



Haldimand-Norfolk

REACH

supporting children, families, communities

**ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT 2005
AODA
MULTI – YEAR PLAN
2021 – 2023**

June 25, 2021

Legal Name: Haldimand-Norfolk Resource, Education and Counselling Help (H-N REACH)

Business Number: 106914757

Number of Employees: 190

Certified by: Leo Massi, Executive Director **Email:** lmassi@hnreach.on.ca **Telephone:** (519) 587-2441 Ext. 251

Sector: Business/Non-profit

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is committed to ensuring people with disabilities have the same opportunity of access to our services and in a similar way that these services are available to all others. H-N REACH will abide by the provisions of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). H-N REACH is committed to providing high quality and accessible services to children, youth, families and the public, that are free of barriers and biases. We also are committed to providing employment opportunities that are free from barriers and bias.

Following are definitions of the four principles of customer service, as well as a description of assistive devices:

- Dignity - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
- Independence - when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- Integration - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as others, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.
- Equal opportunity - service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods or services equal to that given to others.
- Assistive devices - are used by people with disabilities to help with daily living and include a broad range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, portable chalk boards and electronic communication devices that people may bring to the premises.

H-N REACH is committed to all objectives of the AODA ensuring access and participation for people with disabilities. We strive to remove, minimize or prevent barriers and to treat everyone in a manner that maintains their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and strive to meet the accessibility needs of individuals and all related requests in a timely manner, ensuring compliance to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 and Regulations*.

Introduction

Since the last Compliance Report submitted in December 2017, H-N REACH has continued with the transition to an updated training platform which provides greater opportunities for tracking AODA training compliance.

H-N REACH included an AODA refresher training update for all employees, volunteers and students in 2019.

H-N REACH prioritizes needs and prepares annual plans for improvements in consultation with the external Website Designer who provides the expertise to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA Standards.

We engaged the services of an external Disability Management Consultant to enhance and provide additional support for our employees as they return to work from disability leaves of absence, where assistance is required. The organization works closely with the employee to assist in developing an effective plan for accommodation/reintegration into the workplace.

Section 1: PAST ACHIEVEMENTS (PRIOR TO 2021) TO REMOVE AND PREVENT BARRIERS

Reporting

H-N REACH completed compliance reports in 2014 and 2017. The most recent report covers 2018 to 2020, and was submitted in June 2021.

The H-N REACH Board of Directors are informed of the completion of all compliance reports.

Service Delivery

H-N REACH intake processes are completed using varying methods based on program guidelines through Contact Haldimand-Norfolk, or by individual program intake workers following a standard questionnaire format. Intakes for Adult Developmental Services are processed through Developmental Services Ontario. The accessibility checklists prompt discussion on service participant needs related to communication, hearing, physical abilities and general requirements related to types of services, health and safety, and, types of accommodations required.

The Service Participant Policy 3A-1 addresses accommodation.

Unit planning meetings and supervision sessions encourage discussion and problem-solving related to how accommodations can be provided based on individual needs. Examples of types of accommodation made include:

- Delivery of one-to-one services, both in-person and virtual based on individual needs
- Use of closed captions during Zoom meetings re: hearing impairments
- Autism program adapted volunteer drop-off/pick-up policy to accommodate individuals with physical limitations
- Intake process normally conducted by telephone may be provided in-person to meet the needs of persons with hearing impairment
- Adapting of counselling services to meet the needs of adults with developmental disabilities
- Providing choices of location of service delivery to meet individual needs
- Where possible, providing choice of therapist based on gender preference to meet specific requests
- Providing additional supports or counselling based on individual needs of youth at Residential Program
- Accommodating medical fragility and diverse medical needs of service participants in our licensed Respite Programs
- Adapting individual plans and providing Classroom Facilitators to support special needs and inclusion of children in Childcare programs.
- Use of service animals, support person(s), and/or assistive devices.

