

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Policy

1 PURPOSE

The policy acknowledges the legislative requirement for and commitment by Skills for Change to provide high quality services that are accessible to all persons that we serve.

This policy is intended to fulfill the requirements set out in Ontario Regulation 429/07 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and other third parties engaged by Skills for Change, clients and all other stakeholders.

3 DEFINITIONS

Accommodation is a special arrangement made or assistance provided so that customers with disabilities can participate in the experiences available to customers without disabilities. Accommodation will vary depending on the customer's unique needs.

Accessible means customer service is provided in a manner that is capable of being easily understood or appreciated; easy to get at; capable of being reached or entered; obtainable.

Assistive Device means any device or mechanism that assists a person with a disability in accessing and benefiting from the services provided. Assistive devices may include but are not limited to; American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, wheelchair, walker, cane, assistive listening device, visual alarms, or assistive software programs.

Disability means:

- a) Any degree of physical 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 impairment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal, or on a wheelchair or

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other remedial appliance or device,

- b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - c) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - d) A mental disorder,
 - 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.
- Guide Dog means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the Blind Persons' Rights Act R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7, s. 1 (1).

Service animal is an animal that provides assistance for a person with a disability. It may be readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his/her disability; or a person may be asked to provide a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support person means in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

6 POLICY

Our Commitment

Skills for Change aims to provide its, services and opportunities in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others, to obtain, use or benefit from the services provided by and on behalf of Skills for Change.

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7 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities, making communication more accessible for all.

Telephone Services

We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers, employees and volunteers. We will train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly. We will offer to communicate with customers and employees by the following methods: e.g. e-mail, TTY (Telephone Teletype), or relay services (if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.)

Assistive Devices

We are committed to serving and providing opportunities to people with disabilities that use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods, services, and opportunities. We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services and opportunities for example: Personal Assistive Devices are part of the personal space of the people using them.

Billing

We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers. For this reason, invoices will be provided in the following formats upon request: hard copy, large print, e-mail or other mutually agreed upon method. We will answer any questions clients or service providers may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone or e-mail.

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Services Animals

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to employees, volunteers, the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

Support Persons

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Skills for Change's premises with his or her support person, provided that the interaction does not compromise our academic or employment standards. At no time will 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.

Employment

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities with respect to recruitment, employment, training, career development and career progression.

Facilities

We are committed to ensuring that our premises and related services are welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities. As appropriate, we are willing to provide necessary alterations to our facilities to accommodate people with disabilities.

Notice of Temporary Disruption of Services

Skills for Change will provide clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

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The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises, on our voicemail, our website and social media, e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube.

Training

Skills for Change will provide training to all employees, volunteers and other third parties who deal with the public on their behalf. The training must be delivered as soon as it is reasonable after starting a job or new duties and where changes occur to policies, practices, and procedures, updated training must be offered.

Training must include:

- The Ontario Human Rights Code
- Accessible customer service
- Any accessibility requirements that apply to their job duties and the organization
- Information on Policies and Procedures at Skills for Change in accordance to AODA

8 Modifications

We are committed to developing customer service and employment policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. Any policy of Skills for Change that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Feedback Process

The ultimate goal of Skills for Change is to meet and surpass employee, volunteer, client and third-party expectations while serving clients with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way Skills for Change provides goods, services and opportunities to people with disabilities can be made in person, in writing, by email, telephone, or survey and feedback forms.

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- [AODA Customer Service Feedback Form](#)
- [AODA Employee Feedback Form-Recruitment Process](#)

All feedback will be directed to Human Resources (hr@skillsforchange.org) and respond within 48 hours if necessary.

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