

Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation (CHC)

BACKGROUND

In 2005, the government of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (“AODA”). It is the goal of the Ontario government to make the province accessible by 2025. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (“IASR”) under the AODA requires that effective January 1, 2014, CHC establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan which outlines CHC’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities and to meet its requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards.

INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY POLICY AND STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

This policy has been established by Windsor Essex CHC to govern the provision of its services in accordance with Ontario Regulation 191/11, “Integrated Accessibility Standards” (“Regulation”) under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. These standards are developed to break down barriers and increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

Windsor Essex CHC is governed by this policy as well as the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, the CHC Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, in meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. Windsor Essex CHC endeavors to regularly ensure and implement accessibility standards in all of its practices.

Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in 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

INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY MULTI YEAR PLAN

This 2014 – 2021 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that Windsor Essex CHC will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

The multi-year plan outlines CHC’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and addresses the current and future requirements of AODA.

In accordance with the requirements set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Windsor Essex CHC will:

- Establish this plan,
- Post the plan on its website (wechc.com),
- Report, as required, on its website (wechc.com) on the progress of the implementation of this plan,
- Provide this plan in an accessible format, upon request,
- Review and update the plan at least once every five years.

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Since 2012, Windsor Essex CHC has been in compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Regulation under the AODA, and is committed to excellence in serving all customers, including persons with disabilities, and it will carry out its functions in a manner which delivers an accessible customer service experience. We will continue treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. 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 AODA.

Action Taken:

- All staff and volunteers have been trained on the Accessible Customer Service Policy,
- We provide timely notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation (CHC) facilities or services that may be used by persons with disabilities. Notices are posted both at the physical site, and on our website, (AODA Service Disruptions) and includes information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Windsor Essex CHC is committed to providing our customers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. We will work with the person requesting the information to meet their needs, as soon as possible.

We will also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

Action Taken:

- Individualized workplace emergency response information procedures have been offered for any employee with disclosed disabilities, as required.
- Workplace Emergency Response Information forms have been developed for employees who have disclosed a disability and are requesting accommodated according to their disability.
- Where required, CHC will provide assistance to specific disabled employees, with the employee's prior consent, to help them evacuate the workplace in case of an emergency. Plans for providing assistance will be set out in individualized emergency plans for said employees.

Training

Windsor Essex CHC has and will provide training to employees and volunteers on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees and volunteers. CHC will take the following steps to ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario's accessible laws by January 1, 2015.

- Continue to include updated Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulations as part of an orientation session for new hires,
- Continue to incorporate it in our overall training programs, where appropriate,
- Provide ongoing training about the requirements when accessibility policies change,

- Continue to keep records of the number of people trained and when.

Windsor Essex CHC will explore developing a training plan that integrates the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standard with its current Customer Service training.

Information and communications

CHC is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities.

- CHC has ensured all websites and content on our websites conform to WCAG 2.0, Level A.
- CHC has ensured existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request.
- CHC offers emergency and public safety information accessible to people with disabilities and will work with the person to meet their individual needs, as soon as possible.

Action Taken:

- Our wechc.com website contains publicly available content that outlines our commitment to AODA and how to best submit feedback and to request accessible emergency and public safety information.
- CHC staff(s) have been instructed to advise customers with disabilities to contact our Public Affairs Manager with issues regarding the feedback process or to request accessible emergency and public safety information.

Summary to date

Through the progressive implementation of this Plan and compliance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation requirements, additional policy and procedure documents will be developed. Currently, the Windsor Essex CHC has in place the following accessibility related policy & procedure documents:

- Corporate Customer Service Standards
- Notice of Service Disruption and Notice of Service Disruption Template
- Customer Feedback Process
- Accessible Customer Service Training Confirmation Form
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Policy
- Employee Workplace Emergency Evacuation Assistance Form
- Employee Workplace Emergency Response Plan

By January 1, 2016 CHC will take the following steps:

Information and Communication, CHC will

- provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability; and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons, upon request,
- revise procedures and train staff to receive and respond to feedback from persons who have a disability in the format requested. We will work with the individual to meet their needs as soon as possible.

Employment, CHC will accommodate people with disabilities

- during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired,
- develop, put into place and document a return to work (RTW) process for employees who have been absent from work due to disability and who require accommodation to return to work,

- include a statement in job posting stating our commitment in providing accommodations for persons with disabilities,
- notify applicants (telephone, email, letter, etc.) based on required accommodations advised,
- identify barriers: location of interview room, room set up for in person interviews, interviewing timelines, supports, paperwork, etc.,
- notify job applicants, when they are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process, that accommodations are available upon request in relation to the materials or processes to be used,
- when making offers of employment, notify the successful applicant of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities,
- shall inform its employees of its policies used to support its employees with disabilities,
- consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for, information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job; and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace,
- develop and have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities,
- take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans, when providing career development and advancement to its employees with disabilities.

By January 1, 2017 CHC will take the following steps:

Design of Public Spaces

CHC will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces. Within our portfolio public spaces include:

- Outdoor play spaces
- Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas
- Accessible off street parking
- Service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas

CHC will put the following procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to its accessible parts of its public spaces.

By January 1, 2021 CHC will take the following steps:

CHC will take the following steps to make all websites and content conform to WCAG 2.0, Level AA by January 1, 2021.

- All software development for websites will be purchased with the view for expansion to Level AA

For More Information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact Kari Schofield, Public Affairs Manager at kschofield@wehc.com or by calling 519-254-1681 ext. 3235

Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request by emailing info@wehc.com or contacting our customer service extension 519- 254-1681 ext. 3030.



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