



# **MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN**

## North Eastern Ontario Family And Children's Services



## INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

In 2005, the government of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (the “AODA”). It is the goal of the Ontario government to make Ontario accessible by 2025. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR), under the AODA, require that North Eastern Ontario Family and Children’s Services (NEOFACS) establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan which outlines the organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities and to meet its requirements under the IASR.

This multi-year plan outlines the Agency’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers, to address the current and future requirements of the AODA in order to fulfill the Agency’s commitment as outlined in NEOFACS Accessibility Policy. This accessibility plan outlines the steps that NEOFACS will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

In accordance with the requirements set out in the IASR, NEOFACS will:

- Establish, review and update the multi-year accessibility plan;
- Post this plan on its website ([www.neofacs.org](http://www.neofacs.org));
- Report any updates of this Plan on its website ([www.neofacs.org](http://www.neofacs.org));
- Provide this plan in an accessible format, upon request; and
- Review and update this plan at least once every five years.

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (was revoked on July 1, 2016 and incorporated into the IASR).
2. Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations
3. Emergency Procedure, Plans or Public Safety Information
4. Workplace Emergency Response Information
5. Training
6. Information and Communication Standards
  - a. Feedback, Accessible Formats and Communication Supports
  - b. Accessible Websites and Web Content
7. Employment
  - a. Recruitment
  - b. Informing Employees of Supports
  - c. Documented Individual Accommodation Plans/Return to Work Process
  - d. Performance Management, Career Development and Redeployment
8. Procurement
9. Proposed Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment

## STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

NEOFACS has remained in compliance with the Customer Service Regulation under the AODA.

NEOFACS is committed to excellence in serving all clients, including persons with disabilities and it will carry out its functions in a manner which delivers an accessible client service experience.

NEOFACS is committed to providing services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. This commitment will be integrated wherever possible and will ensure that persons with disabilities will benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients.

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

- Ensures all persons who, on behalf of NEOFACS, deal with the public or other third parties and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of IASR policies, practices and procedures, as well as all others providing services to our clients, are trained to communicate and provide the best possible service to all clients, including persons with disabilities;
- Ensures staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by clients with disabilities who are accessing the Agency's services;
- Ensures completion of accessibility training is tracked and recorded;
- Provides fully-accessible telephone service to clients, offering to communicate with clients by TTY if telephone communication is not suitable to their needs;
- Ensures clients accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal in areas of NEOFACS open to the public and other third parties, are accommodated;
- Ensures that if a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the support person is accommodated. If the support person is assisting the client participating in an Agency program or service, but that person is not participating in the program or service on his or her own behalf, the support person is not charged a fee to attend the program or service;
- Provides clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of service or inaccessibility of facilities used by persons with disabilities, by placing such notices at all public entrances. If the disruption is long-term, NEOFACS posts an announcement on its website informing clients of the location, duration of the disruption and alternate solutions;
- Continues to welcome and appreciate feedback from persons with disabilities through multiple communication channels;
- Reviews and develop strategies to engage stakeholders in providing accessibility related feedback, including people with disabilities;

- An “Accessibility” tab was added to the footer of the website (www.neofacs.org) to communicate the Agency’s accessible customer service policy including related procedures and guidelines; and
- NEOFACS’s has filed compliance reports with the customer service standard through the Accessibility Compliance Reporting tool at Service Ontario’s One-Source for Business website.

## INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS REGULATIONS

### EMERGENCY PROCEDURE, PLANS OR PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION

#### **Commitment**

NEOFACS is committed to providing and maintaining premises that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

Emergency procedures, plans and public safety information that are prepared by NEOFACS and made available to the public, will be made available in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request; and

An Accessible Format Request Form will be developed and will be available online on the Agency’s internal website when available, for completion by NEOFACS staff upon receipt of a request from the public for such documentation in an accessible format. In addition, an internal referral process is in place for fulfilling the accessible format request.

### WORKPLACE EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFORMATION

#### **Commitment**

Where NEOFACS is aware that an employee has a disability and that there is a need for accommodation, individualized workplace emergency response information will be provided to the employee as soon as practicable if such information is necessary given the nature of the employee’s disability.

