



**Seaway Valley
Community Health Centre**
Working with you for a Healthier Community

***Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
(AODA) - Accessibility Standards for Client Service***

Policy and Training Manual

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DEFINITIONS

Alternate formats

Alternate formats to publish information beyond traditional printing:

- Audio format such as cassettes or digital audio format
- Braille used by some people who are blind or deaf-blind
- Videos that may be helpful to people with certain learning disabilities
- Literature that is easy-to-read, simplified summaries of materials for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities.

Assistive Device

SVCHC defines an assistive device as a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating or lifting. This includes but is not limited to, walkers, magnifiers for reading, assisted listening systems, television captioning and decoders, video tapes, both open and closed captioned, TTY/D's, transcriptions, readers, taped texts, Braille and large print materials. Any similar device or service that is needed to make spoken or aural language accessible is also considered an auxiliary aid.

Is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that clients bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

Barrier

SVCHC defines a barrier as any policy, practice or procedure, or part of the built environment that prevents someone with a disability from participating fully in programs or services because of his or her disability.

Disability

SVCHC uses the definition of disability as provided by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, which refers to: 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 coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device; A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability; A learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language; A mental disorder; or I An injury or

disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Disabilities come in many different forms, sometimes obvious and sometimes not. Disabilities may be visible or invisible, they may differ in severity, and the effects of a disability may be continuous or intermittent. The impact of a disability depends on the person's ability to access services, assistive devices, transportation, education and employment.

Guide Dog

A guide dog is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

Provider of goods or services

A provider of goods or services is defined as an Ontario business or organization that provides goods or services to the public or other third parties, and has at least one employee.

In addition to the public sector organizations designated under the standard, providers of goods or services are:

- stores, restaurants, hotels, bars and hair salons
- garages, service stations, home renovators, architects and builders
- travel agencies, tour operators, amusement parks, farmers' markets and travelling fairs
- manufacturers and wholesalers
- professionals, such as **doctors and nurse practitioners**, dentists, chiropractors, physiotherapists, lawyers, and accountants, whether services are offered to individuals or to businesses
- consultants, programmers, engineers and event planners
- **charities and non-profit organizations**
- theatres, stadiums and conference centres
- places of worship, such as churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, and
- unions and professional associations.

Public Sector provider

The customer service standard defines a public sector provider as:

- the Legislative Assembly and those appointed on the address of the Assembly
- provincial ministries
- all Ontario municipalities
- organizations listed in Schedules 1 and 2 of the customer service standard:
- Schedule 1 organizations are boards, commissions, authorities and agencies of the Government of Ontario, and
- Schedule 2 organizations are broader public-sector organizations such as school boards, colleges, universities, hospitals and public transportation organizations.

Reasonable Efforts

The Customer Service Standard requires organizations to make reasonable efforts to meet the needs of people with disabilities. SVCHC defines reasonable efforts as providing the best possible service within the context of: available resources, balancing the needs of people with disabilities with others who may encounter barriers to access and with the community at large, the health and safety of staff and volunteers, the security of property and existing laws and contracts.

Regulated Health Professionals

Ontario Regulation 165/16, s. 16. The person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

- (i) A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
- (ii) A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
- (iii) A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- (iv) A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
- (v) A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
- (vi) A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
- (vii) A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
- (viii) A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
- (ix) A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

Sensory Impaired

Sensory Impaired refers to a person who has a hearing deficit, deaf, partially sighted and/or blind or physically unable to speak.

Service Animal

As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if: It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability. An animal (commonly a dog) trained to help a person with a disability such as,

- autism or other developmental/intellectual disabilities
- vision loss
- who are deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing
- mental health disabilities
- physical disabilities
- epilepsy or other seizure disorders.
- other disabilities.

Service Dog

As reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562* a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if: It is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or The person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

Sign Language and Sign System

Sign Language and Sign System means visual or tactile ways of communicating thoughts, ideas and feeling through American Sign Language or manual signs and gestures with specifically defined vocabulary.

