

SECTION IV: HUMAN RESOURCES

Subsection: GENERAL

Policy Title: Accessibility

Policy Number: IV, 6.1

Initial Date of President and CEO Approval: 2023-10-26

Last Review/Revision Date: 2024-09-29

Purpose

Strides Toronto (the Organization) Accessibility Policy combines the requirements for Accessible Standards for Customer Service Regulations specific to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) with the requirements for Integrated Accessibility Regulations in AODA.

The Accessibility Policy ensures the provision of equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of Strides Toronto programs, services and service locations and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public in the areas of customer service, information and communication, and employment.

For the purposes of this policy, Strides Toronto uses the term "disability" as defined by AODA and Ontario Human Rights Code.

Application

All Strides Toronto employees, volunteers, students, contractors and clients.

Definitions N/A

Policy

Strides Toronto believes in treating people with respect and is guided by the core principles of dignity, equal opportunity, integration and independence. All goods and services provided by the Organization shall be handled in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

All goods and services provided by the Organization to people with disabilities shall allow people with disabilities to benefit from the same services as other people, delivered in a similar way.

The Organization shall implement measures for the identification and removal of barriers in the provision of services to persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, residential accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises, or such things as may be described by AODA, 2005.

People with disabilities shall be given equal opportunity to seek employment prospects or obtain, use and benefit from the services or goods provided by the Organization.

All employees, volunteers, students, contractors and consultants who act on behalf of the Organization, and who provide client services or who deal with the public, family members or community partners will be familiar with this policy.

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The Organization shall develop and implement a multi-year accessibility plan that shall be reviewed, updated, and published as required to maintain compliance with the AODA.

Procedures**A. Client Services:**

Strides Toronto will make every reasonable effort to ensure that our policies, practices and procedures support the full inclusion of persons with disabilities by:

- Ensuring that all clients/participants receive the same value and quality of services;
- Allowing clients/participants with disabilities to do things in their own ways and at their own pace when accessing services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- Using alternative methods of service delivery, when possible, to ensure that clients/participants with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- Taking into account individual needs when providing services; and;
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the client's/participant's disability.

Strides Toronto will carry out our responsibilities in the following ways:

Assistive Devices

People with disabilities may use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from organizational services. Employees will be familiar and properly trained in the use of various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities when accessing our services.

Service Animals

Strides Toronto is committed to welcoming and providing services to people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal in the areas of our offices that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. We will ensure that all staff dealing with the public are familiar with how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

The person who is accompanied by a service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.

Support Persons

Strides Toronto is committed to welcoming and providing services to people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will have access to their support person at all times while on Strides Toronto premises.

Where confidentiality is important due to nature of the services provided, the support person may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

If there is a fee payable by a person for the admission of services, activities, events, etc. the person will be notified in advance if there is a fee for the support person.

Temporary Disruption of Service

Strides Toronto will provide employees and clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected

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disruption to facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access Strides Toronto services. Reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice of such a disruption.

This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be placed at applicable public entrances, locations and reception areas on Strides Toronto premises where there is disruption of services.

Clients who have appointments will be contacted or notified using the most appropriate method under the circumstances. Strides Toronto's website, social media and phone system messaging will be updated, as appropriate, to notify the public about the disruption of service.

In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Feedback Process

Strides Toronto provides all employees, clients and partners with an opportunity to provide feedback regarding services provided to clients with disabilities, either verbally (in person or by phone) or by written letter or email.

A client or a client's family member who prefers to provide more formal feedback will follow Strides Toronto's Complaint Procedure.

Training of Employees

Strides Toronto will provide training to all employees regarding accessible customer services, which will include the following:

- A review of the purpose of the AODA and the requirements for the Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, Ontario Regulations 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 an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices available at Strides Toronto sites or that the Organization provides that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing Strides Toronto services.
- Training on the Organization's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer services to clients with disabilities.

Employees will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Training will be provided to all employees, volunteers, contractors and students who work with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of Strides Toronto or have a role in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training will be provided in new employee orientation sessions or through an online training program. After

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completing the training, employees, volunteers and students will receive a certificate of completion that will be kept in their personnel file.

Contractors providing services to Strides Toronto on behalf of Strides Toronto must provide documentation demonstrating that they have received training regarding accessible customer service related to AODA. Where this documentation cannot be provided, contractors will be provided with AODA online training. The Program Manager or designate who is responsible for coordinating the services of a contractor will be responsible for obtaining this information.

Notice of Availability of Documents and Documentation

Documents related to the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service will be made available upon request and in a format that takes into account the client/participant's disability. Notification of these documents will be given by posting on Strides Toronto website, as well as other reasonable methods as necessary.

B. Employment Standards/Accessible Employment and Employment Standards:**Recruitment, Assessment and Selection**

Strides Toronto shall notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for job applicants with disabilities.

- Accommodation statements are included in all job postings, notifying all candidates of availability of accommodations upon request.
- Individual job applicants are encouraged to make accommodation requests known during the assessment or selection process.
- If a selected applicant requests an accommodation, the Organization shall consult with the applicant and arrange for provision of suitable accommodations in a manner that considers the applicant's accessibility needs due to disability.
- Successful applicants shall be notified of the policies for accommodating people with disabilities.

Informing Employee Supports

Strides Toronto shall inform employees of its policies to support its employees with disabilities, including, but not limited to:

- Policies on the provision of job accommodations that consider an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.
- Information required for accommodation shall be provided to a new employee as part of orientation as soon as practicable after they begin employment.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees

In addition, and where an employee with a disability requests it, Strides Toronto shall consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for:

- information that is needed to perform the employee's job;
- information that is generally available to employees in the workplace; and
- consult with the employee making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

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Workplace Emergency Response Information

Strides Toronto shall provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary, and the Organization is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

Where an employee requiring individual workplace emergency response information requires assistance and with the employee's consent, the Organization shall provide the emergency information to the person(s) designated to aid the employee, as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

The Organization shall review the information when the employee moves to a different location in the Organization, when overall accommodation needs, or plans are reviewed and when the Strides Toronto reviews its general emergency response policies.

Performance Management, Career Development and Redeployment

Strides Toronto shall take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans when providing career development, conducting performance management and considering redeployment.

Design of Public Spaces Standards

Strides Toronto shall comply with the AODA standards for design of public spaces.

Cross References

Accommodation Policy

Recruitment and Selection Policy

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Policy

Performance Evaluation for Employees Policy

Appendices N/A