



TITLE: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

MANUAL: Accessibility

SECTION: n/a

APPROVED BY: Senior Leadership Team

COMMITMENT STATEMENT:

The North Shore Health Network (NSHN) is committed to providing care and services to our patients, residents and clients and families in a way that respects dignity and independence and considers different needs and abilities. Identifying and removing barriers is an important element of excellent customer service, and ensures that the organization meets the accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

NSHN will:

- continually improve access to NSHN facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services
- encourage the participation of individuals with disabilities in the development of the plan
- ensure policies and practices are consistent with the principles of accessibility and incorporate accessibility design, criteria or features into procurement and acquisition practices, where possible
- promote a culture where all people are treated in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence
- meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility
- provide information related to this plan in accessible formats upon request

POLICY:

North Shore Health Network (NSHN) recognizes our corporate and ethical obligations outlined within *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR). The purpose of the Act is to *achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025*. This policy applies to all the NSHN personnel who interact with the public, whether they do so as employees, volunteers, agents or otherwise.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

In keeping with the principles set out in the AODA, the NSHN is committed to providing access to those requiring accessibility, in a respectful manner that focuses on the unique needs of each individual's disability.

Consequently, reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that policies, procedures, protocols, and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties adhere to the following guiding principles as set out in Ontario Regulation 429/07:

- a) The goods or services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of individuals with disabilities.

- b) The provision of goods or services to individuals with disabilities and others will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable an individual with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- c) Individuals with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

INFORMATION:

i. Accommodation

- a. Employees with a disability who require accommodations will have an individualized plan developed with them for their specific needs to be developed by the Occupational Health Nurse (OCN). (IASR 28)

ii. Assistive Devices

- a. All individuals with a disability will be allowed the use of their assistive devices as required for their specific needs.
- b. The importance of the use of assistive devices is recognized for individuals with disabilities and the positive contribution the devices may have on mobility and access. Employees will be trained in the use of devices (for example – walkers and wheelchairs). In addition, the organization realizes that individuals with disabilities may prefer to use their own assistive devices while accessing services and are encouraged to do so.

iii. Communication

- a. Any information that is requested to be in an alternate format will be provided upon request and at no additional cost. (IASR 12)
- b. When communicating with an individual with a disability, personnel will do so in a manner that takes into account the disability and will make reasonable efforts to ensure that information is transferred and understood. A simple “can I help you” will form the basis of the approach. Employees are encouraged to look for signs of comprehension or misunderstanding during the exchange of information, providing clarity in a respectful manner.
- c. Upon request an employee with a disability will be provided information in an accessible format or with an appropriate communication support. (IASR 26)

iv. Feedback

- a. Upon request an appropriate alternate feedback format will be arranged to allow comments or suggestions to be submitted to accommodate each individual’s disability. (IASR 11)
- b. Feedback concerning our services is welcomed, including comments on the effectiveness of our customer service processes for individuals with disabilities.
- c. Feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to individuals with disabilities can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by utilizing email.

- d. Feedback and complaints will be directed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or his/her alternate. The CEO or alternate will be responsible for initiating a response in a timely manner.

v. Policies

- a. All employees will be provided with on-going updates of policies.

vi. Procurement

- a. Consideration will be given to the acquisition of all goods and services for the facility where it is deemed viable to do so. (IASR 5)

vii. Recruitment

- a. The availability of accessibility accommodations will be noted on all recruitment and hiring processes. (IASR 22-24)

viii. Return to Work

- a. All employees with a disability will be provided with a documented Return to Work plan to be developed by the OCN. (IASR 29)

ix. Safety

- a. Upon request all individuals will be provided with information in an appropriate alternate format to accommodate each individual's disability.
- b. Upon request emergency or safety plans / procedures will be provided to the public in an appropriate alternate format. (IASR 13)

x. Service Animal

- a. Individuals with a disability will be allowed the use of a service animal as an assistive device as required for their specific needs.
- b. Service animals are permitted in non-patient/resident care areas. Patient care areas are not open to this practice, for infection control reasons. Employees recognize that service animals are not pets and will be trained how to treat these animals accordingly.
- c. In the patient/resident care areas, individuals requiring alternate assistance, due the exclusion of service animals, will be provided with alternate guidance on an as-required basis by personnel, while remaining sensitive to the needs of the individual person's disabilities.

xi. Support Person

- a. All individuals with a disability will be permitted the use of a support person to assist them with their specific needs.
- b. An individual with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be permitted to enter the premises with his or her support person. At no time will an individual with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be reasonably prevented from having access to his or her support person while under care.

Please Note: Some procedural situations may require the supporting individual to temporarily be excluded.

xii. Temporary Disruption

- a. A notice of temporary disruptions will be publically displayed.

- b. If there is a temporary disruption in the facilities or services in whole or in part that are essential to the access to services of individuals with disabilities, a notice of temporary disruption will be publically displayed.
- c. The notice of the disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services (if any) that are available.
- d. Notice may be given by posting the information in a written format, posting the information on the website and/or by such other method as is reasonable to the particular circumstance.

xiii. Website

- a. The website will conform to the *World Wide Web Consortium Content Accessibility Guidelines* (WCAG). (IASR 14)

TRAINING:

i. Customer Service

- a. On-going training will be provided as required by the Customer Service Standards and the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations* (IASR).

ii. Records

- a. A list of attendance records will be compiled and kept for all training. (IASR 36)

iii. Requirements

- a. Training will be provided as required by the IASR and the Human Rights Code. (IASR 7)

iv. Safety

- a. An individualized emergency plan for each employee with a disability will be developed by the OCN. (IASR 27)

v. Training

- a. Appropriate levels of training to all employees and agents who deal with the public (or other third parties) as well as those employees who are involved in the development and approvals of policies, practices, protocols and procedures that deal with the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties;
- b. Records of training will be kept in the Human Resources Department.
Training will include the following topics:
 - The purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*;
 - The requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*;
 - How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
 - How to interact with individuals with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
 - How to use the assistive devices available;
 - What to do if an individual with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the services;
 - Policies, practices, protocols and procedures relating to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties.

- c. Training of employees will be provided on an ongoing basis to address changes made to the applicable policies or processes that affect individuals with disabilities. (IASR 25)

TRANSPORATION:

- i. **Availability**
 - a. Individuals with a disability will not be restricted to the number of requests submitted for transportation services. (IASR 72)
- ii. **Bookings**
 - a. Individuals with a disability will be permitted to request transportation services. (IASR 71)
- iii. **Support Person**
 - a. Individuals with a disability will be permitted to be accompanied by a support person who is not to be charged any additional fees. (IASR 38)

AVAILABILITY OF THE ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE DOCUMENTS:

NSHN will provide a posted notice stating that copies of corporate policies/procedures under the AOD Act are available to the public. Upon request, copies of related documents will be provided in an appropriate format. This information will be provided in a manner that facilitates communication with respect to the individual's disability.

REFERENCES:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). 2005.
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations, Ontario Regulation.
- Manitoulin Health Centre. January 2010. *Policy & Procedure: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.*
- Ministry of Community and Social Services. April 2009. *Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.* Ontario Regulation 429/07.