

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023

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Accessibility Plan and Policies for the Timiskaming Health Unit

This 2023 Accessibility Plan outlines the policies and actions that the Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

1 – Introduction

1.1 Accessibility Legislations: Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) & Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

2001: *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* was introduced with to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by people with disabilities. Agencies are required to:

- Prepare an annual accessibility plan

2005: Ontario Government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* with the long-term goal of achieving a barrier-free Ontario for people with disabilities by 2025. Within designated timelines, this act was passed with the goal to create standards to improve accessibility in the following key areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment

2008: The *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* was developed to establish accessibility standards relating to customer service. This regulation applies to every public sector organization and to every other person or organization that provides goods or services to members of the public or other third parties and has at least one employee in Ontario. Organizations were required to meet these standards by December 31, 2012.

2011: *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 (IASR)* combines standards for Information and Communications, Employment, and Transportation. These regulations are being phased between 2011 and 2021.

1.2 THU's Commitment Statement

The Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We support 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, 2005. THU is committed to providing equal access to its services, programs and facilities by being responsive to the diverse needs of the community including people with disabilities.

Under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards*, THU is required to create a multi-year accessibility plan outlining its organizations' strategy to prevent and remove barriers by implementing and maintaining this plan. This plan must be posted on the THU website and made accessible in other formats upon request. THU is also required to review and update the accessibility plan at least every five years as required by the act.

1.3 Organization

The Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) is one of thirty-four Health Units in Ontario. THU provides services to the Timiskaming region in Northern Ontario with offices located in Timiskaming Shores, Kirkland Lake, and Englehart.

Public Health Units fall under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and the legislated mandate of the Health Units is to deliver public health programs that prevent the spread of disease and promote and protect the health of the people of Ontario. Health Units are responsible for providing public health programs and services that contribute to the physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing of the population. Health Unit activities must be designed to address the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), promote the health of the population as a whole, and work with community partners to reduce the health inequities of the regional population.

THU provides a variety of services to promote health and prevent disease including:

- Population health assessment / surveillance
- Chronic disease prevention
- Prevention of injury
- Reproductive and sexual health
- Child health
- Infectious disease prevention and control
- Substance misuse prevention, smoking cessation, tobacco control
- Food and water inspection
- Public health emergency preparedness

The Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards establish the guidelines for effective governance and management for Public Health Units.

1.4 Key Contact

Randy Winters , Director of Corporate Services

Telephone: 705.647.4305 extension 2224 Fax: 705.647.5779

Email address: wintersr@timiskaminghu.com

2 – AODA Planning: Customer Service Standard

2.1 Summary

The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is to achieve an accessible Ontario by 2025 through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards. These standards apply to the public, private and not-for-profit sectors in order to identify, remove and prevent barriers in a person’s life, specifically regarding customer service; employment; information and communications; transportation; and the design of public spaces. In Ontario, it is the law for all organizations with one or more employees to comply with the AODA and its accessibility standards. These requirements pertain to accessible customer service policies, practices and procedures; service animals; support persons; customer feedback; and staff training.

2.2 Accessibility Standard Compliance (02-c-61)

The Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) is committed to providing equal access to its services, programs and facilities by being responsive to the diverse needs of the community including people with disabilities. The Accessibility Standard Compliance policy developed by THU applies to the Board of Health and all staff including volunteers, contractors, agents and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties, on behalf of the THU.

THU has established policies, practices and procedures to provide goods and services to clients with disabilities:

Accessibility of Public Buildings: THU will strive to ensure and improve access to all THU premises for persons with disabilities. Improved building access enhances opportunities to access services and to engage with the broader community.

Assistive Devices: If a person with a disability requires assistive devices to access goods or services of the THU, they are allowed to use such devices.

Guide Dogs, Service Animals: If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, THU will permit the person to enter the premises with the animal and keep it with him or her, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. In this case, THU will look to other available measures to accommodate this individual.

Support Persons: If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, they will be enabled to enter the premises together and have continuous access to each other. A support person may be required by THU in order to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.

