Haldimand-Norfolk
REACH

supporting children, families, communities

AODA Multi-Year Plan 2024-2026

Legal Name: Haldimand-Norfolk Resource, Education and Counselling Help (H-N R.E.A.C.H.)

Business Number: 106914757

Number of Employees: 190

Certified by: Wendy Carron, Executive Director

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Telephone: (519) 587-2441 Ext. 401

Sector: Business/Non-profit

Executive Director's Message

Haldimand-Norfolk REACH (H-N R.E.A.C.H.) is committed to supporting people with disabilities by providing access to: programs, services, student and volunteer placements and employment opportunities, in a similar manner that they are available to others. H-N R.E.A.C.H. will abide by the provisions of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). H-N R.E.A.C.H. is committed to providing high quality and accessible services to service participants (children, youth, families, adults), and the public that are free of barriers and biases. Recruitment of employees, volunteers and student placements follow the same standards.

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 R.E.A.C.H. 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:

H-N R.E.A.C.H. has completed a Compliance Report submitted in December 2023 covering the calendar years: 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Since the last Compliance Report submitted in June 2021 (covering years: 2018, 2019 and 2020), all new employees and volunteers continue to be required to complete the AODA training on the internal on-line training platform as part of the Orientation and Probation practices.

H-N R.E.A.C.H. Human Resources is responsible to monitor and follow-up to ensure completion of AODA training requirements, and, to coordinate the collection of details required for ongoing AODA report updates and plans.

H-N R.E.A.C.H. continues to consult with an external Web designer for assistance with preparation for ongoing improvements and prioritization of planning for website updates as part of the annual planning process to ensure the agency website meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA Standards.

H-N R.E.A.C.H. will engage 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 individual employee to assist in developing an effective plan for accommodation and reintegration into the workplace.

The H-N R.E.A.C.H. planning process includes regular reviews and updates at the Executive and Management team level, to ensure enhancements being made to: outdoor public spaces, parking lots, building entry ways, reception areas, service kiosks and children’s play areas include review and compliance with the applicable AODA Standards.

Section 1: Past Achievements (Prior to 2024) to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Reporting

H-N R.E.A.C.H. completed past compliance reports: 2018-2020 in June 2021 and prior to that in 2014 and 2017.

The H-N R.E.A.C.H. Board of Directors are informed of the completion of all compliance reports.

Service Delivery:

H-N R.E.A.C.H. 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 Orientation 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.
- Introduced the use of closed captioning feature during Zoom meetings for users with hearing impairments.
- Translation features were activated for selected Zoom meetings as needed to accommodate language communication barriers and disabilities.
- Autism program adapted volunteer drop-off/pick-up policy to accommodate individuals with physical limitations.
- Intake processes normally conducted by telephone may be provided in-person to meet the needs of persons with hearing impairments.
- Adapting of counselling services to meet the needs of adults with developmental disabilities
- Providing choices of location of service delivery to meet the specific needs of individuals
- 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
- Increased use of virtual services when requested by service participants
- Posting of banned substances (e.g. scent, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, bananas etc.) at respective sites to accommodate the needs of individuals who have sensitivities and/or severe allergic reactions to these substances, to make the building accessible for them.

Information and Communication

The Agency contracted with an external web-designed to update our website and to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level 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.

Employees who have responsibility for updating website content have access to an updated Website Editing Guide that includes specific information throughout the document regarding how to ensure content is AODA compliant. The Website Editing Guide is compliant with WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.

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.

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.

Translation and closed-captioning features were activated for selected Zoom meetings upon request from service participants.

Employment

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

The Return-to-Work process was enhanced in 2020 and continues, 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, beginning in 2020, for health and safety reasons during the pandemic. This process has continued to be available as an accommodation for both applicant requests and to meet Agency needs.

The fire alarms system was upgraded to include flashing lights to accommodate the needs of the hearing impaired.

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 probationary period – onboarding process.

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

Human Resources review and update H-N R.E.A.C.H. leadership teams on any changes to Accessibility rules for businesses and non-profits through the Government of Ontario website (https://www.ontario.ca/page/government-ontario).

Design of Public Spaces

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

In 2021, the Child Clinical Services location in Delhi was relocated. The new location includes an elevator to improve access for individuals with limited physical abilities.

In 2021, the Caledonia EarlyON site was relocated with improved access for parking facilities to meet AODA standards.

H-N R.E.A.C.H. owns a building on John Street, Simcoe where renovations and upgrades were completed in 2020-2021 including: push button entry, walkway widening and surface upgrades and one additional parking space at the front entrance.

H-N R.E.A.C.H. owns a building on Ramsey Drive, Dunnville where a total renovation was completed in 2020-2021 including: push button entry, accessible bathroom, retro-fit of doorways to accommodate mobility devices and accessible parking at the front entrance.

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 reflect the needs of the individual children, youth and adults attending the program and follow MCCSS and AODA standards.

Section 2: Strategies and Action Plans 2024 – 2026

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

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 the past three years was conducted in preparation for updating the Agency's Multi-Year AODA Plan (2024-2026). This included customer services, premises, public spaces and employment standards for AODA.

Annual status reviews and updates are planned for the Fall of 2024, 2025 and 2026. 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.

H-N R.E.A.C.H. will continue to offer virtual meetings or services, as required to remove barriers to access for people with disabilities.

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

Information and Communication:

H-N R.E.A.C.H. contracts with a consultant to ensure the Agency's website meets ongoing compliance with the WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.

The last scan and audit of the website was conducted in December 2023 and is planned annually at a minimum, to ensure ongoing compliance with established standards and to identify opportunities for ongoing improvement to the website.

The ongoing updates to website content will be administered through employees who have access to the Website Editing Guide 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 educational materials and ongoing website updates.

The Agency will review the Consultant's recommendations on an ongoing basis for website updates required to remain AODA compliant.

The training planned during the prior report period was delayed due to pandemic considerations and is now planned for 2024. The training will be for assigned administrative staff who are responsible for updating website content, to ensure consistency of formatting and adherence to established AODA standards and guidelines.

H-N R.E.A.C.H. will continue to highlight AODA priorities at Staff Days and Management and/or 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 and/or Leadership Team.

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

We plan to continue to communicate key concepts to H-N R.E.A.C.H. staff during the next report period (2024-2026).

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.

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.

All future renovations are planned as funding permits in compliance with AODA standards.

Following is the list of planned future renovations:

EarlyON/Child Care/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 communicate ongoing maintenance and improvement requirement needs to the parking lot and public walkways to meet AODA standards.

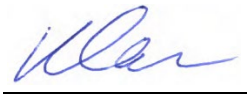
Transportation Standard: Not applicable – standard for public transportation services only.

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.

If required, 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 2024-2026 reviewed and approved on December 20, 2023 by:



Wendy Carron, Executive Director

Haldimand-Norfolk R.E.A.C.H.