



# **Sault Area Hospital Annual Accessibility Status Report 2024**

**Prepared by:**

**The SAH Accessibility Committee**

**This publication is available on the SAH website ([www.sah.on.ca](http://www.sah.on.ca)) and in accessible formats upon request.**

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## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

In 2013, Sault Area Hospital (SAH) created a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan which was designed to foster a healthy, respectful and positive environment and to facilitate barrier-free access to all SAH goods, services and facilities. In that plan, we outlined our strategy to prevent and remove barriers and to meet the requirements set out under the provincial accessibility legislation.

The purpose of this report is to:

- (1) Provide an update on the progress of those accessibility issues identified in our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and the steps taken to address them;
- (2) Describe accessibility issues identified since the creation of that Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and in response to which improvements have already been made;
- (3) Describe accessibility issues identified since the creation of that Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for which improvements are underway or planned for the coming calendar year; and
- (4) Meet the requirement set out under subsection 4(3)(a) of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)* that we create an annual status report and make that report publicly available.
- (5) be made available to the public via the SAH website and in accessible formats upon request.

## BACKGROUND

In 2005, the Ontario government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, C. 11. This statute requires that Ontario be an accessible province by 2025. To guide and assist employers with the identification, prevention and removal of barriers to accessibility, 2 regulations were also developed: *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*, O. Reg. 429/07 and *Integrated Accessibility Standards*, O. Reg. 191/11. This legislation contains accessibility standards governing:

- (1) Customer service;
- (2) Information and Communications;
- (3) Employment;
- (4) Transportation; and
- (5) The Design of Public Spaces.

The *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* regulation (O. Reg. 429/07) came into force in 2008. SAH is in compliance with these standards and will continue to maintain, monitor and improve upon accessibility in customer service.

The *Integrated Accessibility Standards* regulation (hereinafter “IASR”) (O. Reg. 191/11) contains the remaining standards. The IASR is now law and the requirements are being phased in over the coming years.

## **ABOUT SAH**

Located at the hub of the Great Lakes in beautiful Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, across from our sister city of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, Sault Area Hospital (SAH) is a vital cornerstone in our community with a long, storied and proud history.

SAH began as two community hospitals, both situated on the St. Mary’s River in downtown Sault Ste. Marie—the Sault Ste. Marie General Hospital (Catholic hospital founded by the Sisters of the Cross in 1898) and the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital (founded in 1919). In 1993, the two formed a partnership becoming Sault Area Hospital. Then, in March 2011, we opened a spectacular one-site, state-of-the-art hospital.

With a total annual budget of \$260 million and operating up to 300 beds, SAH provides primary, secondary and select tertiary services to residents in Sault Ste. Marie and the district of Algoma. We provide core services in Emergency and Critical Care; Cardiac; Medicine; Surgery; Obstetrics, Maternity and Pediatrics; Mental Health and Addictions; Complex Continuing Care; and Rehabilitation.

Our regional programs include the Algoma Regional Renal Program (ARRP), which provides comprehensive renal services and is one of 26 regional renal programs across Ontario. The Algoma District Cancer Program (ADCP) offers comprehensive cancer treatment services to residents of the Algoma district. Additionally, SAH operates several programs and services in locations throughout the community.

SAH works collaboratively with our local educational institutions to provide a training site for nurses and many other allied health disciplines. We are also a training site for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), supporting the learning of our medical learners and residents.

Sault Ste. Marie is a growing hub for health research. There are approximately 30 studies being spearheaded by physicians at SAH. In addition, SAH has a thriving Clinical Trials Department that works out of our Algoma District Cancer Program. There are approximately 30 clinical trials active at any given time, giving patients access to novel treatments for their care.

We are incredibly proud of our approximately 2100 dedicated staff, 160 active physicians and 400 volunteers who provide exemplary service to a catchment population of approximately 114,000 in the Algoma District.

SAH is a proud member of the Algoma Ontario Health Team, supporting an integrated health system focused on the unique needs of Algoma residents.

## **COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY**

All people, regardless of disability, have equal right of access to all goods, services and facilities provided by the Sault Area Hospital. SAH is committed to:

- Providing goods, services and facilities in a manner that:
  - Maintains the dignity, autonomy, respect, privacy and safety of persons with disabilities;
  - Is inclusive, sensitive and responsive to unique needs.
- Integration and equal opportunity;
- Preventing and removing barriers to accessibility;
- Meeting the standards set out under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

**SAH ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE**

The SAH Accessibility Committee is a working group that prepares, monitors and revises the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and Annual Status Reports required under the *IASR*. Various departments across the organization are represented on this Committee and efforts are made to include representation from the broader community. The working group responsible for preparation of this plan includes representatives from:

<b>SAH Department / Community Organization</b>
Strategy and Business Planning
Communications and Public Affairs
Facilities Management
Clinical/Allied Health
Planning and Risk Management
Patient & Family Advisor
Community Member
Occupational Therapy
Human Resources (ad hoc)

**REVIEW AND MONITORING OF PROGRESS**

The Strategy and Business Planning at Sault Area Hospital is responsible for monitoring accessibility concerns within the organization. Members of the SAH Accessibility Committee will provide input on accessibility issues during the monthly Accessibility Committee meetings.