Disruption of services: If there is a disruption in a particular facility or service used to allow a person with a disability to access goods or services, THU will give notice of the disruption to the public by posting the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration, and alternative facilities or services that may be available.

Communication Access: THU will communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability (e.g. hearing, speaking, reading and writing). THU will ensure successful interactions when people with communications disabilities use our services.

Training: THU will provide training about the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities. All THU employees, volunteers, agents, contractors and others who deal with the public or other third parties and those involved in developing customer service policies, practices, and procedures, will receive Accessibility Awareness Training within six months of beginning their duties. THU will also provide ongoing training with respect to changes. THU will keep records of the training provided, including dates when training is provided and the number of persons trained.

Feedback Process: The public can provide feedback on the accessibility of the provision of goods and services by contacting the Manager of Human Resources by mail, phone or in person. Feedback will be responded to within three (3) business days of receipt by the THU.

3 – Activities and Requirements:

3.1 Accessibility Plan (January 1, 2014)

THU will develop policies, procedures and practices which address integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity, in compliance with the AODA and to promote accessibility.

The Accessibility Plan addresses accessibility considerations for the Timiskaming Health Unit and their requirements in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. It will be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure that it is current. THU will make the plan available to the public by posting it on the THU website, and in any other format requested by persons with disabilities.

3.2 Establishment of Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (January 1, 2014)

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation's goal is to remove barriers in the following areas: transportation, employment, information and communications. THU has identified barriers and is developing policies, procedures and guidelines related to the areas of employment; and information and communications.

- The **Employment Standard**, under the IAS Regulation, requires employers to provide for accessibility across all stages of the employment life cycle. The Employment Standard applies to paid employees and is a framework for integrating accessibility into regular workplace processes.
- The **Information and Communications Standard** outlines requirements for organizations to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities.

4 – Accessibility Achievements and Goals

The AODA workgroup identified, addressed and took action on the following employment; informational and communicational; physical/architectural; attitudinal; and technological barriers.

4.1 Employment

THU is committed to an inclusive, barrier free environment and has identified the following actions to be addressed:

- Modifying the job advertisements stating that THU encourages all applicants to self-identify in order to provide accommodations in all steps of the hiring process.
- Successful applicants will be notified of the agencies policies and procedures for accommodating employees with disabilities.
- Policies, procedures and guidelines have been created for employees with disabilities that require accommodations.
- Policies, procedures and guidelines will be established for job accommodations for employees with disabilities returning to work.
- Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability as soon as the employer becomes aware of the need for accommodation.
- Take into account the accessibility needs of an employee with disabilities when using performance management, when providing career development, advancement and redeployment (reassignment of employees to other jobs, departments or office locations).

4.2 Informational and Communicational

THU has developed the Feedback Form and Accessible Format Request Form in order to obtain client feedback and request of documents/services available in an accessible format. These documents can be obtained by communicating with Randy Winters, Manager of Administration & Finance Services. The Accessible Format Request forms allows the person to select the appropriate formats/supports required for their accessibility needs (i.e. visual, audio, HTML, etc.) Once this consultation occurs, THU has the flexibility to decide on the most appropriate accessible format or communication supports, given the needs of the person and the organizations' capability to deliver. These formats and supports will be delivered in a timely manner and at no additional cost to the client. Public notification about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports will be posted at the reception desk of all locations and on the website's Accessibility webpage.

4.3 Physical/Architectural

THU currently leases all its premises. Landlords have completed building renovations as required for physical accessibility in all office locations. **4.4 Attitudinal**

THU provides training to staff on the requirements of the IAS and Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. All staff, new hires and volunteers are required to obtain training as part of their orientation which includes review of Accessibility Standard Compliance policy (02-c-61); Power Point presentation on Accessibility Standard Compliance and the completion of a quiz. Human Resources keeps records regarding the completion of this training.

4.5 Technological

Under the IAS Regulations, THU has been reviewing the requirements to be compliant to become accessible according to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Accessibility webpage will be added to the current website. Website information posted prior to 2012 is not required to be compliant with WCAG2.2. However, people with disabilities can still request information to be provided in an accessible format. All website information and documents posted after 2012 will need to be accessible as per the regulation of the WCAG 2.0 Level A. By January 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform to the WCAG 2.0 Level AA.

