

Administrative

Access for People with Disabilities

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1.0 Policy Statement:

Women's College Hospital's (WCH) equity vision underscores the hospital's strategic commitment to healthcare as a human right, identifying and addressing gaps in health outcomes and healthcare access.

WCH is committed to providing inclusive and responsive goods, services and employment in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all persons with disabilities to our staff, clients, families, volunteers, learners, community partners and all stakeholders.

Duty to Accommodate:

Through the **Women's Accessibility and EquiTy Committee for AODA Hospital compliance (WATCH)**, the hospital oversees the development of a formal process of identification, elimination, and prevention of barriers in the service, work and learning environment for staff, clients, families, volunteers, learners, community partners and all WCH stakeholders, in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

- Pursuant to its duty to accommodate, WCH is committed to ensuring access to assistive devices, use of service animals as well as support persons to facilitate best quality of care standards.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline practices and procedures in place at Women's College Hospital to help identify and eliminate barriers that hinder a person's ability to access care and services. Additionally, the policy is designed to bring about organizational change that will meet WCH's objectives under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Ultimately, the policy is designed to

encourage the conditions that build an equitable, respectful, positive, and healthy environment.

2.0 Definitions:

Assistive Devices:

Devices used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the Act. Assistive devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, reading machines, recording machines, hearing devices and devices for grasping (AODA, 2005)

Barrier:

According to the AODA, a barrier refers to anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, and information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or practice.

Disability:

The Act uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code. It is important to understand that information about a disability is personal and private and must be treated confidentially.

Under the Act and the Code, disability means:

- 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 co-ordination, 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 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.

The definition also refers to disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and temporary disabilities the effects of which may come and go. It is noted that disability sometimes affects how people’s bodies move, or how they perceive or communicate.

In addition, some people with disabilities use service animals or [assistive devices](#).

Alternatively, other people have invisible disabilities. Moreover, there are different kinds or degrees of disability. For instance, one person may have one amputated limb, while another person has more than one. Likewise, one person may be totally blind while another person has some sight.

Guide Dog:

A dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations. R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7, s. 1 (1). Blind Persons Rights Act. A guide dog is a dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* to act as a guide dog for people who are blind. **[See 1.10.003- Access for People with Disabilities- Use of Service Animals].**

Service Animals:

Service Animal - an animal used by a person with a disability,

- a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability; or
- b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

The customer service standard's provisions include animals used by people with autism, mental health disabilities, those with physical or dexterity disabilities as well as others.

Support Persons:

A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services. The support person could be a paid personal support worker, a volunteer, a friend, or a family member. The support person does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications (AODA January 2008).

3.0 Procedure:

The policy has been developed to ensure that all staff, clients, families, volunteers, learners, community partners and all stakeholders, of the hospital community are aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the AODA and *achieving accessibility for people with disabilities*.

This will be done by developing, implementing, and enforcing accessibility standards concerning goods, services, accommodation, communication, facilities, buildings, and employment, consistent with the aims and objectives of the AODA, the Canadian Charter of Rights

The policy is designed to bring about systemic and organizational change that will meet our obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code*. This policy is also designed to foster the conditions that create a healthy, equitable, respectful, and positive hospital and work environment.

Specifically, this policy is designed to accomplish the following outcomes:

1. Foster a positive accessible hospital environment through proactive measures, barrier free systems analysis and enforcement;
2. Ensure that all members of the hospital community are aware of their rights and responsibilities under this policy;
3. Ensure that all members of the hospital community are treated equitably and with dignity and respect;
4. Address breaches of this policy and settle disputes quickly, fairly and as close to the source as possible;
5. Provide proactive education and organizational training and development at the hospital that is aimed at creating an environment that is healthy, equitable, respectful, welcoming, accessible, and free of discrimination and/or harassment.
 - The online e-learning course reviews the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its associated Customer Service Standard. Its aim is to provide training that will support equitable and effective service for all people, regardless of any disability they may have. The course is mandatory for all staff at least once. You must take it at the beginning of your employment at Women's College and may review course in whole or in part at any time.

Application

This policy applies to members of the hospital community at WCH, including all employees, physicians, health-care professionals, students, researchers, interns, volunteers, patients, families, visitors, advisory groups, public community-based partners, affiliated research institutes and associations, suppliers, contractors, and other WCH health-care and business partners.

1. This policy applies to all activities which take place at the hospital, as well as to hospital-related activities which occur elsewhere, including but not limited to business undertakings, teaching or training programs, research initiatives, community projects, partnership activities, social functions, fundraising events, and activities involving access to the hospital's communications systems.
2. All contractual relationships between the hospital and its business, research, and community partners are governed by this policy. All such contracts and agreements will include a provision requiring compliance with this policy.

4.0 References:

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

<https://aoda.ca/guide-to-the-act/>

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>

Credit to the Hospital Collaborative and Mount Sinai Hospital for sharing resource and information.