The SAH Accessibility Committee reviews and prepares an Annual Status Report on actions taken to remove barriers. These are published on the SAH website.

**2024 COMPLETED ACTIONS TO FOLLOW:**

Accessibility Issue	Description	Improvement	Progress
<b>Continuous 'Accessibility' feedback gathering</b>	Ensure that the Accessibility Committee is continuously gathering input from the community, workers and PFAC when developing as actions on the multi-year plan.	The Accessibility Committee successfully launched the Report a Barrier button back in 2018, and has since received regular feedback and suggestions for removing barriers at SAH. We reviewed, responded, and remove numerous barriers in 2024 through feedback from this tool. It should be noted that there was less feedback than in 2023 which might suggest some additional promotion of the tool should be considered in 2025.	Complete
<b>Review AODA legislation for updates</b>	Ensure that there are no new legislative requirements to consider.	<p>We have reviewed and discussed the proposed changes to the AODA legislation that have been provided to the government to look for opportunities to make changes in advance of legislative changes. Example: the recommendations say that any organization artificial intelligence policy should have specific working to consider barrier removal and ensuring accessibility. SAH developed their first such policy and language was included preemptively.</p> <p>Officially, there no updates to the legislation have been made by the Ontario government.</p>	Complete
<b>Create accessible seating in Auditorium</b>	It was identified that the Auditorium's stadium seating was not fully accessible.	Although wheelchair had space to park in front of the seating, the fold down stadium seating was not accessible due to	Complete

		<p>the closeness of the seats to one another. After working directly with the seat manufacturer, we determined that by removing some seats and changing the arm rest spacing, we could make the seating more accessible. This was done with no cost other than an hour of facilities' time.</p>	
<p><b>Review and provide input for new or reorganized onsite or offsite locations.</b></p>	<p>Ensure that the Accessibility Committee is consulted when hospital operated space is developed or redeveloped. The committee should provide feedback, input and provide attestations for the work when completed, as required.</p>	<p>The committee reviewed potential Emergency Department designs and provided feedback from an Accessibility perspective. Although the planning work is still happening, we have been able to ensure the voice of the Committee is included.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Actuator and doorway reviews</b></p>	<p>Audit facilities to determine the need for door actuators, "hold opens," or alterations to doorways.</p>	<p>Modifications were made to the cashier office door to make it more accessible.                      Modification to the change rooms in day surgery were complete and now offer a fully accessible place for changing.                      Hold opens were installed for the door from the day surgery change room into the corridor.                      Some minor alternations were made to the door leading to Ventures coffee shop to provide greater clearance for larger wheelchairs. Structural changes are being investigated.                      New bottle fill stations were installed at an accessible height.                      Actuators for Patient Records and for the outer staff door near Ophthalmology,</p>	<p>Complete                      Complete                      Complete                      Complete and ongoing                      Complete                      Complete</p>

		<p>which were ordered in 2023, were successfully installed this past year.</p> <p>Warning tape was installed on emergency exits where there is a drop of surface level which could pose a safety risk to those in wheelchairs or with mobility issues.</p>	Complete
<b>Additional Accessible seating in Courtyard “B”</b>	Reviewed and recommended options for a staff donation of outdoor furniture in tribute of former staff.	Working with the SAH Foundation and Facilities, we were able to influence a decision to buy a new outdoor table and seating to ensure that they are not only accessible, but would be functional for exercises our rehab patients were doing in the courtyard during the summer months using seating.	Complete
<b>Review Accessibility Policies</b>	Reviewed policy for any potential updates needed.	<p>No changes were required. The policy was updated and moved to the new policy template. The next update for the SAH Accessibility will be in 2027.</p> <p>Additionally, the Support Animal Policy was reviewed and minor changes were made based on challenges with patients identifying multiple animals as support animals, which in fact were not trained and posed a safety risk to staff.</p>	Complete
<b>Support Patient Relations re: Accessibility-related concerns</b>	Provide Accessibility-related advice and support to Patient relations Department, as required,	Supported Patient Relations by providing Accessibility-related advice when responding to Patient Concerns.	Complete and ongoing
<b>Prepare annual status report</b>	Completed the annual status report for publication on the SAH website by year end.	Created on December 21, 2023.	Complete

FOR PLANNED ACCESSIBILITY ACTIVITY FOR 2025, PLEASE SEE THE 2025-2028 MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY WORKPLAN AVAILABLE ON THE SAH WEBSITE.