

## ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

<b>Effective Date:</b>	December 2011	<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	July 2021
<b>Approved by:</b>	Cheryl McClellan, Chief Operations Officer		

### COMMITMENT:

The Arthritis Society is committed to creating a culture of values and ethical behavior and strives to provide information and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Building on the Arthritis Society’s mission to improve the quality of life for Canadians affected by arthritis, the organization is committed to, and takes pride in, ensuring that all individuals with disabilities receive accessible services with the same quality and timeliness as others do.

This policy satisfies the requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and will be updated accordingly, in line with any future legislative changes.

### SCOPE:

This policy applies to:

- a. All activity (employment, provision of services, etc.) which occurs on the premises, operated by the Arthritis Society, in an effort to provide equal opportunities, greater contributions and increased involvement of people with accessible needs.
- b. Employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third-parties that act on behalf of the Arthritis Society, including when the services occur off the premises, such as program delivery services, events, training courses/seminars and off-site therapy/rehabilitation sessions.
- c. All persons who participate in the development of the Arthritis Society’s policies, practices and procedures.

### POLICY:

#### Accessibility Standards for Employees with Accessible Needs

The Arthritis Society is proud to be an equal opportunities employer that values diversity and welcomes applicants from all cultures, religions, abilities, and sexual and gender identities, including all other grounds as specified in each provincial/territorial Human Rights Code.

Throughout the recruitment process, the Arthritis Society will notify all candidates about the organization’s commitment to facilitating any necessary special arrangements and/or accommodations for any candidates with accessible needs.

The Arthritis Society will make every reasonable effort to ensure employees understand the accessibility supports which are in place, through initial and ongoing training, as well as by posting the information in a common area of the organization’s shared drive. Accessible formats will be provided to any employee upon request.

It is the employee's responsibility to notify the Arthritis Society of any accessibility needs. In doing so, HR, along with the employee and their manager, will partner to create a documented accommodation plan which will make every reasonable effort to arrange for the provision of reasonable accommodation in a manner that takes the employee's needs into account.

In many cases, accommodation plans that enable an employee to fulfill their responsibilities can easily be addressed. There are however two (2) situations whereby the organization is not required to make an accommodation:

1. When the person cannot perform the essential duties of the position, even with accommodations.
2. The accommodation required would create what is known as "undue hardship" for the Arthritis Society.

As an organization that is committed to supporting the successful contributions of individuals with accessible needs, managers will consider the accessibility needs of their employees with disabilities as well as their individual accommodation plans during the performance management process and when providing career development and advancement.

A return-to-work process is in place to support employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations to return to work. For those returning from short-term disability (STD) leave and/or long-term disability (LTD) leave, this process will be handled by the disability carrier, working in close collaboration with the employee, HR and all other relevant/required Arthritis Society and medical parties. For more information in relation to this approach, please refer to our **Short-Term and Long-Term Disability** policy. For those returning to work outside of STD and/or LTD, this process will be handled through close collaboration between the employee, HR and the guidance provided by the treating medical professional.

## Training

Training will be provided to employees, volunteers and third-party providers when they join or perform work on behalf of the Arthritis Society and will be required to be completed within their first two (2) weeks of employment. Training modules will be categorized as follows:

1. Workers (those who have no supervisory responsibilities)
2. Supervisors (those who have employees reporting to them)

Training will be mandatory for all employees within the province of Ontario, and optional for all other employees nationally. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

By the end of the training, participants will:

- Be briefed on and knowledgeable of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and all requirements under the accessibility standards.
- Understand the Arthritis Society's accessibility policy and accessibility plan.
- Know the minimal requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

- Be aware of how to interact and communicate appropriately and effectively with people with various types of accessible needs.
- Understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality around an individual's health information/diagnosis and respect the dignity of the person requesting accommodation.
- Be aware of how to appropriately and effectively interact with people with accessible needs who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- Be aware of how to use available assistive devices at the Arthritis Society (this will vary by location).
- Know what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Arthritis Society's services, and know how to facilitate accommodations.
- Be knowledgeable of the Arthritis Society's feedback process and how to help individuals provide the organization with feedback on our accessibility.

The Arthritis Society will keep a record of training that includes the names and dates of employees' training.

### **Delivery of Services to Persons with Disabilities**

The Arthritis Society will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- Ensuring that all patients and donors receive the same service, value and quality.
- Allowing patients and donors with accessible needs to operate in their own way at their own pace when accessing our services, in line with health and safety requirements.
- Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that any persons with accessible needs have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner.
- Considering individual needs when providing services.
- Communicating in a manner that considers the individual's accessible needs.

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be welcome to have that person accompany them on our premises. Fees will not be charged for support persons.

### **Assistive Devices**

Any person, be it an employee, volunteer, patient or donor, with accessible needs will be permitted to use their personal assistive device(s) while accessing our services. In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern, or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure access of our services.

### **Service Animals**

We welcome any individuals with accessible needs and their service animals. Service animals are welcome in all public areas on our premises. In cases where a service animal poses a health and safety concern, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of our services.

### **Notice of Temporary Disruption**

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of the Arthritis Society. In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for those with accessible needs, the Arthritis Society will promptly notify all necessary persons. The clearly posted notice will include information about what services are unavailable, the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time and a description of alternative facilities or services where available. The notice will be placed at the front door of the Arthritis Society's premises, as a message on our voicemail and on the Arthritis Society's website.

### Feedback process

It is the Arthritis Society's ultimate goal that all employees, volunteers, patients and donors receive information and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with accessible needs. Any person who wishes to provide feedback on the manner in which the Arthritis Society provides services to individuals with accessible needs can complete and return a feedback form in-person (to 1700 - 393 University Avenue, Toronto, ON M5G 1E6), verbally via telephone (to 416-979-7228) or via email to [accessibility@arthritis.ca](mailto:accessibility@arthritis.ca).

All feedback will be directed to HR and addressed accordingly. Individuals can expect to receive a response within five (5) business days.

### Availability & Accessible Formats of Documentation

Arthritis Society materials, including marketing, educational and those specifically related to accessibility standards, will be made available in various accessible formats, in a timely manner, upon request. Documents will be formatted in such a way that considers the person's accessible needs. There will be no additional charges for accessible formats compared to other formats.

The following list of format options are available upon request:

- a. Hard copy paper documents.
- b. Soft copy documents, available with the following options:
  - Optimized for screen readers.
  - Text in place of images.
  - Descriptions of images.
  - High contrast and color schemes.
  - Ability to enlarge text.
  - Line and letter spacing for maximum readability.
  - Other accessible formats including:
    - Video.
    - Documents read aloud, in person or over the phone.