5 – Identifying Barriers at THU

5.1 Types of Barriers

THU recognizes that a number of different barriers can exist. A “barrier” is anything that stops a person with a disability from fully taking part in society because of that disability. Below are some examples of barriers:

Attitudinal

- Inaccurate beliefs or perceptions about a person’s ability.
- Someone who is abrupt, insensitive, impatient and uncomfortable with people slowed by a physical, language or developmental disability.
- Receiving Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits is to be considered a disability.

Architectural / Physical Barriers

- Includes building design, shape and dimensions of rooms, width of doorways, stairways, inaccessible bathrooms.
- Additions to an interior or exterior environment such as doors, windows, furniture, planters, hardware, recreational or playground equipment, lighting, signage, use of colour, materials

Communication Barriers

- The process of providing or sending, or receiving information such as difficulties receiving information in person or by telephone.
- Someone who speaks too quickly or unclearly.
- Use of language that is not understandable such as the use of complex words or jargon.

Information Barriers

- Information is not available in an accessible format (large print, audio, video, plain language, Braille, closed captioned video or electronic format).
- Inadequate or incomprehensible signage (font, size, colour, location, or faded).

Systemic Barriers

- Occur when practices or policies restrict participation; which is often done unintentionally.
- Needing to fill out a “complex” form to get a service & not being able to because of a disability.

Technological Barriers

- When a technology cannot be modified to support various assistive devices.
- Lack of visual alarms.

5.2 Types of Disabilities

A barrier is something that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society. Barrier identification is the methodology used to determine what barriers exist and where the barriers are found. Examples of a barrier identification process include the review of documents and publications; conducting public meetings; surveys and/or audits; the use of customer feedback forms; and other mechanisms.

Barriers may exist in relation to various forms of disability. In developing this Plan, THU has considered the functional limitations associated with several different kinds of disability and the effects of these limitations on an individual's ability use our services and an employee to perform their duties (Canadian Standards Association, 2002).

- Physical and/or Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Speech Impairment
- Vision Impairment
- Touch
- Intellectual
- Mental Health Impairment
- Learning Impairment

6 – Making the Plan Available to the Public

THU Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2023 is accessible to the public on the Timiskaming Health Unit website at www.timiskaminghu.com/. THU will strive to improve accessibility of its programs and services.

Your feedback is important to help us provide better service. We would like to hear your comments, questions and suggestions about the provision of our goods or services to people with disabilities.

Please complete the **Feedback Form** and submit it in the following manner:

- **Email** to Randy Winters: wintersr@timiskaminghu.com
- **Phone:** (705) 647-4305 ext: 2224
- **Fax:** (705) 647-5779
- **Mail** to Timiskaming Health Unit:
Attention: Randy Winters
Timiskaming Health Unit
P.O.Box 1090
New Liskeard, ON P0J 1P0
- **Drop off** at any reception desk at the following locations:

43-247 Whitewood Ave
New Liskeard, ON

81-5th Street
Englehart, ON

31 Station Road North
Kirkland Lake, ON

7 – Appendix A

7.1 Acronyms

AODA: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

IASR: Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

ODA: Ontarians with Disabilities Act

THU: Timiskaming Health Unit

WCAG: World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0: Set of guidelines developed to support web based accessibility

WSIB: Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

7.2 Definitions

Accessibility: To be easily obtained or used; easily understood or appreciated; reached, entered or used by people who have a disability.

Accessible formats: Include but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

Communication supports: May include but is not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

Assistive Devices: Auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids)

Disabilities: As per the Ontario Human Rights 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; (“handicap”)

Persons with Disabilities: Individuals who are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

- Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing
- Deaf blind
- Intellectual and / or Developmental Disabilities
- Learning Disabilities
- Mental Health Disabilities
- Speech or Language Impairments
- Visual Impairments
- Physical or Disabilities Affecting Mobility

Service Animals: Any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit or a person with a disability.

Support Persons: Any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs, or with access to goods and services.