Information and Communication

The Agency contracted with an external web-designer to update our website and to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.0 AA standards in 2020. A number of improvements were made to the website, including the general appearance and the addition of a specific Accessibility section/tab.

In 2020, due to pandemic restrictions, the agency computer system capabilities were updated to support more virtual service delivery as accommodation for many service participants and their families.

H-N REACH was able to obtain Public Health support for the early return of our Autism and Behavioural Services programs with additional precautions to provide in-person services.

Information is available in accessible formats, based on requests from persons with disabilities. Accessible formats may 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 are not limited to captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

Conversion-ready formats are electronic or digital formats that are easily converted into accessible formats such as HTML and structured Microsoft Word files.

The Service Participant Complaint Policy 3A-7 addresses the complaint procedures.

The Service Participant Rights and Responsibilities brochure addresses accommodation.

Employment

Job postings and the careers section of the website include information on how to receive assistance if accommodations are required.

In 2020, we enhanced the return to work process by introducing additional support through a Disability Management Consultant to assist with accommodation and reintegration, where required.

The recruitment interview process moved to a virtual process in 2020, for health and safety reasons, during the pandemic. This capability will continue to be available as an accommodation for applicants if required.

The fire alarm system was upgraded to include flashing lights to accommodate the needs of hearing impaired employee(s).

A volunteer applicant requested and was provided electronic format for Braille conversion.

Training

The Agency Policies and Procedures include several Accessibility policies which incorporate the AODA principles and standards. The policies are reviewed on a regular schedule by the Policy Review Committee. Policy updates are uploaded electronically through the Agency training portal requiring all employees to review and acknowledge their understanding. All new employees, volunteers and student placements are required to review policies as part of the onboarding process.

Agency-wide AODA training requirements were initially completed in 2010 and all new employees, volunteers and student placements are required to complete AODA training as part of the onboarding process.

Refresher training for AODA was completed by all employees in 2019.

Design of Public Spaces

H-N REACH leases space for many programs including public and separate schools. Renovations at these sites are designed to be in compliance with the AODA and building codes.

A natural play space was created at Mapleview Public School, Dunnville. Design and construction was coordinated through Grand Erie District School Board following accessibility and building standards.

H-N REACH leases office and meeting spaces throughout both Haldimand and Norfolk. Upgrades at these locations are coordinated through the applicable landlords.

H-N REACH purchased a building (John Street, Simcoe) prior to this review period. The original upgrades added accessible parking at the rear entrance. Renovations and upgrades at the front entrance: push button entry, walkway, and surface upgrades were completed in 2020-2021 with an additional accessible parking space at the front.

Bramble Retreat is a licensed and regulated respite facility that is fully accessible. This program provides regular short-term periods of respite for adults and children who are medically fragile or technology dependent. Ongoing updates to meet the needs of the individual children, youth and adults attending the programs follow MCCSS and AODA standards.

Transportation Standard: Not applicable – standard for public transportation services only

Section 2: STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS 2021 - 2023

Reporting:

The 2020 AODA Compliance Report was completed and submitted to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility in June 2021. The next scheduled compliance report date is December 2023.

Reporting will continue on an ongoing basis as required to meet AODA and Accreditation standards.

Service Delivery:

A status update and review of the AODA plan achievements and unit plans for next three years was conducted in preparation for updating the Agency's Multi-Year AODA plan. This included customer service, premises, public spaces and employment standards for AODA.

Annual status review and updates are planned for fall of 2022 and fall of 2023 in preparation for the next report. This will include tracking of the types of requests for accommodations.

Accessibility policies are reviewed on a regular schedule by the Policy Review Committee and updated by the Agency to meet changes with AODA legislation.

The Agency will continue to offer virtual meetings or services, as required, to remove barriers to access for people with disabilities.

There will be ongoing review of opportunities for enhancements/improvements to policies and systems.

Information and Communication:

We have contracted with a consultant to ensure the Agency's website meets ongoing compliance with the WCAG AA standards.

