

Introduction

Willowbridge is committed to working towards full compliance with current standards of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Policy, Regulation 191/11, under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA); In doing so, we affirm our commitment to providing quality services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Our AODA Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the policies, achievements, and actions that Willowbridge has taken and the work underway to improve opportunities for people with disabilities. This current plan covers a five-year period (2023-2028).

Statement of Commitment

Willowbridge Community Services is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion 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.

Willowbridge Community Services is committed to developing, implementing, and maintaining policies that govern how the organization achieves or will achieve accessibility through meeting this Regulation. To facilitate our commitment, Willowbridge Community Services has established, maintained, and documented this multi-year accessibility plan that shall be reviewed and updated at least once every five years to identify progress made in addressing barriers. This plan will be posted on the Willowbridge Community Services website.

Standards of Accessibility under AODA:

I. General Requirements

Requirement: Accessibility policies and plans

Actions taken:

- The AODA policy (ORG 3.08) was developed and approved.
- The AODA policy was reviewed and updated as necessary.
- The AODA policy was posted on our website and will be made available in an accessible format to anyone requesting a copy of the policy.
- The IASR is incorporated into Willowbridge Community Services' Standard of Conduct. Our policy requires that the Standard of Conduct must be read, reviewed, and signed by all workers and volunteers upon hire, and as part of the annual performance review process for all workers and volunteers.
- Policy Review takes place within the organization annually.

Actions planned:

- Willowbridge will continue to review the AODA policy at least every three years - or whenever our practices and/or procedures change - to ensure it is up to date and all AODA requirements are integrated.
- Continue to make the AODA policy and multi-year plan available in an accessible format to anyone requesting a copy.
- Report compliance on the Accessibility Compliance Reporting tool.
- Annually report compliance to the Board of Directors.

Requirement: Multi-year accessibility plan

Actions taken:

- In accordance with AODA requirements for companies with over 50 employees, in 2023, Willowbridge developed this multi-year plan that outlines strategies and actions required to identify, prevent, and remove barriers for people with disabilities.
- This plan has been posted on the company website.

Actions planned:

- Review the plan at least every 5 years.
- Provide the plan in an accessible format on request.

Requirement: Procurement of goods and services

Actions taken:

- When procuring goods and services, we incorporate accessibility criteria and features. Where applicable, procurement documents will specify the desired accessibility criteria to be met and provide guidelines for the evaluation of proposals.

Actions planned:

- Educate workers and volunteers to consider, where required, incorporating accessibility criteria when procuring goods or services.
- Consult the **Ontario Government – Accessibility Rules for Procurement – How to buy or acquire goods, services or facilities that are accessible to people with disabilities** site to better understand accessibility considerations and requirements into the procurement process.

Requirement: Training

Accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities is a core value for Willowbridge and for that reason, Willowbridge provides training to workers and volunteers on Accessibility Standards and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training is provided in a way that best

suits the duties and needs of workers, volunteers, and every person who deals with the public on behalf of Willowbridge Community Services – including third parties. In addition, workers and volunteers may require training on one or more of the standards—information and communications, employment, or transportation, as it relates to the duties and responsibilities of their position.

Actions taken:

- Ensure new workers and volunteers complete AODA training within 30 days of employment or placement.
- Keep and maintain a database of the training participant’s names and dates of completion.
- Upon request, provide educational or training resources in an accessible format that considers the accessibility needs of a person with a disability.
- A new learning management system, HR Downloads, was introduced in 2022 to push all mandatory training, including AODA, to staff.
- Willowbridge has partnered with the Canadian Centre for Diversity Institute (CCDI) which provides a large library of resources on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. These resources are available to all our workers and volunteers.
- Organization-wide training compliance audits are run as needed.

Action Planned:

- Continue to use HR Downloads and CCDI as the learning platform for AODA and diversity learning modules.
- Refresher training will cycle annually.

II. Customer Service Standard

Requirement: Accessible customer service

Willowbridge Community Services strives for service excellence in all our interactions with customers. We will meet the requirements of AODA and the IASR. The agency will identify barriers to accessibility and determine appropriate ways to accommodate customer needs to provide service that is accessible for people with varying abilities.

Actions taken:

- Goods or services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use, and benefit from the goods or services.
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of goods and services.
- Persons with disabilities and their service animals are accommodated in all aspects of service provision unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.
- Willowbridge Community Services workers and volunteers, when communicating with a person with a disability, will do so in a manner that considers the person's disability.
- Notice will be provided on the website, over the phone, or in writing where applicable, and in accordance with the Continuity of Operations Plan when a Service Disruption occurs and will be done as quickly as possible if the disruption is unexpected.

Actions planned:

- Continue to train new workers and volunteers on accessible customer service.
- Continue enabling customers to use assistive devices and welcoming the assistance of service animals and support persons.
- Continue to communicate when accessible services are temporarily unavailable using methods appropriate for the circumstances.
- Develop digital services with accessibility at their core, striving for all users to have equal access to information and functionality.
- Work to ensure all online forms are accessible.

Requirement: Feedback

Comments relating to our programs and services about customer service are welcomed and appreciated.

Actions taken:

- A process has been established to encourage feedback regarding the

way Willowbridge Community Services provides goods and services to people with disabilities. This feedback can be made in multiple formats including phone, email and verbally.

- All feedback collected from clients, workers, volunteers, or the public is reviewed and analyzed to identify potential gaps in customer services, and to ensure appropriate actions are taken.
- Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person or by a service animal will be allowed to ensure Willowbridge Community Services' premises with their support person and service animal. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person or service animal be prevented from having access to their support person and/or service animal while on our premises.

Actions planned:

- Continue to use the accessible feedback mechanisms as a means for improving services to persons with different abilities.