Support Person

As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07* is a support person who accompanies a person with a disability to help them with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or to access goods or services.

Third Party

Business and organizations that provide goods and services to the public through a third party instead of direct service provision.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 **(AODA) - Accessibility Standards for Client Service** **Policy and Procedure Training Manual**

POLICY

Policy Statement

The Seaway Valley Community Health Centre (SVCHC) welcomes and encourages people with disabilities to use its services. SVCHC will provide access to programs and services for people with disabilities in a way that respects their rights to dignity, independence and integration.

This commitment is consistent with SVCHC's mission to deliver services in a welcoming and supportive environment and with its core value of equity; accessibility, diversity and fairness in the treatment of all individuals. The individual's accessibility needs will be met in a timely manner.

SVCHC will establish policies, practices and procedures which support the accessibility standards established under the AODA on customer service, information and communication, employment and the built environment.

Policy Objectives

This policy outlines SVCHC's responsibilities in providing programs and services to people with disabilities in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, Accessible Customer Service Standard and regulations. The goal is to ensure SVCHC meets or exceeds the standards set by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 ("AODA")* and its regulations, the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11.

SVCHC is committed to achieving a fully accessible organization. To achieve this commitment, all SVCHC staff, students and volunteers share in the responsibility for advancing accessibility by playing unique and important roles in removing and preventing barriers to participation.

SVCHC is committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access and benefit from programs and services, in the same place and in a similar way as other service users.

SVCHC will consider the individual needs of people with disabilities in delivering service by:

- Considering individual and special needs when applying SVCHC policies and rules
- Communicating with people in a way that meets their needs
- Welcoming feedback and suggestions about services in a variety of formats
- Welcoming accompanying support people (at no charge or fee)
- Offering a range of assistive devices
- Welcoming service animals
- Letting people know if services are not available where possible, for example, if a program is going to be closed or if the website is not available
- Ensuring emergency responses address accessibility
- Training all staff and volunteers to provide the best possible service
- Providing a forum for addressing concerns or challenges associated with accessing our services including provision of phone numbers and key contact information
- Providing opportunities for continuous improvement and regular review of accessibility policies and procedures

Principles

Dignity – Service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people. People with disabilities are not treated as an afterthought or forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

Independence – Allowing a person with a disability 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 other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable the person to access goods or services.

Equal opportunity – People with disabilities have an opportunity equal to that given to others to access your goods or services.

Accountability

The Board of Directors and Management at the Seaway Valley Community Health Centre's is accountable to our clients and to the government of Ontario for meeting the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 ("AODA") and its regulations. To address concerns regarding the implementation of this policy, please contact the Executive Director at 613-936-0306, ext 101.

The Centre will develop and implement accessibility policies and programs that adhere to the standards as set out in the Acts. These documents will be available to the public in writing and, upon request available in an accessible format, and updated on a regular basis. The plan will be updated every five (5) years.

PROCEDURES

Customer Service Pledge

The following procedures address the requirements established by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (“Customer Service Standard”). SVCHC is committed to excellence in serving all service users, including people with disabilities. This commitment is demonstrated in a variety of ways as detailed below.

Provision of Services

In keeping with SVCHC’s mission of providing free and equitable access in a welcoming and supportive environment, the centre will:

- Provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities and provides them with an equal opportunity to learn about, use and benefit from programs and services:
- Integrate services for people with disabilities. The Centre understands that equitable access sometimes requires different treatment including separate or specialized services. However, such services will be offered in a manner that respects the dignity and full participation of individuals with disability.

1.0. Communication:

- 1.1. Communication to Clients: SVCHC staff and volunteers shall communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their needs and their disability by asking how they can help and taking guidance from the person with whom they are communicating.
- 1.2. Public Safety Information related to emergency procedures and plans, as well as public safety information will be available to the public. The Centre will provide the information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports upon request and as soon as practicable.
- 1.3. The language of service delivery at SVCHC is English however; interpreter services for multilingual services are purchased on an as needed basis from a Third Party organization specializing in language interpretation. The aim is to improve quality of service as a result of accurate transmission of messages to clients with sensory impairments, ultimately reducing risk and liability and facilitating coordination and integration with other health services.
- 1.4. Many SVCHC employees speak other languages and are willing to provide informal interpretation service to assist any individual to overcome a barrier in delivery of client service due to language.

