



Rideau Community
Health Services

**Rideau Community Health Services
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
2024-2027**

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1. MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The COVID 19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities and their caregivers. They have faced roadblocks in accessing healthcare and health information and have faced greater financial constraints. The pandemic has underscored the need for inclusive and accessible support not only during times of crisis, but always. We must ensure our programs and services are accessible. Rideau Community Health Services remains committed to understanding and efficiently designing, delivering, and guiding users through accessible service channels as we know that accessibility benefits everyone.

Rideau Community Health Services (RCHS) is committed to providing a respectful, accessible, and inclusive environment for all clients, staff, volunteers, and visitors. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and we will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility. Accomplishing this requires systemic, cultural, and behavioural change at all levels of the organization. “Accessible by design” is not just a slogan - it’s a commitment for RCHS to build in accessibility from the start. It’s a way of thinking and working that aims to remove barriers and make accessibility a priority from the moment we start researching and designing the policies, programs, spaces, and services that our communities rely on every day.

2. DEFINITIONS

Accessibility: The term accessibility means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. It is used to describe how widely a service, product, device, or environment is available to as many people as possible. Accessibility can be seen as the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product or environment.

Disability: The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005 adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Disability” is:

- a) 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 a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- c) a learning disability, or dysfunction in one of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- d) a mental disorder, or
- 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.

Barrier: A “barrier” is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice.

Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR): In July 2016 the AODA Customer Service Standard was amalgamated with the Integrated Accessibility Standard. RCHS’ policies regarding information, communication, employment and customer service form a key part of the organization’s commitment to meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities. RCHS’ full policy regarding AODA’s Integrated Accessibility Standard can be found by following the link below to RCHS’ website.

3. INTRODUCTION

Rideau Community Health Services is a multi-site Community Health Centre (CHC) with locations in Merrickville, Smiths Falls, Brockville, and Perth which were designed to meet the standards laid out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

RCHS is a fully accredited organization with a catchment area of approximately 60,000 residents within the tri-county region of Lanark, Leeds, and Grenville. RCHS provides a comprehensive scope of primary care, health promotion, telemedicine, diabetes education, high-risk chiropody, and mental health and wellbeing programs and services.

This plan is applicable to:

- All people who access our services.
- All staff, volunteers, students, contractors, consultants, and others working on behalf of the organization and who provide client services.
- Staff, board directors, volunteers, and others who are involved in developing policies and procedures.
- People who accompany clients with disabilities who use our services.

The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers. In accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (Customer Service Standard) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 (under the AODA), Rideau Community Health Services has updated their Multi-year Accessibility Plan 2022-2025.

To summarize, the report describes:

- 1) The measures that RCHS will take during this period
- 2) The measures that RCHS has employed in the past
- 3) How RCHS will make this accessibility plan available to the public

The RCHS is committed to the continual improvement of access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for clients and their family members, staff, volunteers, and members of the community with disabilities; the participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans; and the provision of quality programs and services.

4. COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING

RCCHS is committed to:

- 1) The continual improvement of access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for clients and their families, staff, volunteers, and members of the community;
- 2) The participation of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plans;
- 3) Working toward ensuring by-laws and policies are consistent with the principles of accessibility; and
- 4) The training of those required regarding the requirements of the Act
- 5) Establishing policies, procedures, and practices that describe how we serve people with disabilities.
- 6) Using reasonable effort to ensure our client policies are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration of services, and equality of opportunity.
- 7) Promoting the use of assistive devices for people with disabilities in our policies.
- 8) Communicating with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disabilities.
- 9) Welcoming people accompanied by guide dogs, service animals, or support people and providing information about access.
- 10) Providing clear, complete, timely, and prominent notice of temporary disruption of any of our services used by people with disabilities.
- 11) Ensuring that our board and senior management who approve policies, receive training on AODA legislation.
- 12) Providing timely and ongoing training to our staff, students, and volunteers who interact with clients to ensure their understanding of, and ability to implement our policies regarding service to people with disabilities.
- 13) Implementing and communicating our processes for receiving and responding to feedback and handling complaints about how we provide services to people with disabilities.
- 14) Complying with documentation standards including availability and format of documents.