III. Information and Communications Standard

Requirement: Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Willowbridge Community Services is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities.-We want to achieve the most effective and efficient access to information for all users.

Actions taken:

- A feedback process has been established that is accessible and multiple formats are available such as telephone, mail, and in-person. These processes are available on our website.
- Our website has been designed to be user-friendly for people with a range of needs and abilities.
- Our website also provides a feature that allows users to change the size of text they see online to suit their preference.

Actions planned:

- Continue to develop and use best practices for creating accessible documents.
- Develop best practices to make email communication more

accessible.

- Continue to review feedback received to identify accessibility barriers and strive for barrier removal.

Requirement: Accessible websites and web content

Actions taken:

- Willowbridge Community Services has ensured all new websites and content on those sites conform to World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level A and conforms to WCAG 2.0, Level AA.

Actions planned:

- Continue to evaluate and confirm that the website and web content meet AODA requirements and develop a plan if the content does not conform to the requirements.
- Ensure any future digital services or computer programs are designed for accessibility and strive for all users to have equal access to information and functionality.
- Ensure all forms are designed and conform with accessibility criteria.
- Determine what formatting that is not feasible to do in-house. i.e. captioning, video-description, and conversion to Braille or audio and any other formatting

Requirement: Emergency procedures, plans or public safety information

Actions taken:

- Willowbridge has a policy and procedure on emergency procedures (ORG 2.05)
- The Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) conducts monthly inspections on the building
- Annual fire drills are conducted (monthly in the Respite program)
- Upon request, the emergency policy will be provided in an accessible format.

Action planned:

- Continue to review the policy and conduct inspections and practice drills.

IV. Employment Standard

Requirement: Recruitment

Willowbridge Community Services is committed to ensuring that our recruitment and assessment processes are fair and accessible.

Actions taken:

- All our job postings encourage people with disabilities to apply for employment and state that accommodations are available upon request. “Willowbridge aims to provide a diversity-friendly work environment and particularly encourages people of all ethnicities, genders, sexual/gender identities, cultural backgrounds, abilities and beliefs to apply. Accommodations in the recruitment process are available upon request.”
- If requested, successful job candidates selected for an interview will be notified of what accommodations are available.
- If requested, when offers of employment are made, we notify the successful applicant of the policy for accommodating workers and volunteers with disabilities.
- All supervisors and other workers and volunteers involved in staffing of any type have access to the course on Interviewer Biases Training on our training platform, HR Downloads.

Actions planned:

- Continue to address barriers to recruitment.
- Continue to accommodate workers or volunteers upon request.

Requirement: Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Workers and Volunteers

Action taken:

- Upon request, assistive technology ie. Keyboards, specialty mice, ergonomically designed components will be investigated and provided.
- Automatic door openers have been installed in some areas of the building for mobility impairments.

- All videos in our learning management system, HR Downloads have closed captioning.

Action planned:

- Continue to ensure all learning products and systems are WCAG Level A and AA compliant.
- Continue to use assistive devices as required.
- Provide training to workers and volunteers on how to create accessible documents.

Requirement: Documented individual accommodation plans

Action taken:

- Willowbridge has a workplace accommodation policy.
- Require participation of the workers and volunteers requiring the individual accommodation plan.
- Request outside medical evaluation to determine if accommodation can be achieved and how.
- Ensure a high level of privacy.
- Get regular reviews and updates.
- Provide Individual Accommodation Plans in a format that considers the needs of the workers and volunteers.
- And if required, include individualized workplace emergency response information.

Action planned:

- Continue to review processes and procedures and look for ways to enhance the accommodation program.

Return to Work

Willowbridge Community Services is committed to developing and putting in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for workers and volunteers that have been absent due to a disability.

Willowbridge Community Services has developed and maintained a return-to-work process for our workers and volunteers who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations to return to work. Willowbridge Community Services takes steps to facilitate the return-to-work process and uses documented individual accommodation plans.

Requirement: Accessible Emergency Information

Willowbridge Community Services is committed to providing clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request.

Actions taken:

- Willowbridge has reviewed emergency procedures, created a policy, and conducted monthly inspections of our building.
- Willowbridge Community Services has provided workers and volunteers with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary, and as soon as practically possible.
- If a worker or volunteer who receives individualized workplace emergency response information requires assistance, (with the worker/volunteer's consent) the workplace emergency response information will be given to the designated workers and volunteers who will assist them.
- Willowbridge Community Services will document issues of accessibility and provide accommodation for individualized accessible emergency response information.

Action Planned:

- Willowbridge Community Services will continue to offer and provide workers and volunteers with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary, and as soon as practically possible.
- Willowbridge will continue to review the individualized workplace emergency response plans when necessary, i.e. if the location of the workers and volunteers changes and/or if there is a change in disability.

V. Transportation Standard

Willowbridge Community Services is committed to maintaining policies, planning for accessibility, and training staff to comply with the accessibility standards related to the Transportation Standards outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. All workers and volunteers that are involved in transporting people – either for free or for a fee - will follow our policy on Transportation of Clients.

VI. Design of Public Spaces

Requirement: Accessible public spaces

Willowbridge Community Services will establish plans to meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces.

Action taken:

- Willowbridge Community Services takes appropriate measures to prevent service disruptions to the accessible parts of its public spaces.
- In the event of a service disruption, notify the public of the service disruptions and alternatives available.

Action planned:

- Continuously improve physical accessibility in the Willowbridge office.

Contact Details

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact:

Willowbridge Community Services
54 Brant Ave

Brantford ON N3T3G8

Phone: 519-753-4173 or Toll Free 1-855-755-4173. The receptionist will direct the call to the appropriate program manager or director.

Email: hello@willowbridge.ca

Standard and accessible formats of this document are available free upon request.