



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

YMCA of Niagara Policies and
Procedures March 2020

Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) is a law that has specific regulations for accessibility relating to goods, services, facilities, buildings, accommodation, employment, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

Disability, as defined by AODA Section 2 and Ontario Human Rights Code is:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and includes diabetes, epilepsy, brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, 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 wheel chair or other remedial device.
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- A learning disability or dysfunction in understanding, symbols or spoken language
- A mental disorder or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under insurance based on Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.
- The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go.

All organizations that provide goods and services and have one or more employees are required to have Customer Service policies and practices in place by January 1, 2012.

Statement of Commitment

The YMCA is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's accessibility laws in the following areas.

Principles

All YMCA Policies and Practices will embody, and all Programs and services will be delivered to all members or participants demonstrating the four principles of:

- Dignity
- Independence
- Integration or alternate measures to meet the needs of people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other members or participants.
- Equal opportunity to have the same chances, options, benefits and results as others.

Guidelines

- Where the standard sets different rules than other laws, the YMCA will comply with both.
- If two laws conflict with one another, the YMCA will follow the law that provides the higher level of accessibility.
- The YMCA does not have the ability to provide one to one or specialized supports in every situation.
- The YMCA will review requests for accommodation on an individual, case by case basis.
- Information about a disability will be treated with privacy and confidentially.

Practices

i. Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. Staff/volunteers will be trained on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities. Communication is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. Depending on the situation and the person's needs, The YMCA will offer alternatives ways to make communications more accessible. Finding a suitable communication method may require consideration of the situation or circumstances of the provider and of the person with a disability.

These can include:

- Making the original communication more accessible
 - When requested we will provide alternate formats of print documents such as large print for people who have low vision; audio format such as cassettes or digital audio format; and/or easy-read, simplified summaries of materials for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities.
- Changing the usual method of communication
 - Offering phone service rather than requiring in person service, or email rather than postal notices.
 - Equipping staff/volunteers with a notepad and pen or a picture board.
 - Providing visuals with discussions.
 - When we create our new YMCA website, we will be incorporating content that conforms with the WWW Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level A and eventually increasing to Level AA.
- Using assistive devices or services such as:
 - Real-time captioning services (on-screen typing of what speakers are saying), sign language interpreters or deaf-blind interveners upon request.

In the case of individuals who have limited options of communication or where ongoing services are required, such as an individual who will be receiving weekly services for an extended period of time, the YMCA will assess

the situation and consider all options and resources available to them.

ii. Telephone services

Staff/volunteers will be trained on how to communicate with members and participants over the telephone.

We will offer to communicate with members and participants by email or face to face if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

iii. Assistive devices

Members and participants will be allowed to use their personal assistive devices. Personal assistive devices are usually devices that people bring with them, such as a walker or a personal oxygen tank.

Staff/volunteers will be trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by guests/customers with disabilities.

Staff/volunteers will know how to use the following assistive devices available on our premises:

- Wheelchairs
- Accessible seating locations
- Automatic doors
- Accessible parking spaces

iv. Service animals

People with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal will be welcomed at all of our locations that are open to the public.

Staff/volunteers will be properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

v. Support persons

People with disabilities who require specialized supports have the option to secure the services of an independent support person to assist them in their participation at the YMCA. Individuals who are accompanied by a support person will be welcomed at all of our locations that are open to the public.

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter any YMCA of Niagara premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

Fees will not be charged for support persons for admission to any YMCA of Niagara premises. The support person will be required to sign into the program/facility according to YMCA policies.

Staff/volunteers will be properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person.

vi. Notice of service disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services (i.e. elevators, accessible washrooms,) usually used by people with disabilities notices will be posted.

This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and if available a description of alternative facilities or services.

Notices for planned disruptions will be posted on the web page 2 weeks in advance whenever possible.

Notices for unexpected disruptions will be posted to social media, placed on the web page, digital displays/bulletin boards and on service counters within the premises as soon as possible.

vii. Billing

We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all our members. For this reason, invoices will be provided in hard copy, and online upon request.

We will answer any questions members may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone or via email.

viii. Training

We are committed to training staff and volunteers in Ontario's accessibility laws and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

We will train our employees and volunteers on accessibility as it relates to their specific roles. Training covers:

- Review of the purposes of the AODA and requirements of the customer service standard.
- Instruction on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instruction on how to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or a support person.
- Instruction on how to use equipment or devices available at YMCA of Niagara sites, that may help people with disabilities access services, such as elevators or lifts, and
- Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing services.

When policies, practices or procedures on the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities change, updated training will be provided to all staff/volunteers.

Initial training will be provided at time of orientation, no less than three months (probation period) after staff/volunteers commence their duties.

ix. Feedback process

Members and participants may provide feedback regarding the way we provide services to those with disabilities:

- In person, by speaking or communicating through a support person
- By phone, using speech, TTY or speech-to-speech relay service
- In writing, using pen-and-paper notes or email

Feedback processes will be made accessible when asked.
All feedback will be directed to the Site Supervisor or Centre Manager.

Members or participants can expect to hear back in within 2 to 3 business days. Responses will be provided using communication methods that take customers' disabilities into account.

x. *Employment*

We will notify employees, potential hires and the public that accommodations can be made during recruitment and hiring. The YMCA will note on job postings that accommodations are available and will consult with those who are selected for an interview to meet their needs in a suitable way.

We will notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We will put in place a process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.

The YMCA will ensure all employees with disabilities who require an individual emergency response information plan have a customized and individualized one developed.

Our return to work following absence due to disability, performance management, career development and redeployment processes will take into account the accessibility needs of all employees.

Our Accommodation Policy for all employees will meet and speak to AODA standards.

xi. *Responsibility*

Information regarding this policy and its practices will be posted on the web page to let members and participants know that the documents are available upon request.

When a person with a disability asks for a document in a different format, we will discuss what options they have available to them and then agree on the format to provide.

Questions regarding this policy should be referred to the Site Supervisor or Centre Manager.

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