Communication of the Accessibility Plan

The accessibility plan will be available on RCCHS's web site (www.rideauchs.ca) and copies of the plan and policies will be available if requested at each site. Upon request, RCCHS will work to accommodate any person with a disability who requests a copy of this plan in format that meets their needs.

Establishment of a Community Engagement Council

The Community Engagement Council would include clients of Rideau Community Health Services as well as community members to work with our management team staff to identify

barriers to accessibility. The valuable input of our clients and families is used to improve programs and services and access to Rideau Community Health Services including:

- 1) Review legislation requirements
- 2) Report on measures taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities;
- 3) Develop the list of measures the organization intends to implement in order to identify, remove, and prevent barriers; and
- 4) Develop mechanisms for addressing any other areas the regulations may recommend.

4.1 Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Commitment

Rideau Community Health Services remains committed to providing a barrier free workplace and has remained in compliance since its written report of 2019.

Identification of Barriers to Accessibility

The Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) and the Leadership Team work on an ongoing basis to identify barriers to accessibility, with the assistance of clients with accessibility needs.

Customer Service-Related Achievements

- In the last several years, RCHS expanded from two sites and opened two satellite locations in Brockville (Strowger Boulevard) and Perth (Sunset Boulevard). Both of these sites were planned in accordance with AODA Accessibility Standards.
- Modification of reception area glass Smiths Falls and Merrickville
- Addition of accessibility paddles on washroom doors in the Merrickville site and Smiths Falls sites as per identified challenges

Feedback Process-Related Achievements

- Updated the client feedback process to allow clients to provide comments through the website, by email, phone, via on-site comment cards, or in-person.
- Based on feedback we are evaluating waiting room spaces to ensure optimal space for clients with mobility devices based on feedback received.

Information and Communications related Achievements

- Converted existing emergency and public safety information into a digital file for easy conversion to accessible formats.
- We communicate with people with disabilities in ways that consider 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.

- Interpreter supports have been contracted (refer to policy GEN 222 – Communicating with People with Disabilities)
- Part of our 2023-2026 Communication Strategy includes review of public facing documents for literacy levels.
- Access to TTY for those with hearing impairment.
- Development of our new website in 2020 which continues to be WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant.

For more information about Ontario’s Customer Service Standard, visit www.ontario.ca/accessibility.

Employment

AODA and customer service training is part of RCHS’ annual mandatory training requirements for all staff, students, and volunteers (including the board), in addition to training provided as part of orientation for all new staff, students, and volunteers.

4.2 Strategies and Actions

Equitable Customer Service

Rideau Community Health Services is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide services to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

The [Customer Service Standards](#) under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation require RCHS to provide accessible public services for persons with disabilities and to ensure that policies and procedures are in place to support this requirement.

Key outcome: Clients of all abilities receive seamless, dignified, and equitable access to barrier-free services from RCHS staff.

Initiatives

- Reviewed current strategies to support staff in providing accessible customer service.
- Reviewed and updated the RCHS Accessibility Policies to ensure inclusive language and promote the delivery of accessible customer service.

Use of Assistive Devices

RCHS is committed to ensuring clients with disabilities who access our services, and anyone with a disability who visits our sites, will be able to use their assistive devices within the limits of any applicable privacy, health, and safety laws or regulation (refer to policy GEN 218 - Use of Assistive Devices).

Support Persons

RCHS is committed to allowing full access to our services and premises to people with disabilities and their support persons (refer to policy GEN 217 - Support Persons).

Guide Dogs and Service Animals

RCHS is committed to allowing full access to our services and premises to people with disabilities and their service animals wherever possible (refer to policy GEN 219 - Service Animals).