2.0. Telephone Services:

2.1. Accessible telephone service is provided to service users within the scope of SVCHC's resources.

2.2. When communicating with clients and participants, personnel shall speak clearly and at a pace the person can understand.

2.3. If telephone communication is not suitable to a person's communication needs or is not available, communication with service users can be done through secure e-mail, written means, relay services and TTY services where a TTY machine is available.

3.0. Assistive Devices:

3.1. The Centre offers a broad range of assistive devices to meet the needs of people with disabilities and will make every effort to permit the use of assistive devices that enable people with disabilities to use SVCHC services. The Centre recognizes that accessibility can be achieved and provided in different ways.

3.2. Staff is responsible for identifying the types of assistive devices their clients and participants may use while accessing SVCHC programs or services and becoming familiar with these devices.

3.3. **Client's Own Assistive Device(s):** Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services provided by Seaway Valley Community Health Centre. In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, open flames and oxygen tanks cannot be near one another. Therefore, the accommodation of a client with an oxygen tank may involve ensuring the clients in a location that would be considered safe for both the client and business. Or, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the client.

3.4. The following assistive devices are available on a first come, first serve basis and upon request, to assist clients in accessing our goods and services:

- Wheelchairs

4.0. Use of Service Animals, Guide Dogs:

4.1. SVCHC welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. A client with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. "No pet" policies do not apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs.

4.2. At no time shall a person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal be prevented from having access to their service animal. Client and provider safety will be the priority at all times when dealing with service animals.

5.0. Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

5.1. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the client for reasons relating to his or her disability, Seaway Valley Community Health Centre may request verification from the client. Verification may include:

- A letter from a physician or Regulated Health Professional (as noted below) confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
 - A valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
 - A certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.
- Care and Control of the Animal:

The client that is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.

6.0. Regulated Health Professionals Ontario Regulation 165/16, s. 16:

6.1. The person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

- (i) A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
- (ii) A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
- (iii) A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
- (iv) A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
- (v) A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
- (vi) A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
- (vii) A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
- (viii) A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
- (ix) A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

7.0. Exclusion Guidelines:

7.1. If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law (see applicable laws below) Seaway Valley Community Health Centre will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

8.0. Food Service Areas:

8.1. A client with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog or service dog will be allowed access to food service areas that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law.

Other types of service animals are not permitted into food service areas due to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*.

9.0. Applicable Laws:

9.1. Food Safety and Quality Act 2001, Ontario Regulation 31/05: Animals not intended for slaughter or to be euthanized are not allowed in any area or room of a meat plant. It also makes an exception for service dogs to allow them in those areas of a meat plant where food is served, sold or offered for sale to clients and in those areas that do not contain animals or animal parts and are not used for the receiving, processing, packaging, labelling, shipping, handling or storing of animals or parts of animals.

9.2. The Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60, normally does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. It does allow guide dogs and service dogs to go into places where food is served, sold or offered for sale. However, other types of service animals are not included in this exception.

9.3. Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pitbulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

10.0. The Use of Support Persons:

10.1. SVCHC welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. At no time shall a person with a disability, who is accompanied by a support person, be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises. If a client with a disability is accompanied by a support person, Seaway Valley Community Health Centre will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the client is not prevented from having access to the support person. There may be times where seating and availability prevent the client and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations Seaway Valley Community Health Centre will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue. In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the client, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed. Support persons who participate in a program or service for the purposes of supporting a person with a disability shall not be charged a fee.

11.0. Allergies:

11.1. If a health and safety concern presents itself for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, Seaway Valley Community Health Centre will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

12.0. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption:

12.1. Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of Seaway Valley Community Health Centre. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that client's with disabilities rely on to access or use Seaway Valley Community Health Centre's goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notifications will include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- Goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable;
- Reason for the disruption;
- Anticipated duration; and
- A description of alternative services or options.