A scan and audit of the website was conducted in June 2021 and will be performed annually at a minimum, to ensure ongoing compliance with established standards and to identify opportunities for ongoing improvement to the site.

Ongoing updates to website content will be administered through employees who have been specifically trained to ensure consistency of formatting and adherence to established standards and guidelines to meet ongoing AODA requirements.

We will continue to promote AODA principles through education materials and ongoing website updates.

The Agency approved the Consultant's recommendations for the following updates for the website following the June 2021 review:

- Added contrast icon to support those with visual impairments
- Slowed the speed of banners to support those with motion sensitivity
- Consolidated all Accessibility-related information and materials under one section/tab on the web-site – June 2021
- Training to be provided to assigned administrative staff responsible for updating website content to ensure consistency of formatting and adherence to established AODA standards and guidelines

Our Child and Youth Mental Health services are hosting a youth group working on recommendations for improvements to an app that will be more easily accessible on cellphones.

Opportunities to update agency phone system(s) to include a voice recognition feature to assist service participants who have difficulty with phone buttons, will be explored.

We will continue to highlight AODA priorities at Staff Days and Management/Leadership Planning Days.

We will provide information and communication in alternate formats as requested, to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities.

The Executive Director will review AODA requirements with the Management team annually.

The Human Resources Manager will update the Multi-Year AODA plan in coordination/consultation with the Management/Leadership Teams.

There will be ongoing review of opportunities for enhancements/improvements to policies and systems.

Employment:

We will monitor requests for accommodation from applicants and track measures taken: i.e. Requests received; completed; and types of changes established for future annual plans/updates.

We will continue to enhance and use computer systems to enable on-line recruitment processes, which can continue post pandemic, as a means of accommodation as required.

There will be ongoing review of opportunities for enhancements/improvements to policies and systems.

Training:

We will continue to provide AODA training for new employees, volunteers and students.

There will be ongoing review of AODA concepts (Customer Service), as part of Agency Staff Days on a regular basis.

We will plan for a formal refresher/update of AODA training, every five years at a minimum.

AODA principles will continue to be included in the onboarding process for new employees and will promote group discussions to ensure awareness, understanding and compliance.

The Human Resources Manager will continue to monitor training compliance statistics and follow-up with the managers, as necessary, to ensure completion of assigned AODA training modules.

Training will be provided to assigned administrative staff responsible for updating website content, to ensure consistency of formatting and adherence to established standards and guidelines to meet ongoing AODA requirements.

Design of Public Spaces:

The Agency will ensure that renovations and upgrades comply with current accessibility standards, in collaboration with respective landlords and community partners, where applicable.

Renovations currently underway as of report date:

New Dunnville Office: Purchased and preparing for renovations to new office location in 2020 for 2021. The renovations include improvements to accessibility in compliance with AODA standards.

- new accessible washroom renovation
- retro-fit of doorways to accommodate mobility device
- new furniture purchased to accommodate space for mobility devices in offices

Future renovations will be planned as funding permits and in compliance with AODA standards.

EarlyOn CFC and Licensed Child Care Programs- Playgrounds:

- In coordination with landlords, upgrade play spaces to include accessibility needs of young children, seating, space and equipment at various sites.

Townsend:

- Regular meetings will be scheduled with the Landlord to ensure ongoing maintenance and improvements to the parking lot and public walkways to meet AODA standards.


Transportation Standard: Not applicable – standard for public transportation services only.

Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is committed to AODA principles and continues to review opportunities to enhance the accessibility of our sites and services to enable us to provide accessible services to the communities we serve.

The Agency provides access to volunteer drivers to support accessibility for service participants utilizing our programs.

If there are any questions or, additional information required about this report please contact Lynn Tessaro, Human Resources Manager by Email: ltessaro@hnreach.on.ca or telephone: 519- 587-2441 Ext. 351

Multi-year Plan 2021-2023 reviewed and approved by:


Leo Massi, Executive Director
Haldimand-Norfolk REACH

2021-08-25
Date