Notice of Disruption

If there is a disruption to the usual facilities or services that RCHS provides to people with disabilities which impacts access (e.g., accessible washrooms, ramps, accessible parking spaces, automatic doors, TTY services, etc.), the organization will provide notice of such disruption as far in advance as possible through a variety of communication formats (refer to policy GEN 221 - Notice of Disruption in Service).

Information and Communications

Rideau Community Health Services is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities.

- Our website was updated in 2020 and made compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA.
- In addition, our communications strategy includes our commitment to having public facing materials reviewed for readability.

Communicating with People with Disabilities

RCHS is committed to offering programs and services to persons with disabilities. Upon request, RCHS will provide accessible formats and communication supports. The organization will consult with the requestor to determine how best to support their accessibility and communication needs (refer to policy GEN 222 - Communicating with People with Disabilities).

Employment

Rideau Community Health Services is committed to fair and accessible employment practices as per updated employment policy (refer to GEN 224 – Employment) including:

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

- 1) We notify employees, potential hires, and the public that accommodations can be made during recruitment and hiring. Our recruitment add has been modified to include this information.
- 2) We notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We put in place a process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.
- 3) Where needed, we can provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency.

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:

- a) RCHS will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired.
- b) RCHS will develop individual accommodation and return-to-work plans for employees that have been absent due to a disability.
- c) RCHS will ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account when considering performance management, career development and redeployment processes.
- d) RCHS will take steps to prevent and remove other accessibility barriers identified.
- e) RCHS will respond to 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. Accommodations will be provided unless RCHS experiences "undue hardship" as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Key outcome: Candidates and employees with disabilities have the support to join, work effectively, experience career growth, and have opportunities for learning, development, and progression.

Initiatives

- Develop and implement recruitment strategies to help increase the representation of persons with disabilities. RCHS ensures recruitment is open and transparent and our recruitment and interview process is open and inclusive.
- Ensure mental health resources and services, are inclusive and readily available to employees with disabilities. RCHS has developed a mental health electronic mental health resource centre for all persons. RCHS had developed a process where we can proactively identify and address systemic employment barriers. We are supporting career development for staff including persons with disabilities.

5. TRAINING

All staff, volunteers (including board members), and students of RCHS will receive training and orientation to the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards, the Ontario Human Rights Code and AODA policies, procedures, and practices governing the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities. This training will be provided on orientation and updated annually. The training will also be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with any changes to policies, procedures, and practices. This information is communicated through a monthly newsletter sent to all staff.

- Training will be provided to staff based on the position's job requirements.
- Training will be provided to volunteers including board members.
- Training will be provided to people developing our organization's training policies.
- Staff will be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to the policies, practices, and procedures.
- RCHS will keep records of the training provided, including dates training is provided and the number of persons trained.
- For every new hire, training will be provided upon orientation to their duties.
- Training will include the following:
 - a) The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard;
 - b) The requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) and the Ontario Human Rights Code;
 - c) How to provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
 - d) How to interact and communicate with persons in a manner that takes into account their disabilities;
 - e) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person to access goods or services;
 - f) How to use equipment or devices available on RCHS premises or provided by RCHS that may help with the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
 - g) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the RCHS' goods and services;
 - h) Information on other policies, practices and procedures dealing with the AODA;
 - i) The process for people to provide feedback about its provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities and how we respond to the feedback and actions taken on any complaint.

Refer to policy GEN 226 - Training for Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

6. FEEDBACK PROCESS

To assist RCHS in ensuring that the delivery of goods and services to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, clients, volunteers, families, and staff are invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, in person, fax, e-mail or telephone, comment cards (located at each site) addressed to:

Rideau Community Health Services
354 Read Street
Merrickville, ON K0G 1N0

Telephone: 613-269-3400
Fax: 613-269-4958
Email: communications@rideauchs.ca
Website: www.rideauchs.ca
TTY Relay Services: 1-800-855-0511 and connect to our local number 613-269-3400

The CEO and/or designate will respond either in writing, in person, by email or phone acknowledging receipt of feedback and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints. A response will be provided within 14 days in accordance with policy SD 300 - Client Feedback.