When disruptions occur Seaway Valley Community Health Centre will provide notice by:

- posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption,
- posting notices at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption
- posting notice on on the Seaway Valley Community Health Centre website;
- contacting clients with appointments by telephone or verbally notifying clients when they are making a reservation or appointment; or
- by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

In the event of a planned or unexpected service disruption, SVCHC shall provide service users with as much advance notice as is reasonable. This notice shall include information about the reason for the service disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The notice shall be placed on SVCHC's website, at all public entrances and at reception counters on SVCHC premises. If clients have not had reasonable access to notifications through these

means, personnel shall make every effort to contact them by phone or e-mail to inform them of the service disruption.

13.0. Notice of Availability of Information and Format of Documentation:

13.1. SVCHC will document its policies and procedures as required by the Customer Service Standard. Members of the public will be notified of the availability of this documentation, available in a number of formats.

13.2. Seaway Valley Community Health Centre shall notify clients that the documents related to the Accessibility Standard for Client Service are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the client's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place owned and operated by Seaway Valley Community Health Centre, the Seaway Valley Community Health Centre's website and/or any other reasonable method.

14.0. Reasonable Effort:

14.1. SVCHC will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of people with disabilities. SVCHC defines reasonable effort as providing the best possible service within the context of available resources, balancing the needs of people with disabilities with others who may encounter barriers to access and with the community at large, and the health and safety of SVCHC staff.

14.2. Every attempt will be made to meet the requests for Accommodation under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Where a request for accommodation is made, SVCHC will strive to provide accommodation in a way that most respects the dignity of the person. SVCHC recognizes that people with disabilities may require individualized accommodation and that each person's needs are unique. Accommodation will be provided unless SVCHC experiences "undue hardship" as defined in the Code. 13

15.0. Training for Staff and Volunteers:

15.1. SVCHC shall provide this mandatory training to all staff, students and volunteers to meet the needs of people with disabilities. This includes the training requirements in the AODA and its regulations.

15.2. SVCHC shall provide training to staff, students and volunteers who deal with the public or other third parties on its behalf. SVCHC shall also ensure/confirm that all contractors who deal with the public or other third parties on SVCHC's behalf have received training about accessible customer service requirements.

15.3. This training shall be provided during orientation (within one month of the date of hire) after personnel commence their duties. The following people/positions shall take lead responsibility with respect to this:

- The Executive Director or designate shall ensure all newly hired staff members undergo training as part of their orientation.
- The Staff responsible for the recruitment and supervision of students and volunteers ensure that all students and volunteers undergo training as part of their orientation to their role at SVCHC. Refer to the link to training below.

15.4. Training shall include the following:

- The goal and mandate of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- How to use the TTY (if applicable for their role).
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing SVCHC's programs and services.
- SVCHC's policy on accessible customer service.

15.5. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

15.6. The training will be coordinated by the Executive Director (or delegate). This training shall be accessed electronically at the following web site: Serve-Ability: Transforming Ontario's Customer Service Accessibility Directorate of Ontario's Serve-Ability Training Video

15.7. Seaway Valley Community Health Centre will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

16.0. Training Provisions:

16.1. As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Client Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices; require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- Seaway Valley Community Health Centre's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible client service to clients with disabilities.

17.0. Feedback, Complaints and Questions:

17.1. Seaway Valley Community Health Centre shall provide clients with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to clients with disabilities. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all clients and notice of the process will be made available in a variety of formats, including in person, on the organization's website and verbally to clients at orientation and at appointments. Feedback forms along with alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email), will be made available upon request. Assistance will be made available to individuals requiring support in providing feedback upon request.

