

Complete the following policy template. Do not delete unused sections of the template. Unused sections should remain blank.

<b>Title: ACCESSIBILITY</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy & Procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Procedure Only <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol Only
<b>Policy Type:</b>		
Corporate		
Approval Authority Level: Chief Executive Officer & President		Authority Area of Responsibility Accessibility
Date of Original Issue: July 30, 2009	Revised Date: July 23, 2025	Next Review Date: July 23, 2028
Distribution: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hospital-Wide		
Related Policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient and Visitor Compliments and Concerns Management</li> <li>• Service Animal</li> <li>• Recruitment, Hiring and Staffing</li> <li>• Procurement Policy</li> </ul>		
Keywords: accessibility, AODA, accessible, disability, disabilities, barrier, free, assistive, devices, standards, customer, service, human rights		
<b>NOTE:</b> This is a CONTROLLED DOCUMENT. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current version; always check against the electronic version prior to use.		

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the practices and procedures in place at SAH to help identify and remove barriers that impede a person's ability to access care and services.

**Policy:**

Sault Area Hospital (SAH) is committed to preventing, identifying and removing barriers that impede the ability of people with disabilities to access care and services. This includes patients, families, staff, physicians, volunteers and members of our community.

In June, 2005 the Ontario government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The purpose of this enhanced Act is to develop, implement and enforce standards of accessibility for all Ontarians. SAH's Accessibility Policy is consistent with the AODA, the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation (O. Reg. 429/07) that was passed on January 1, 2008, and the Integrated Accessibility Standards (O. Reg. 191/11) passed on July 1, 2011. These regulations set accessibility standards related to customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces. All public sector organizations, including Sault Area Hospital (SAH), are



required to comply with the requirements as applicable. All people, regardless of disability, have equal right of access to all goods, services and facilities provided by SAH. 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; and
  - is inclusive, sensitive and responsive to unique needs.
- Integration and equal opportunity;
- Preventing and removing barriers to accessibility; and
- Meeting the standards set out under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

**Scope:**

All workers (staff, physicians, volunteers), patients and families, and visitors.

**Procedure:**

SAH will ensure we are identifying, preventing and removing barriers to access for people with disabilities through procedures in the following areas:

*General Procedures:* SAH will enable and accommodate people with disabilities to access our goods and utilize our services. We will communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their unique needs.

*Support Persons, Service Animals and Assistive Devices:* SAH will support and encourage the presence and use of accessibility support persons, service animals and assistive devices, with consideration taken for infection prevention and control, as well as patient safety (for example, kitchen areas and OR suites).

SAH will:

- allow people with disabilities to bring their guide dog or service animal with them to areas of the premises that are open to the public.
- permit people with disabilities who use a support person to accompany them and ensuring that a person with a disability has access to a support person while on our premises.
- Encourage people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to improve access to SAH's services.

*Training:* SAH will ensure anyone who provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of the hospital, including all staff, physicians and volunteers, will receive accessibility awareness training about key principles and accessibility strategies and tools (i.e. e-Learning module). This training will include:

- the purpose and content of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* (O. Reg. 429/07), the *Integrated Accessibility Standards* (O. Reg. 191/11) and Ontario's *Human Rights Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities;
- the purpose and content of policies and procedures governing accessibility at SAH;
- an introduction to some of the equipment and assistive devices available for use at SAH when providing services to persons with disabilities; and
- considerations and strategies to promote accessible information sharing and communication.

Records will be kept to document training of staff, physician, and volunteers for a period of 5 years.

*Notice of Accessible Service Interruption:* SAH will provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access our services are temporarily disrupted. In the event of a planned or unplanned service disruption, notification will be provided in advance or as soon as possible. When necessary, appropriate alternative services will be provided. Notices of disruption shall be made publicly available as appropriate (e.g. SAH website) and shall include:

- the name of the event/service;
- the normal service location being impacted;



- alternate service locations;
- alternate service methods;
- hours of service availability;
- contact information; and
- any other information deemed appropriate to deliver a good or service.

*Encouraging Feedback:* SAH will encourage and respond to feedback from patients, families and visitors. The hospital accepts feedback in a variety of formats, including email, telephone, mail and in-person. In addition, SAH will ensure:

- communication supports are available to facilitate the feedback process upon request;
- every staff member is attentive to the concerns of patients/residents, their families and visitors and to resolve concerns related to accessibility;
- all information provided through our feedback process is available in accessible formats upon request. Upon being advised of a need for documents in accessible formats or communication supports, SAH will work with the individual making the request to determine the most appropriate format or communication support. Where information cannot be converted to the format requested, SAH will provide an explanation of the problem and a summary of the information; and
- concerns related to accessibility shall be reported to Patient Relations and managed in accordance with the *Patient and Visitor Compliments and Concerns Management* as required.