7. BARRIER IDENTIFICATION METHODOLOGIES

Methodology	Description	Status
Canvas Management and staff	Leadership Team and Occupational Health & Safety for input and ideas from them.	Completed will remain on Agendas Quarterly as well is on all staff meeting agendas
Engagement with Community members and families with persons with disabilities	Worked with families and clients with disabilities and plan to work with our new Community Engagement Council	Ongoing work with Clients and Families- feedback is acted upon when received and we will continue to work with new Community Engagement Council
Surveys/Questionnaire	We enable surveys across all programs and services	Ongoing
Feedback	Policy supports several methods of feedback to the organization. The feedback is responded to as per policy SD 300	Analysis of feedback in undertaken and reported to the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis

8. BARRIERS IDENTIFIED

Barrier Free Design for the potential new HUB in Smiths Falls

- The [Design of Public Spaces Standards](#) under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* apply to newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces covered under the standards. The initiatives below go above and beyond the standards to demonstrate the government's commitment to designing and building facilities and spaces that are accessible and inclusive for everyone.
- Develop RCHS workspace standards that include accessibility and create an implementation plan for applying these standards to new office infrastructure projects.
- Review and recommend updates to the [Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities](#) that align with best accessibility practices.
- Develop resources to build OPS expertise around inclusive design.

Key outcome: Clients of all abilities feel welcome in RCHS facilities that incorporate inclusive design practices and technologies.

9. REVIEW AND MONITORING PROCESS

The RCHS Multi-Year Plan will be reviewed annually and updated every three years. See appendix 1 for identified barriers and related action plan. This plan covers the period of January 1, 2024-December 31, 2027.

10. ASSOCIATED POLICIES

The following related policies are available on the RCHS Website.

- GEN 216 - Accessibility
- GEN 218 - Use of Assistive Devices
- GEN 217 - Support Persons
- GEN 219 - Service Animals
- GEN 221 - Notice of Disruption in Service
- GEN 222 - Communicating with People with Disabilities
- GEN 224 – Employment
- GEN 226 - Training for Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- SD 300 - Client Feedback

Appendix 1 – Barriers Identified

Barrier Type	Location	Description	Measures implemented
Physical Barrier:			
Entrances	Waiting Areas in Smiths Falls and Brockville	Identified spaces as “tight” when we have specialty clinics related to number of wheelchairs	Evaluate the flow on days where we know we will have high volume of assistive mobility devices in waiting areas
Parking/ lighting	Smiths Falls	Back Lot request for increased lighting	Request has gone to Building Owners for quote
Door speeds	Smiths Falls	Door speed needs to be adjusted to enable persons using assistive devices time to go through	Modifications of door occurred in October 2022
Architectural Barriers:			
Common area bathroom not accessible	Brockville	Public Washrooms in Brockville are not accessible. These washrooms are not located within RCHS rented space but are part of larger facility managed by the landlord. Clients of RCHS and Alzheimer require that these washrooms be accessible.	Plan being developed
Door opener not reliable	Merrickville	Public Washrooms in Merrickville are accessible however the accessibility buttons are battery operated and are not reliable. We recommend hard wiring the accessibility buttons into electrical system.	This has been corrected and is now functioning
Informational Barriers: None Identified			
Communication Barriers:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of public facing information for clients for content and literacy level • Review of website for literacy level is planned • Lack of written information regarding persons needing accommodations in our waiting areas <p style="text-align: center;">This has been corrected with the addition of infographics to our information screens and materials posted</p>			
Attitudinal Barriers: This has been identified as an area where RCHS excels. Clients and families have identified and continue to identify the positive experiences they have at our sites and positive interactions with staff.			