

POLICY: **Accessibility Policy**

APPROVED: **December 29, 2011**

REVISED: **April 26, 2014**

ADDENDUM: **October 16, 2018**

REVISED: **June 2, 2026 (Approved by Executive Director)**

Mission Statement:

Access Community Services creates pathways for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live with purpose, choice, and dignity. We work with individuals, families, and communities to build inclusive environments where strengths are celebrated and people live fulfilling, self-directed lives.

Values:

- Advocacy
- Community
- Commitment
- Empowerment
- Self Determination
- Service Excellence

The definition of disability under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) is the same as the definition of disability in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Disability means:

- a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defects 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 co-ordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheel chair 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 or spoken language,
- d) A mental disorder or
- 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.

1. Our commitment

In fulfilling our mission, Access Community Services strives to provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of our clients. We are also committed to giving our clients the same opportunity to access our services and allowing them to benefit from these services, in a similar way as other non disabled clients would be in other community settings.

2. Providing services to people with disabilities

Access Community Services is committed to excellence in serving all of our clients and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

2.1 Communication

We will communicate with our clients in ways that take into account their disabilities.

We will train our staff to communicate with clients assigned to them on how to interact and communicate with them in the manner that is consistent with their needs and their disability.

If an alternate format of information is requested, whether by client, staff or member of the public, Access Community Services will provide said information in a timely manner.

2.2 Telephone services

We are committed to providing accessible telephone service to our clients. We will train staff to communicate with clients assigned to them in a manner that is clear, at their pace and in plain language.

We will offer to communicate with our clients by other means if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs.

2.3 Assistive devices

We are committed to serving our clients, who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our services. We will ensure that staff delivering the service will be trained in how to do this and are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by our clients while accessing our services.

We will also ensure that staff delivering the service will be trained in how to use assistive devices available on our premises for our clients, which may include any or all of the following:

- Wheelchairs
- Mechanical lifts
- Walkers
- Communication devices
- Hearing aids

2.4 Billing

We are committed to explaining required fees to our clients in ways that are consistent with their disability and to provide documentation in the following formats upon request: hard copy, large print or email.

3. Use of service animals and support persons

We are committed to serving clients who are accompanied by a service animal as described in our policy "Service Animals in Residences." We will also ensure that all staff and volunteers delivering services to clients with service animals will be trained in how to deal with these clients and their service animals.

In delivering services to our clients, staff support persons are available to meet the accessibility requirements of the clients to whom they are assigned.

4. Notice of temporary disruption

Access Community Services will provide notice to clients who are affected by a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities in which they reside or services usually used by them. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Clients will be notified in a manner consistent with their disability.

5. Training for staff

Access Community Services will provide training to staff delivering the service to our clients and to those who are involved in the development and approvals of their service policies, practices and procedures.

- Training will be provided to all staff delivering the service to our clients in the following:
 - The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the standards
 - How to interact and communicate with clients with various types of disabilities
 - How to interact with clients with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
 - How to use the equipment and assistive devices e.g. Walkers or wheelchairs that are available to the client on Access Community Service's premises and that help with the provision of goods or services to that client.
 - What to do if a client is having difficulty in accessing Access Community Service's goods and services.
 - Access Community Service's policies, practices and procedures relating to the accessibility standards.

Staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way services are provided to their clients. Staff will be trained as soon as practicable upon assignment of duties and on an ongoing basis when changes are made to policies, practices and procedures that affect their clients.

6. Feedback process

The ultimate goal of Access Community Services is to meet and surpass the accessibility requirements of our clients. Comments on our services regarding how well these are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way Access Community Services provides services to our clients can be made in a manner suitable to the needs of the person and according to our policies and procedures.

7. Transportation

Access Community Services owns a private fleet of vehicles that support our individuals. Accessible transportation is available to our individuals through this private fleet. If public transportation is required, due diligence is carried out to ensure that the transportation meets the individual's needs.

8. Modifications to this policy

Access Community Services is committed to developing client service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of our clients. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on our clients. If this policy does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of our clients, it will be modified or removed.

9. Employment

Access Community Services welcomes and encourages employment applications from people with disabilities and will endeavor to make hiring and employee support practices more accessible by providing accommodation during all stages of recruitment, hiring, and employment.

Access Community Services will consult with an employee who requests it, to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports that take the employee's needs into account when providing information that is needed to perform the employee's job, and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace.

10. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to our clients. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation will be provided by Access Community Services.

Addendum:

For individuals who require translation services, Access Community Services Inc. will seek outside resources to provide support. Such resources could include:

- Canadian Hearing Services
- Quinte Immigration Services
- ARRAY Services
- New Canadians Centre