*Accessibility Committee and Accessibility Plan:* SAH, in consultation with persons with disabilities, will establish and maintain a multi-year accessibility plan. This Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every 5 years. Each year, SAH will prepare a status report of the measures taken to implement the strategies set out in the multi-year accessibility plan. Both the multi-year accessibility plan and the annual status reports will be made publicly available through the SAH website.

*Procurement:* SAH will consider accessibility when making decisions relating to the procurement or acquisition of goods, services and facilities. In particular, SAH will incorporate accessibility features when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

*Hiring and Recruitment:* SAH will ensure that all open positions are recruited for in an inclusive manner, ensuring equal consideration and that accommodation is available in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

The following language in job postings shall be used:

“Sault Area Hospital is a respectful, caring, and inclusive workplace. We are committed to championing accessibility, diversity, equal opportunity and maintaining a barrier-free selection process for job applicants. Requests for accommodation can be made at any stage of the recruitment process providing the applicant has met the requirements for the open position. Applicants need to make their requirements known to the Human Resources department when contacted. All requests are handled confidentially.”

## Supportive Data / Definitions:

<p><b>Assistive Devices and Measures:</b> Assistive devices and measures are supports to improve access to care for patients with disabilities. For example, wheelchairs, volunteers, real-time captioning services (on-screen typing of what speakers are saying), sign language interpreters or deaf-blind interveners. Other examples include, text, Telephone Teletypes (TTY) to communicate with clients who are deaf, hard of hearing, have speech impairments or are deaf-blind (Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation).</p>	<p><b>Disability:</b> According to the Ontario Human Rights Code, a "Disability" is defined as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech</li> </ol>
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	<p>impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,</p> <p>b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,</p> <p>c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,</p> <p>d) a mental disorder, or</p> <p>e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.</p> <p>The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go. This definition describes common disabilities and is not considered exhaustive.</p>
<p><b>Emotional Support Animals:</b> Emotional support animals provide comfort and security; however, they do not have training for specific tasks. Therefore, emotional support animals do not formally qualify as service animals under the AODA. At SAH, an Emotional Support Animal will be considered a “service animal” if the patient/visitor provides documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability (see SAH’s Service Animal Administrative Policy) and at the discretion of the area manager or delegate based on a risk analysis.</p>	<p><b>Personal Assistive Devices:</b> For the purpose of this policy, Personal Assistive Devices are personal supports used by persons with disabilities that enable them to carry out the activities of daily living and allow access to services. Patient-owned equipment such as power-mobility devices (power wheelchairs or scooters) are regarded as Personal Assistive Devices.</p>
<p><b>Service Animal:</b> Any animal individually trained to assist people with disabilities in the activities of normal daily living, to enhance quality of life, and mitigate their disabilities. These animals provide persons living with disabilities a variety of services, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ guiding individuals with visual impairments</li> <li>▪ alerting individuals who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing to sounds</li> <li>▪ alerting to seizures</li> <li>▪ opening/closing doors</li> <li>▪ retrieving items</li> <li>▪ pulling a wheelchair</li> </ul> <p>Most service animals are dogs and can be of any breed or size. A service animal is afforded access to all places the public is invited when accompanying their human partner. A service animal is not considered a “pet” because it is specially trained to help a person overcome the limitations of their disability or used to minimize the impacts of the disability. (See SAH’s Service Animal Administrative Policy)</p>	<p><b>Support Person:</b> A “Support Person” accompanies a person with a disability, in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. Medical needs may include, but are not limited to, monitoring an individual’s health or providing medical support by being available in the event of a seizure. A Support Person may be a paid professional, a volunteer, family member or friend of the person with a disability (Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation).</p>

**References:** Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

**Revision History:**

Date:	Signing Authority: Name / Title
July 2009 - Accessible Customer Service - Administrative Policy 1.1	Unknown
March 2018 - Accessibility – Administrative Policy 1.2	Ila Watson, VP
January 2021 - Accessibility – Administrative Policy 1.3	Ila Watson, VP
July 2025 – Accessibility – Administrative Policy	Shauna Hynna, VP
July 2025 – Accessibility – Administrative Policy	Greg Zambusi, VP, on behalf of Ila Watson, CEO

