changes to meet the gold standard certification, which we completed. Holland Bloorview is the first health care facility in Canada to achieve this standard of accessibility.

Outside of this exciting achievement, we work to ensure all spaces across the hospital are as accessible as possible. This includes:

- Installing of automatic door openers (ADOs), throughout the building as we receive requests. Your space team sets aside funds each year in anticipation that we will have requests.
- Adding remote technology to some ADOs, for those individuals that need it.
- Updating the cafeteria (microwave/water station) to be more accessible, having a lower counter area added and a safer and more accessible water source.

- Adding ADOs to our 5th floor terrace. This year we added ADOs to both sets of doors leading to the 5th floor terrace so that all can enjoy this inviting space during the summer months.

Overall, our team is always open to suggestions on how we can improve or add more accessibility to our facility.”

- **Ian Rogers, senior director, facility management, building services**