Questions or concerns about this policy or its related procedures should be directed to:

Debbie St John-de Wit, Executive Director
Seaway Valley Community Health Centre
613-930-4892, extension 101
dewitd@seawayvalleychc.ca
353 Pitt Street, Cornwall, ON K6J 3R1

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
(AODA) - Accessibility Standards for Client Service

ACKNOWLEDGMENT & AGREEMENT

I, (_____), acknowledge that I have read and understand the Accessibility Standards for Client Service Policy of Seaway Valley Community Health Centre.

Further, I agree to adhere to this policy and will ensure that colleagues and employees /volunteers working under my direction, or alongside me, adhere to this policy.

I understand that if I violate the rules/procedures outlined in this policy, I may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

REFERENCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

How May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities
<http://www.redwoodlearning.com/rcc/>

Ontario Interpreting Service <http://www.chs.ca/en/> and click on Ontario

Captioners <http://www.productionhub.com/> and click on directory

Braille www.canadianbraillepress.com

Contacts:

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario 777 Bay Street, 6th Floor, Suite 601 Toronto, ON M7A 2J4
E-mail: accessibility@css.gov.on.ca.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Contact Centre: (Service Ontario) Toll-free: 1-866-515-2025 TTY: 416-325-3408 / Toll-free 1-800-268-7095 Fax: 416-325-3407

ADDITIONAL TRAINING INFORMATION

Training Modules for Staff and Volunteers Frequently Asked Questions

Ontario continues to demonstrate leadership in Canada by developing comprehensive accessibility standards within all areas of daily life. In January 2008, the Ontario government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*. The Act which aims to give people with disabilities the same opportunities as all others and includes availability of barrier-free access to all retail establishments and access to employees trained to provide superior customer service.

How does this new Act impact upon businesses in Ontario? The regulation states that every organization in Ontario, with at least one employee, is required to provide staff with accessibility training by January 1, 2012 to comply with this Government legislation.

What does this mean for you?

SVCHC must ensure that all contractors are trained on providing accessible customer service. In general, any person or organization that does business with Seaway Valley Community Health Centre should receive training.

What is covered in accessibility training?

- Introduction to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act*
- Goal and mandate of the AODA
- Overview of Accessible Customer Service Standards requirements
- Definition of disability and types of disabilities
- Barriers to accessibility
- Principles of effective customer services
- Proper etiquette for interacting with people with disabilities
- How to recognize and respond appropriately to people using personal supports, service animals and assistive technology.

What are the benefits of providing staff with accessibility training?

- Empowered and trained staff who are aware of how to properly respond to and accommodate disability needs
- Improved workplace practices and policies
- Higher rates of customer satisfaction with services and customer retention rates
- Increased workplace morale
- Reduced risk of non-compliance, penalties and customer dissatisfaction with service delivery (equalling increased cost saving benefits)
- Better service for all clients, regardless of whether they have a disability
- Fulfillment of training requirements for staff as mandated in the Accessible Customer Service Standards

Additional On-Line Training Modules and Other Resources from Ministry of Community and Social Services:

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario's Talk To Me Video – use link below:

http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/understanding_accessibility/howto_videos.aspx

Other Resources from the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario

The Legislation

<http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/DevelopingStandards/customerService.aspx>

Frequently asked questions

What is the status of the other new accessibility standards? What will my business have to do to comply with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service?

Note: Information regarding Accessibility is posted on the SVCHC website. All staff must participate in a training session and provide proof of training completion as a requirement of compliance.

Reporting

Mandatory reporting is required to ensure that all organizations are complying with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. Organizations must file an annual online accessibility reports with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Organizations must file their reports online through the ServiceOntario website called ONE-key. Alternate formats of the report must be provided upon request when:

- the person filing the report requires an alternate format due to accessibility concerns, or
- the person or organization does not have the technical capacity to file an online report.

Contacts:

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario 777 Bay Street, 6th Floor, Suite 601 Toronto, ON M7A 2J4
E-mail: accessibility@css.gov.on.ca

Accessibility For Ontarians With Disabilities Act (AODA) Contact Centre : (ServiceOntario) Toll-free: 1-866-515-2025 TTY: 416-325-3408 / Toll-free 1-800-268-7095 Fax: 416-325-3407