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

- Individualized workplace emergency response information procedures are developed for employees with disabilities, as required;
- Workplace Emergency Response Information forms are prepared for employees who have disclosed a disability and who are being accommodated according to their disabilities;
- Where required, the Agency provides assistance to specific disabled employees, with the disabled employees’ prior consent, to help them evacuate the workplace in case of

an emergency or disaster. These plans for providing assistance have been set out in individualized emergency plans for the employees, as required;

- These individualized emergency plans are communicated to the employees' respective managers and health and safety personnel, on an 'as needed' basis;
- During site inspections, any and all barriers are removed, as required; and
- On an ongoing and regular basis and as per the applicable terms of the IASR, NEOFACS will review and assess general workplace emergency response procedures and individualized emergency plans to ensure accessibility issues are addressed.

## TRAINING

### Commitment

NEOFACS is committed to implementing a process to ensure that all employees, volunteers and persons participating in the development and approval of the Agency's policies are provided with appropriate training on the requirements of the IASR and on the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities, and are provided with such training as soon as practicable.

### Update

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

- Ensures that appropriate training on the requirements of the IASR and on the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities, is provided to all employees, volunteers and persons participating in the development and approval of Agency policies;
- Ensures that the training is provided to persons referenced above as soon as practicable;
- Keeps and maintains a record of the training provided, including the dates that the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided; Ensures that training is provided on any changes to the prescribed policies on an ongoing basis;
- Ensures that all employees continue to complete mandatory training; and
- NEOFACS has recently moved away from the Access Forward AODA training and has now implemented training through the OACAS Learning Management System that provides comprehensive AODA training.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

### Commitment

NEOFACS is committed to making Agency information and communications accessible to persons with disabilities. The Agency will meet accessibility requirements under the information and communication standard to ensure that information, communications systems

and platforms are accessible and are provided in accessible formats that meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

## Feedback, Accessible Formats and Communication Supports & Accessible Websites and Web Content

### Update

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

- Ensures that existing and new processes for receiving and responding to feedback are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports, upon request and in a timely manner;
- More broadly, as a general principle where accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities are requested:
  - Provide or arrange for the provision of such accessible formats and communication supports;
  - Consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the accessible format or communication support;
  - Provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability, and at a cost no more than the regular cost charged to other persons; and
- Notify the public about the availability of accessible formats on the website.
- North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services' public website ([www.neofacs.org](http://www.neofacs.org)) underwent a complete re-build in 2014. The website is currently undergoing a second phase of implementation to ensure compliancy with the AODA standards.
- New website content is coded in a fashion to enable essential Accessibility software and third-party consumer tools. The Website is accessible by readers with the majority of the content utilizing descriptive alt tags on links and images directed through navigation menus;
- AODA compliance was included as one of the criteria in selecting technology vendors for the build of the new website in 2014 and has informed many of the changes to be undertaken in the second phase of development.

In accordance with the IASR, NEOFACS has:

- Ensured the development of its next generation digital platform for public websites, mobile applications, and information technology infrastructure meet AODA Information and Communication Standards and that partnering vendors have necessary expertise with such technology;

- Use guiding principles in the development of new Agency intranet applications as outlined by the Ontario Government's new Online Design Program standard, which specifies compliance with international accessibility guidelines, W3C WCAG 2.0;
- Developed and Updated System Development Life Cycle (SDLC) documents and processes to outline roles and responsibilities regarding content compliance for new intranet sites;
- Followed the mandated Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) guidelines and Province of Ontario I&IT solutions that support obligated Private Sector and Broader Public Sector organizations in compliance initiatives;
- Communications provided guidelines to all staff to ensure public documents and media are readily available in alternate accessible formats;
- Developed and communicated Agency e-mail best practices; and
- Expanded Agency awareness of requirements for compliance with Information and Communication Standards of AODA.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Commitment

NEOFACS is committed to fair and accessible employment practices that attract and retain employees with disabilities. This includes providing accessibility across all stages of the employment cycle.

### Employment - Recruitment

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

- All external job posting are placed on the external website and the website informs potential candidates that the Agency is an an equal opportunity employer and are committed to building on inclusive process that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. If you require a disability related accommodation in order to participate in the recruitment process, please inform Human Resources.
- The Agency reviews policies and procedures to prevent or remove barriers and ensure they are compliant with legislation and reflect best practices.
- The Agency provides customized information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency, as required.
- Performance management and career development processes take into account the accessibility needs of all employees, as required.
- In orientation, Human Resources reviews policies and procedures for accommodating employees with disabilities.

## EMPLOYMENT - Informing Employees of Supports

In accordance with the IASR, NEOFACS will inform all employees of policies that support employees with disabilities, including, but not limited to, policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.

