

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES

OVERVIEW

AWHL is committed to providing an environment that is accessible and inclusive to all persons who work, volunteer, or use the services of the agency.

AWHL will work to eliminate or minimize the adverse effects of barriers, including physical, environmental, attitudinal, communication, organizational and technological barriers that may prevent the full participation of individuals with disabilities in the agency.

AWHL will provide employees, and to others as deemed appropriate, with opportunities for education and access to information regarding disability and the agency's policies on disability. At the same time, AWHL will endeavour to protect the privacy, confidentiality and autonomy of its employees, volunteers and clients with disabilities.

The core principles in meeting the service needs of those with disabilities are as follows:

- Dignity – Goods and services are provided in a manner that is respectful to persons with a disability and does not diminish the person's importance.
- Independence – Accommodating a person's disability means respecting their right to do for themselves and to choose the way they wish to receive goods and services.
- Integration – Persons with disabilities can access all goods and services. This may require alternative formats and flexible approaches. It means inclusiveness and full participation. This is a fundamental human right.
- Equal Opportunity - Service is provided to persons with disabilities in a way that their opportunity to access goods and services is equal to that given to others.

POLICY

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities ACT, 2005 (AODA) is provincial legislation designed for the purpose of developing, implementing and mandating accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities, with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises. The first regulation developed under the AODA is the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (the "Standards"), which established standards relating to customer service for organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public or third parties. All private and non-profit organizations in Ontario are required to be compliant with the Standards by January 2012.

AWHL will not tolerate any type of discrimination on the basis of disability within the workplace or at work-related activities/events.

An employee who subjects another employee, volunteer, service user or other person to discrimination on the bases of disability, or refuses to provide service in accordance with this policy may be subject to

disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination for cause, depending on the severity of the conduct.

AWHL will conduct an assessment of accessibility at the agency and at any offsite/satellite locations and will make necessary adjustments as appropriate.

All supervisors and employees are responsible for complying with the terms of this policy in the workplace.

Every employee is responsible for promptly reporting to his/her supervisor any issues or concern and/or opportunities for improvement related to this policy.

Every supervisor is responsible for promptly responding to and investigating any issues of concern in accordance with this policy.

This policy is available to any member of the public and the agency will, to the extent possible, provide the policy to an individual in a format that is accessible to them.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, agents and volunteers of AWHL.

DEFINITION

The term 'disability' is defined as follows in the Ontario Human Right Code, as amended from time to time.

- a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a 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 wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols in spoken language;
- d. a mental disorder;
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

PROCEDURE

Communications with Persons with Disabilities

When communicating with a person with a disability, AWHL will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability and, to the extent possible, will act on requests from an individual regarding communication needs and preferences.

Notice of Planned or Unplanned Disruption in Services and Facilities

In the event of a service disruption affecting employees, clients, volunteers, contractors or members of the general public, AWHL will take reasonable steps to report such disruption to its employees and service users in a timely fashion through appropriate information channels. Notice of the disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or service that are available.

Assistive Devices

Personal assistive devices are permitted in all areas of AWHL to which employees and the public have access. The provision, use and safety of personal assistive devices are the responsibility of the person with a disability.

Service Animals

AWHL will take reasonable steps to provide persons with a disability who are accompanied by a service animal access to the premises of AWHL, provided the public has access to such premises and the animal is not otherwise excluded by law.

If a service animal is excluded by law, AWHL will take reasonable steps to ensure that alternate means are available within a reasonable time and location to provide persons with a disability access to the agency's services.

Support Persons

AWHL welcomes staff, service users and visitors who are accompanied by a support, when the support person has been hired or chosen by the person with a disability to accompany them in order to assist in accessing goods and services and/or for the purposes of providing support with mobility, personal assistance and/or communication. Individuals who are accompanied by a support person are encouraged to inform relevant persons of their participation.

Where there are fees for admission, membership or participation in an event organized by AWHL, persons with a disability shall be expected to pay the same fee as other attendees, but no admission fee shall be charged to their support person. Membership at AWHL would not be required for the support person however that individual would be considered a non-member for official purposes (e.g. no right to vote at AGM).

Feedback and Reporting Incidents

Feedback about the delivery of services to persons with disabilities is welcomed, as it may identify areas that require change and assist in continuous service improvement. Such feedback may be by telephone, in person, in writing, or by email to the Executive Director (or designate).

Any employee, volunteer or service user experiencing issues of concern related to this policy are encouraged to report such an incident by telephone, in person, in writing, or by email to the Executive Director (or designate).

When feedback is received, AWHL will address the feedback in accordance with its complaint procedure and will take reasonable steps to respond to the individual providing the feedback within 15 business days.

Training

AWHL shall take reasonable steps to provide training on AODA service to all current employees and volunteers. New employees will be provided such training as part of their orientation. This training shall include a review of the AODE and the Standards of this policy. The training will address how to interact and communicate with persons with disabilities and those who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person. Training will also be provided on the use of various assistive devices and what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the agency's goods and services.

REFERENCES

Guidelines for Assisting People with Disabilities

Eliminating Barriers and Providing Support to People with Disabilities

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Multi –Year Accessibility Plan

Accessibility Plan and Policies for the Assaulted Women’s Helpline (AWHL)

This 2014-21 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that AWHL will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

Statement of Commitment

The Assaulted Women’s Helpline (AWHL) is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Accessible Emergency Information

AWHL is committed to providing service users, volunteers and visitors with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. We will also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when required.

Training

AWHL will provide training to employees, volunteers and other staff members on Ontario’s accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other staff members.

AWHL will take the following steps to ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario’s accessible laws by January 1, 2016:

- Develop and implement an orientation package for new employees
- Provide a training for existing staff

Information and Communications

AWHL is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We will take reasonable steps to consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

AWHL will take the following steps to make ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request by January 1, 2015:

- Ensure that feedback processes are available in other formats (including large print).

AWHL will take the following steps to make sure all publicly available information is made accessible upon request by January 1, 2017:

- Ensure information is available in large formats on request.

AWHL will take the following steps to make all websites and content conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA by April 1, 2020:

- Ensure that AWHL's main website, as well as any other websites associated with AWHL are WCAG 2.0, Level AA compliant when they are updated as part of our IT/IM practises.

Employment

AWHL is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

We will take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, AWHL will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired:

- Include this commitment on all internal and external job postings
- Ensure that job posting are available in large print format if requested.
- During the assessment process, notify job applicants that accommodations are available upon request. If requested, ensure the applicants are consulted arranging accommodations.

AWHL will take the following steps to develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability:

- Review our Human Resource Policies and Procedure to ensure that our existing policies regarding workplace accommodation are in compliance with AODA.
- If AWHL is using performance management, career development and redeployment processes, we will take reasonable steps to take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities.

Design of Public Spaces

AWHL will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces. Public spaces include:

- Service-related elements like service counters and waiting areas.

AWHL will put the following procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to the accessible parts of its public spaces.

- Ensure that the elevator is maintained in order to ensure access to our offices.
- In the event the elevator is temporarily out of service, we will notify the public of the service disruption and alternatives available through our website and social media, as well as signage in the public lobby.
- Visitors who wish to access services can contact us via phone or email and request services (where feasible) in an accessible venue.

For more information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact **your immediate Supervisor or AWHL's Executive Director.**