

RIDEAU COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		NUMBER: GEN 216
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ACCESSIBILITY

Policy:

Rideau Community Health Services is accountable to employees, 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. RCHS will maintain a multi-year accessibility plan that outlines steps to remove and prevent accessibility barriers.

Please refer to individual policies for further information on topics.

Accessibility Statement:

We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting our accessibility requirements under Ontario's accessibility laws.

RCHS welcomes and encourages people living with disabilities to use our services. RCHS will provide access to our services for people with disabilities in a way that respects their right to dignity, independence and integration.

RCHS uses the definition of disability in the AODA.

The AODA 2005 adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. "Disability" is:

- 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 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 of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

RCHS strives to provide service to everyone in a welcoming and supportive environment. RCHS will consider the individual needs of people with disabilities in delivering service by:

- Considering individual and special needs when applying the RCHS policies and procedures
- 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
- Offering a range of assistive devices such as wheelchairs
- 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 that emergency responses address accessibility
- Training employees and volunteers to provide the best possible service
- Providing a forum for addressing concerns or challenges associated with accessing our services including phone number and key contact information
- Providing opportunities for continuous improvement and regular review of accessibility policies and procedures

Multi-Year Plan (“the Plan”):

RCHS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the specific measures RCHS will take to prevent and remove barriers in the workplace and to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The Multi-Year Plan will be reviewed and updated every five (5) years and is posted on RCHS website. Upon request, RCHS will provide a copy of the Plan in an accessible format.

Training for employees and volunteers:

RCHS will continue to train employees and volunteers in Ontario’s accessibility laws (AODA), its regulations and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities. Training will be completed on orientation and annually and is considered mandatory.

This training will be appropriate to the duties of employees, volunteers, other persons and board directors.

Training will also be provided when any changes are made to RCHS accessibility policies or legislative amendments.

The training will be provided as soon as practicable and in respect to any changes to the following individuals:

- all persons who are an employee of, or a volunteer with, the organization;
- all persons who participate in developing the organization’s policies; and
- all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization

Records of training including the dates and number of individuals to whom the training was provided will be kept on file.

Communication

Program employees and volunteers will communicate with people with disabilities in a way that takes their needs into consideration. We can utilize several methods of communications which include:

- newsletters
- emails
- memos
- websites
- bulletin boards
- staff meetings
- one-on-one conversations

If alternative means of communication are required RCHS will work with the person(s) to enable appropriate communications.

Feedback process

RCHS welcomes client feedback and makes information available to all clients on how to provide feedback. Feedback is accepted by RCHS in a variety of formats. Employee assistance is available to support all clients, including people with disabilities, in providing feedback.

Requests for Accommodation under the Ontario Human Rights Code

RCHS will continue to meet the standards set by the Ontario Human Rights Code. Where a request for accommodation is made, RCHS will strive to provide accommodation and work with the person requesting the accommodation in a way that most respects the dignity of the person. RCHS recognizes that people with disabilities may require individualized accommodation and that each person's needs are unique. Accommodation will be provided unless RCHS experiences "undue hardship" as defined in the Code.

Emergency Information

Upon request emergency procedures, plans or public safety information prepared by RCHS, will be made available to the public, and will be provided in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports as soon as practicable.

Specific Directives - Customer Service Standard

a. Provision of Services

RCHS will provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities and integrate services for people with disabilities. RCHS understands that

equitable access sometimes requires different treatment including separate or specialized services. However, such services will be offered in a way that respects the dignity and full participation of people with disabilities.

b. Service Animals

RCHS continues to welcome service animals that are needed to assist people with disabilities.

c. Support People

RCHS welcomes people with disabilities and support people who accompany them.

d. Assistive Devices

RCHS will make reasonable efforts to permit the use of assistive devices that enable people with disabilities to use RCHS services. RCHS 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 (examples include, walkers, magnifiers for reading, etc.). RCHS also recognizes that accessibility can be achieved and provided in different ways.

e. Employee Training

Under the AODA legislation, RCHS will provide employees with accessibility standard training. We are committed to training staff and volunteers in Ontario's accessibility laws and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities. We will train our employees and volunteers on accessibility as it relates to their specific roles

f. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

RCHS will provide notice of service disruptions in services which affect clients with disabilities, which include the reason for the disruption, how long the disruption will last and a description of available alternatives, if any. In the event of an unplanned disruption, notice will be provided as quickly as possible.

g. Information and Documentation on Accessible Customer Service

RCHS will document its policies, practices and procedures as required. Members of the public will be notified of the availability of this documentation which will be available on the organization's website.

Specific Directives - Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Employment Standard

All employment services provided by RCHS shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. RCHS is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. We will take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, RCHS will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired.

- a. RCHS is committed to accessible and fair employment practices. RCHS will notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodations for job applicants with disabilities in RCHS' recruitment process.

Assessment or Selection – when a job applicant has been selected to participate further in an assessment or selection process, RCHS will notify the job applicant that accommodations are available, upon request, in relation to the materials or processes to be used in the assessment or selection process.

If a job applicant requests accommodation during the assessment or selection process, RCHS will consult with the job applicant and provide, or arrange for the provision of, a suitable accommodation in a manner that takes into account the job applicant's accessibility needs due to disability.

Notice to Successful Applicants - When making offers of employment RCHS will notify the successful job applicant of RCHS' policies for accommodating employees with disabilities. This information will also be included during the new employee's orientation.

- b. We will notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We will put in place a process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.
- c. Where needed, we will also provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency.

Documented Individual Accommodation Policy

RCHS will develop individual accommodation and return-to-work plans for employees that have been absent due to a disability. RCHS maintains a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

If requested, information regarding accessible formats and communications supports will also be included in individual accommodation plans. In addition, the plans will include individualized workplace emergency response information (where required) and will identify any other accommodation that is to be provided.

Return to Work Process

RCHS maintains a documented return to work process for its employees who have been absent from work due to disability and who require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

The return to work process outlines the steps RCHS will take to facilitate the return to work and will include documented individual accommodation plans as part of the process.

RCHS will ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account when considering performance management, career development and redeployment processes.

RCHS will take steps to prevent and remove other accessibility barriers identified.

Specific Directives: Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Information and Communications Policy

RCHS is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. RCHS will take into account the person's accessibility needs when customizing individual requests and shall consult with the individual making the request to ensure suitability.

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. When asked, we will provide information about our organization and its services, including public safety information, in accessible formats or with communication supports.

- a. RCHS will ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request.
- b. RCHS will ensure all publicly available information is made accessible upon request. Unless deemed unconvertible, RCHS will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, upon request. Accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost to the individual. Accessible formats include but are not limited to large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities. Communication supports include but are not limited to captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.
- c. RCHS will ensure its website and content conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA by January 1, 2021.
- d. The Information and Communications Standard does not apply to:
 - Products and product labels;
 - Unconvertible information or communications: If it is determined, in consultation with the requesting party, that information or communications are unconvertible, RCHS will ensure that the individual who made the request is provided with an explanation and a summary of the information. RCHS will classify information or communications as unconvertible where:
 - It is not technically practicable to convert; or
 - The technology required to make the conversion is not readily available.
 - Information that the organization does not control either directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship.

Specific Directives: Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Design of Public Spaces

RCHS will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces. Public spaces include:

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

RGHS will put procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to its accessible parts of its public spaces. In the event of a service disruption, we will notify the public of the service disruption and alternatives available as soon as possible.

We will modify or remove an existing policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Associated Policies

GEN 217 Support Persons

GEN 218 Use of Assistive Devices

GEN 219 Service Animals

GEN 222 Communicating with People with Disabilities

GEN 226 Training for AODA