This will include:

- Informing current employees and new hires of the Agency's policies supporting employees with disabilities, including, but not limited to, policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's needs due to disability;
- Providing information under this section as soon as practicable after the new employee begins employment;
- Keeping employees up to date on changes to existing policies on job accommodations with respect to disability;
- Where an employee with a disability so requests it, NEOFACS will provide or arrange for provision of suitable accessible formats and communications supports for:
  - Information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job
  - Information that is generally available to employees in the workplace
  - In meeting the obligations to provide the information that is set out in the paragraph above, NEOFACS will consult with the requesting employee in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

## EMPLOYMENT - Documented Individual Accommodation Plans/Return to Work Process

### Commitment

NEOFACS will ensure that barriers in accommodation and return to work processes are eliminated and Agency policies surrounding accommodation and return to work are followed, where applicable.

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

- Steps that NEOFACS will take to accommodate an employee with a disability and to facilitate an employee's return to work after absenteeism due to disability.
- Ensure policies include a process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with a disability, if such plans are required.
- NEOFACS will ensure that the process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans includes the following elements, in accordance with the provisions of the IASR:
  - Include in the process the manner in which the employee requesting can participate in the development of the plan;

- Include in the process the means by which the employee is assessed on an individual basis;
- Include in the process the manner in which NEOFACS can request an evaluation by an outside medical or other expert, to assist NEOFACS in determining if and how accommodation can be achieved;
- Include in the process the manner in which the employee can request participation of a representative from his or her bargaining agent where an employee is in the bargaining unit, or the participation of another representative from the workplace where an employee is not in the bargaining unit;
- Steps are in place to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information;
- Outline the frequency in which individual accommodation plans will be reviewed and updated and the manner in which this will be done;
- Provide the employee with the reasons for the denial if an individual accommodation plan is denied;
- Include in the process the means of providing the individual accommodation plan in a format that takes into account the employee's accessibility needs
- If individual accommodation plans are established, the Agency will ensure that they include:
  - Individualized workplace emergency response information that is required
  - Any information regarding accessible formats and communication supports that have been provided for or arranged, in order to provide the employee with information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace
- Identify any other accommodation that is to be provided to the employee
- Ensure that the return to work process as set out in its existing policies outlines the steps NEOFACS will take to facilitate the employee's return to work after a disability-related absence, outlines the development of a written individualized return to work plan for such employees, and requires the use of individual accommodation plans, as discussed above, in the return to work process.

## **EMPLOYMENT - Performance Management, Career Development and Redeployment**

### **Commitment**

NEOFACS will take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans:

- When using its performance management process in respect of employees with disabilities;

- When providing career development and advancement to its employees with disabilities; and
- When redeploying employees with disabilities.

NEOFACS has introduced the following, as applicable:

- Reviews, assesses and, as necessary, modifies existing policies, procedures and practices to ensure compliance with the IASR;
- Take the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and, as applicable, their individualized accommodation plans, into account when:
  - Assessing performance
  - Managing career development and advancement
  - Redeployment is required
- Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when providing career development and advancement to its employees with disabilities.
- Take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when redeploying employees, including review and, as necessary, modification of employee transfer checklist.

## PROCUREMENT

NEOFACS incorporates accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities. If it is not possible and practical to do so, we will provide an explanation upon request.

## PROPOSED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

NEOFACS will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces. Public spaces include:

- Recreational trails/beach access routes
- Outdoor public eating areas like rest stops or picnic areas
- Outdoor play spaces
- Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps and rest areas
- Accessible off street parking
- Accessible on street parking
- Service related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas

## Notice of Temporary Disruption

In accordance with the Agency's Accessibility policy, NEOFACS provides service users with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities, services, or physical disruptions of accessible elements to buildings, infrastructure, property or services under its

care usually used by people with disabilities. This notice includes information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The notice is placed at all applicable public entrances on our premises. Service users are contacted about disruptions through other means of communication, for example, by posting a sign, verbally, or on the website by the Communications Coordinator.

NEOFACS ensures procedures are in place for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces as required under AODA.

***Refer to Form on PowerDMS: [Service Disruption Template Form](#)***

NEOFACS will put procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to our accessible parts of our public spaces.

NEOFACS attempts to remove barriers and prevent them for any new or future building renovations or developments.

NEOFACS will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces.

Any building contractors hired by NEOFACS for new construction, alterations, or additions ensure compliance with Accessibility Standards.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on this accessibility plan, or to request a copy of the Plan in an alternative format, please contact Laura Michel, Director of Human Resources at:

- Phone: 705-360-7100 extension 5017
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