

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Policy

Background

The George Hull Centre is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

AODA includes is comprised of five Integrated Accessibility Standards: Customer Service, Information and Communication, Employment, Transportation (which does not apply to The George Hull Centre), and the Design of Public Spaces. Compliance dates for each standard are being phased in, with full compliance required by 2021. The Centre will review each Accessibility Standard at least every five years and will file annual accessibility reports with the Ministry as required.

Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to ensure complete accessibility for people with disabilities. For the purposes of this policy, 'disabilities' is defined according to AODA as follows.

Definition of Disability: The definition of disability under AODA is the same as the definition of disability in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. This is the definition of disability that applies to the customer service standard.

In this Act, "Disability means:

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Customer Service Standard

1. The George Hull Centre is committed to the goal of complete accessibility, and to the core principles of independence, dignity and respect, integration, and equality of opportunity.
2. The Centre permits the use of assistive devices.

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3. The Centre permits the use of service animals (unless prohibited by law) and support persons. No fees are charged for support persons.
4. The Centre will provide notice of temporary disruption to services. When appropriate, such notice will be posted on the premises, and include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and what alternative services may be available during the disruption.
5. The Centre's staff will be trained on communication strategies with people with disabilities that take into account their disabilities, and preserve the core principles of independence, dignity and respect, integration, and equality of opportunity.
6. The Centre will provide training to all staff, students and volunteers to foster positive interaction with people with disabilities. Training will include a review of the purpose and requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the Centre's policies and practices, operation of any assistive devices provided by the Centre, communication, interactions with support animals and support persons, and what to do if a person with disabilities is having difficulty accessing the Centre's services. A record of all training including date it was provided and to whom is kept in the Human Resources department.

Information and Communication Standard

1. The George Hull Centre is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities.
2. The Centre will consult with people with disabilities to understand their information and communication needs and determine how the Centre can better meet them.
3. The Centre will work toward meeting Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) for its entire website by 2021. As of January 2014, all new web content was WCAG 2.0 compliant.
4. The Centre will provide information in accessible formats and with communications supports as quickly as possible and at no additional cost when a person with a disability asks for them, including but not limited to:
 - Centre policies, practices and procedures;
 - publicly available emergency information.
5. The Centre will provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.
6. The Centre has established procedures for receiving feedback regarding customer service for people with disabilities. Feedback can be received in many forms including verbally, by e-mail, in writing, through a client satisfaction questionnaire or through our complaints procedure.

Employment Standard

1. The George Hull Centre is committed to accommodating the needs of employees with disabilities, both permanent and temporary.
2. The Centre will make every effort to accommodate the needs of candidates with disabilities during the employment recruitment, assessment and selection process.
3. The Centre is committed to ensuring that its offices are barrier-free and accessible to employees with disabilities.
4. The Centre will work with employees with disabilities to develop and document individualized accommodation plans as needed.
5. The Centre will develop individualized emergency response plans for employees with disabilities to ensure they are able to safely evacuate the building during an emergency.
6. The Centre will take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when assessing performance, managing career development and advancement, and reassignment.

Design of Public Spaces Standard

1. The George Hull Centre is committed to accommodating the needs of clients and visitors who use assistive devices, such as wheelchairs and walkers, in the reception area/waiting room.
2. The waiting room will maintain accessible seating areas which can easily accommodate visitors and clients with assistive devices.
3. The reception desk has both a high counter and a low counter, so that clients and visitors in wheelchairs can interact face-to-face with the receptionist.

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