

Section	Human Resources
No.	HR#11
Title	Accessibility to Care and Services
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Scope

This policy applies to all Windsor Family Health Team (WFHT) staff, students, volunteers and contractors. Ensuring an accessible workplace is a shared responsibility.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline practices and procedures in place at the WFHT to help identify and remove barriers that impede a person’s ability to access care and services.

Principles

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

- (a) Dignity – the WFHT provides service in a way that allows the patient with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
- (b) Independence – the WFHT recognizes and respects that a patient with a disability can do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk; without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- (c) Integration – The WFHT provides service in a way that allows the patient with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other patients, unless a different way is necessary to enable them to access available services.
- (d) Equal Opportunity – The WFHT provides service to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an equal opportunity to access the services as what is given to other patients. Communication is conducted in a manner that takes into account the patient’s disability.

Responsibility

The **Executive Director** (ED) is responsible to ensure that all WFHT employees are aware of this policy.

It is the responsibility of **all WFHT personnel** to participate at the time of hire and annually thereafter, in education on how to provide accessible patient service and how to interact with patients with different disabilities.

It is the responsibility of every staff member to be attentive to the concerns of patients, their support persons and visitors and to resolve concerns related to accessibility.

Procedure

The WFHT will ensure we are identifying and removing barriers to access for people with disabilities by:

- i. Encouraging people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices¹ to improve access to the WFHT's services.
- ii. Enabling people with disabilities to use our services by providing accessible facilities and offering assistive devices and measures², whenever possible.
- iii. Communicating with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability.
- iv. Welcoming people with disabilities to bring their guide dog or service animal³ with them to areas of the premises that are open to the public.
- v. Permitting people with disabilities who use a support person⁴ to accompany them and ensuring that a person with a disability has access to their support person while on our premises.
- vi. Providing AODA training to all employees, volunteers and students about key principles and accessibility strategies and tools.
- vii. Providing notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access our services are temporarily disrupted.
- viii. Establishing a process for people to provide feedback on how goods and services are delivered and explaining how the WFHT will respond to any feedback and what action will be taken. It is the responsibility of every staff member to be attentive to the concerns of patients, their families and visitors and to resolve concerns related to accessibility. There are a number of strategies that are available to patients/ families/staff and physicians to provide feedback regarding accessibility.
- ix. There are a number of accessibility standards the WFHT is required to meet.

¹ For the purpose of this policy, Personal Assistive Devices are personal support equipment used by persons with disabilities that enable them to carry out the activities of living and allow access to clinical services. Patient-owned equipment, such as power-mobility devices (power wheelchairs or scooters), personal oxygen tank or communication device are regarded as Personal Assistive Devices.

² Supports made available by providers to improve access to care for patients with disabilities. For example, wheelchairs, volunteers, real-time captioning services (on-screen typing of what speakers saying), sign language interpreters, or deaf-blind interveners. Other examples include Telephone Teletypes (TTY) to communicate with clients who have difficulty hearing, have speech impairments, or are deaf-blind (Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation).

³ Service animals are used by people with many different kinds of disabilities. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who are blind, alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety (Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation).

⁴ A "Support Person" accompanies a person with a disability, in order to help with verbal communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods and services. Medical needs may include, but are not limited to, monitoring an individual's health or providing medical support by being available in the event of a seizure. A Support Person may be a paid professional, a volunteer, family and or friend of the person with a disability (Guide to the Accessibility Standards Customer Service, Ontario Regulation).

Standards of Accessibility under the AODA

- i. Customer Service: Service delivery to the public; also includes business practices and employee training.
- ii. Transportation: This standard needs to reflect a variety of environmental, financial capabilities of users/providers and the differing modes of transportation including conventional and specialized modes.
- iii. Information and Communication: Information and communications provided to the consumer or end-user through print, telephone, electronic devices, and in person; also includes publications and software applications.
- iv. The Built Environment: Access to, from and within buildings and outdoor spaces; also includes counter heights, aisle and door widths, parking signage, pedestrian access routes and signal systems
- v. Employment: Hiring and retaining employees; also includes employment practices, policies and processes such as job advertisements and interviewing.

Customer Service

All aspects of customer service will be embedded in the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Disruptions in Service

The WFHT will provide patients with a reasonable amount of notice in the event of a planned service disruption that affects access to our facilities or services (i.e. accessible entrances, accessible parking spaces, etc.). In the event of an unexpected disruption of service, the WFHT will provide information as soon as possible. During the disruption, we will make every effort to provide alternative accommodations that takes into consideration the needs of the individual. We will take the following steps to communicate any disruptions to WFHT's facility or services:

- i. Issue is discovered and Management notified.
- ii. An estimate of the time it will take to fix the issue.
- iii. Notice of service disruption is posted at the site of the disruption.
- iv. In the case of a disruption that requires people to make alternate arrangements before coming to the clinic (disruption to accessible parking spaces, accessible entrances, etc.), notice will also be provided on our web site and social media.
- v. Updates to the notice of disruption will be made as needed and posted accordingly.
- vi. Once the issue is resolved and/or repair completed, the notice will be removed.

Notice of disruption will include the following information:

- i. The services that are disrupted or unavailable.
- ii. The reason for the disruption.
- iii. The expected duration of the disruption.
- iv. A description of alternatives to service, if available.
- v. A contact number for more information.

Service Animals

Service animals are used by people with many different kinds of disabilities and the WFHT acknowledges the vital relationship and dependency which exists between a person with disabilities and their service animal. The staff, physicians, students, volunteers and contractors of the WFHT will ensure all reasonable efforts are made to accommodate a person with disabilities and their service animal.

Note: The patient assumes full responsibility for the care and behaviour of the service animal at all times. The patient may delegate this responsibility to family or friends if necessary. At no time will clinic staff assume responsibility for meeting the service animal's needs for exercise, nutrition, elimination, et.

Refer to Service Animal policy.

Training

Training will be provided to:

- ✓ All employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties who act on behalf of the WFHT.
- ✓ Those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions

As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- ✓ A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- ✓ A review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- ✓ Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- ✓ Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a service animal;
 - require the use of a support person.
- ✓ Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- ✓ Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our services.

