

Policy: Accessible Customer Service

Version no.: 4

Policy owner: Vice President, Communications and Client Experience

Department/branch/division: Communications and Client Experience

Effective date: January 1, 2012

Approval authority: Executive Committee

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Purpose

The *Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) was introduced to ensure that Ontarians with disabilities can access goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, buildings, structures and premises. Under this act, Ontario introduced mandatory accessibility standards.

The purpose of this policy is to govern how the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) complies with AODA's accessibility standards. It provides guidelines for delivering goods and services to people with disabilities in compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation under AODA (Regulation 191/11).

Scope

This policy applies to all CIHI staff, including contract employees, students and external consultants.

Definitions

Disability means

- 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;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability, or a dysfunction in 1 or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Service animals

In the majority of cases, service animals will be dogs. Service animals assist in a variety of ways, including acting as a travel guide, carrying cargo, fetching products, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, pulling wheelchairs, providing additional support to avoid falls, warning the person of an impending seizure or needed medication, protecting the person in medical situations, calling 9-1-1, turning on lights, getting help, and reducing panic and fear. Typically, service animals wear a marked harness or vest.

Support persons

A support person can be a paid worker, volunteer, family member or friend. They do not necessarily require any special training or certification to offer support. Support persons assist in many ways, including interpreting, speaking on behalf of the person with a disability, taking notes, reading, guiding or directing the person, providing transportation, and helping with personal care and communication.

Assistive devices

Assistive devices enable people to do everyday tasks such as moving, communicating, reading or lifting by eliminating barriers. A few examples of devices that could be used are wheelchairs, walkers, listening devices, portable oxygen tanks, laptops with screen-reading software and communication programs, canes, hand-held devices and hearing aids.

Regulated health professionals

Regulated health professionals are members of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech–Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

Policy

CIHI is committed to excellence in providing products and services to all customers, including people with disabilities, in a way that respects their dignity and independence and that ensures people with disabilities have the same opportunity to access and benefit from our products and services.

CIHI carries out its functions and responsibilities by

- Communicating with people with disabilities in ways that take their disability into account;
- Training employees on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities and on the use of assistive devices;
- Welcoming service animals on the parts of our premises that are open to the public;
- Welcoming support persons who accompany people with disabilities;
- Notifying customers of planned or unexpected temporary disruptions in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities; and
- Meeting internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements.

Guidelines

Service animals

CIHI welcomes people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

When CIHI cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask the person to provide documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons related to their disability.

Support persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

Notice of temporary disruptions

CIHI will notify customers of planned or unexpected disruptions in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. The notice will include the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternate facilities or services, if available. The notice will be posted on CIHI's website.

Training for staff

CIHI trains all employees on accessibility and customer service. The training is mandatory and is part of the orientation program for new staff and students. The training includes

- An introduction to AODA and its purposes;
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
- How to use equipment or devices available on CIHI's premises or otherwise provided by CIHI that may help with providing goods or services to a person with a disability; and
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing CIHI's goods or services.

CIHI also trains external consultants who work on site for 3 months or more.

Human Resources maintains a training record, including the dates on which the training was provided and the names of the staff who received it.

Information and communications

CIHI communicates with people with disabilities in ways that take their disability into account.

CIHI notifies the public about the availability of accessible formats and communications by posting a notice on its website. On request, CIHI will provide this information in accessible formats or with communication supports. CIHI will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitable format or communication support. CIHI will provide the accessible format or communication support in a timely manner and at no additional cost. If the information is unconvertible, CIHI will provide the requestor with an explanation and a summary of the information.

CIHI will also meet internationally recognized WCAG 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario's accessibility laws.

Feedback process for providers of goods or services

Comments on our services are welcome and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way CIHI provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by email or verbally.

All feedback is directed to the vice president of Communications and Client Experience. Customers can expect to hear back within 5 business days.

Procurement

CIHI has a process for procuring or acquiring goods, services and/or facilities that complies with AODA and this policy.

Related procedures and/or supporting documents

[Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005](#)

For more information

For more information, please email help@cihi.ca.

Revision history

Date	Description of revisions	Approval authority
January 2015	Updated Human Resources email link	Director, Human Resources and Administration
November 2019	Added notice of available documents, updated definitions	Director, Human Resources and Administration
November 2021	Review; no changes	Director, Human Resources and Administration
November 2023	Added notice of WCAG requirements; updated policy name, director title, policy owner and approval authority	Executive Committee