

## ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

<b>Effective Date:</b>	December 2011	<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	May 2023
<b>Approved by:</b>	Cheryl McClellan, Chief Operations Officer		

We are committed to providing information and services in ways that respect the dignity and expressed needs of people with disabilities and will strive to ensure 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. It applies to:

- a. All activity (employment, provision of services, etc.) which occurs on our premises and/or relates to our work, in an effort to provide equal opportunities, contributions and 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 our behalf, 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 our policies, practices and procedures.

### Accessibility Standards for Employees with Accessible Needs

We are 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, we will notify all candidates about our commitment to facilitating any necessary special arrangements and/or accommodations for any candidates with accessible needs.

We 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 where it can be easily accessed and in accessible formats as requested to meet individual needs.

It is the employee's responsibility to notify us of any accessibility needs. In doing so, HR, along with the employee and their supervisor, 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.

We will make adjustments to ensure adequate support and accessibility based on needs (including hidden disabilities and learning disabilities). This could mean making adaptations to the workplace, acquiring specialized equipment, flexible working arrangements and additional support. There is no absolute definition of what is reasonable so we will consider whether an adjustment is effective, practical and affordable.

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 us.

Supervisors will consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities on their teams 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 organizational and medical parties. For more information in relation to this approach, please refer to our Disability Leave guidelines. 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 our behalf and will be required to be completed as soon as possible after they join our organization.

Training will be mandatory for all individuals within the province of Ontario, and optional for all others nationwide. 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 our 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 about 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 in our organization (this will vary by location).
- Know what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Arthritis Society Canada’s services, and know how to facilitate accommodations.
- Be knowledgeable of our feedback process and how to help individuals provide the organization with feedback on our accessibility.

We will keep a record of training that includes the names and dates of employees’ training.

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

We will make every reasonable effort to ensure that our 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 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.

## **Service Animals**

We welcome any individuals with accessible needs and their service animals. In rare cases where a service animal poses a health and safety concern, other reasonable measures will be used to enable access to our services.

## **Notice of Temporary Disruption**

Service disruptions may occur for reasons outside our control or knowledge. In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for those with accessible needs, we will promptly notify all necessary persons with as much notice as possible. 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 our premises' front door, as a message on our voicemail and on our website.

## **Feedback process**

Any person who wishes to provide feedback on the manner in which we provide 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

Our 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