



## DPI Guide on CRPD Article 24 - Education

*Enjoyment of the right to education plays a particularly important role in the realization of other human rights by people with disabilities*

This guide examines the scope of the right to education and how it is addressed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The right to education was first articulated in detail in a core UN human rights treaty in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Article 13 of ICESCR states that *everyone* has the right to education, which should:

- Be directed to the full development of the human personality and sense of dignity
- Strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society
- Promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups
- Further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace

Although much attention is often given to the education of children in primary and secondary school settings, *all people – including people with disabilities – are entitled to enjoy lifelong learning opportunities.*

All people with disabilities have the right to develop to their fullest potential, and education offers an essential means of facilitating this development. Furthermore, *education provides a means of acquiring knowledge and skills that people with disabilities can use in exercising a whole range of other human rights*, such as the right to political participation, the right to work, the right to live independently and contribute to the community, the right to participate in cultural life, and the right to found and raise a family. Education can also facilitate human rights awareness, so that people with disabilities understand what their rights are and how to effectively claim them.

Unfortunately, people with disabilities often face barriers to their full realization of the right to education.

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For example:

- **Physical barriers** may prevent people with disabilities from accessing educational facilities. The lack of accessible transportation may also prevent people with disabilities from traveling to and from educational facilities.
- **Information barriers** may leave people with disabilities without the use of essential educational materials. Lack of information about education services may also prevent people with disabilities from making informed choices about educational or vocational opportunities.
- **Communication barriers** in educational settings may prevent people with disabilities from accessing information and/or participating fully in the learning experience. Such barriers may also prevent students with disabilities from interacting fully with their non-disabled peers.
- **Attitudes** can lead to assumptions about the capabilities of people with disabilities and also whether it is a “good investment” to commit resources to the education of people with disabilities. This can lead to people with disabilities receiving sub-standard education, or even being denied access to education altogether – a problem that girls and women with disabilities especially encounter.

Article 24 of the CRPD *recognizes the importance of the right to education for people with disabilities, and in particular the right of people with disabilities to an “inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning.”* Although it does not expressly prohibit the use of special or segregated education, the emphasis of Article 24 is very much on the right of people with disabilities to obtain quality inclusive education within the *general education system*. Article 24 prohibits exclusion of people with disabilities from the general education system at all levels (including in adult education and vocational training), and requires the provision of supports, individualized support measures, and reasonable accommodation where needed to facilitate the effective education of people with disabilities. Article 24 also notes the need to ensure that people with disabilities (especially those who are blind, deaf or deafblind) are able to learn relevant life and social development skills, such as learning Braille, alternative script, orientation and mobility skills, and sign language. It also notes the need to promote the linguistic identity of the deaf community.

In addition to elaborating the human rights of people with disabilities with regard to the right to education, *Article 24 also addresses some important implementation measures*. Specifically, Article 24 obligates States Parties to take measures to *employ teachers with disabilities* and teachers qualified in, for example, sign language and Braille. Article 24 also requires the *training of professionals and staff at all levels of education* so that they are aware of the specific education needs of people with disabilities and how best to support them.