

## Accessibility Policy

---



**Date Created:** December 10, 2009

**Date Reviewed:** December 2023

**Motion Number:** 2024-41

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Library is compliant with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its regulations. This policy applies to the delivery of operations, services and programs provided by East Gwillimbury Public Library.

### Policy

East Gwillimbury Public Library is committed to providing equitable access to library service that meets the changing needs of all residents including persons with disabilities in a welcoming and supportive environment. The Library will develop and support a work and service environment where the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in accordance with the principles of dignity, independence, and integration. The Library will meet or exceed the standards set by the AODA and its regulations.

The Library will make reasonable efforts to establish, implement and monitor policies, services and practices that balance the needs of persons with disabilities and others to support the accessibility standards of customer service, information and communication, employment and the built environment established under the AODA.

### Scope

#### 1. Feedback Process

The Library welcomes customer feedback and makes information on how to provide feedback available in accessible format. Staff assistance is available to support residents, including persons with disabilities, in providing feedback and when requested, the Library will make reasonable efforts to communicate with customers in a format of choice. Responses to customer feedback will be given in a timely manner, in accordance with the Library's *Communications Policy*.

## **2. Information and Communication**

Library staff and volunteers will communicate with persons with disabilities in a way that takes their needs into consideration. East Gwillimbury Public Library will make every effort to keep its website, social media, and web content accessible.

## **3. Library Policies**

Library policies will be applied in a way that considers the needs of persons with disabilities and respects the principles of dignity, independence, and integration.

## **4. Requests for Accommodation under the *Ontario Human Rights Code***

The Library will continue to meet the standards set by the Ontario Human Rights Code ("Code"). Where a request for accommodation is made by library staff, library volunteers, or library customers, the Library will strive to provide accommodation in a way that most respects the dignity of the person. The Library recognizes that persons with disabilities may require individualized accommodation and that each person's needs are unique. Accommodation will be provided unless the Library experiences "undue hardship" as defined in the Code.

## **5. Service Training for Staff and Volunteers and Documentation**

The Library will provide ongoing training on how to provide customer service to persons with disabilities and will keep a record of when the training was provided and the individuals who received the training. Training will be provided to:

- a) Those who participate in developing policies and procedures on the provision of service to the public.
- b) Anyone providing services to customers on behalf of the library.

## **Directives**

With the introduction of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations* (IASR), there is more than one Regulation to consider. Therefore, the Directives include directions applicable to both Regulations.

## **1. Accessible Materials**

East Gwillimbury Public Library maintains collections in a variety of formats from print to digital. The Library also provides access to additional accessible materials through its partnership with the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB).

## **2. Accessible Programs**

East Gwillimbury Public Library will consider the needs of library users with disabilities, including welcoming participants of all abilities, providing accessible programs, and championing services and resources that foster inclusion and barrier-free access.

## **3. Assistive Devices**

The Library recognizes that accessibility can be achieved and provided in different ways. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to use personal assistive devices while accessing the Library in a safe and non-disruptive manner. The Library will make reasonable efforts to facilitate the use of assistive devices.

East Gwillimbury Public Library also provides adaptive technology for customers with disabilities. Library staff can provide basic instruction in the use of this technology, subject to staff availability.

## **4. Customer Service Training Information and Documentation**

The Library will document its policies, practices and procedures as required by the AODA and its regulations. Members of the public will be notified of the availability of this documentation, which will be available in a variety of formats upon request at no additional cost.

## **5. Emergency Plans**

The Library will provide emergency plans in accessible formats upon request.

## **6. Employment**

The Library will incorporate accessibility considerations into its recruitment and hiring practices and procedures, if requested. The Library will build in accessibility needs into its human resources practices, policies and procedures including requests for accommodation.

## **7. Facilities**

East Gwillimbury Public Library relies on the Town of East Gwillimbury to maintain our facilities. East Gwillimbury Public Library will comply with the Town's multi-year accessibility plan when planning library spaces.

East Gwillimbury Public Library will maintain buildings that can be navigated inclusively, are fully wheelchair accessible and conform to all standards of the AODA. Any new facilities will take these requirements into account during the planning phase.

## **8. Procurement**

The Library will incorporate accessibility criteria and features into the procurement of goods, services, and facilities, except where it is not practical as defined in the Act. The Library will incorporate accessibility features and criteria when designing, procuring, or acquiring any self-service kiosks.

## **9. Provision of Services**

In keeping with East Gwillimbury Public Library's strategic priority to provide welcoming, accessible library facilities, the Library will:

- Provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities and provides them with an equal opportunity to learn about, use or benefit from library services.
- Integrate services for persons with disabilities. The Library 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 persons with disabilities.
- Where feasible provide self-service kiosks, including online catalogue, computer workstations, and self-check-out terminals, equipped with assistive technology and a range of accessibility features.

## **10. Service Animals**

A person with a disability is welcome to visit the Library accompanied by a service animal. Persons training service animals are also welcome in the facility.

If it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, Library staff may ask the person for confirmation of the animal's status.

There are two ways in which the Library can tell whether or not a customer's animal is a service animal:

1. It is visibly apparent that the customer requires the animal for reasons relating to disability (a service animal vest may not be used as a visual clue); or
2. The customer provides an identification card (in the case of guide dogs for people who are blind) or the customer provides a letter from a healthcare practitioner, confirming that the customer requires the animal for reasons relating to a disability.

Customers with animals that do not meet these criteria may be asked to leave the library. Service animals have training to perform specific tasks for people with disabilities. Emotional support animals provide comfort and security. However, they do not have training for specific tasks. Emotional support animals do not qualify as service animals under the AODA, but the library will allow them into library spaces provided they are under control at all times. If the animal is causing a clear disruption (e.g. jumping, barking, etc.) or a threat to health and safety of others the member will be asked to leave and will be provided alternative services if possible.

## **11. Support People**

The Library welcomes persons with disabilities and accompanying support people. If discussing personal or confidential information, staff will ask the person if they prefer their support person to remain present.

In many cases, the Library does not charge for the programs and services that it offers. However, when admission fees are charged for library programs or services, admission fees will be waived for support people.

## **12. Temporary Service Disruptions**

The Library will provide reasonable notice of service disruptions 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 in all possible channels.

### **Accountability**

- The Chief Executive Officer and Managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy and for maintaining supporting documentation associated with the Act.
- East Gwillimbury Public Library is responsible for reporting to the Ministry of Community and Social Services on its compliance with the Act and its Standards. The Library will comply with Town of East Gwillimbury's [Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#).

### **References**

- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 - O. Reg. 429/07*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 - O. Reg. 191/11*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER H.19*

## **Appendix A: Definitions**

### **"Accessible Formats"**

May include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

### **"Assistive Device"**

An assistive device is 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...).

### **"Barrier"**

A barrier is any policy, practice or procedure, or part of the built environment, which prevents someone with a disability from participating fully in library programs or services because of their disability.

### **"Communication Support"**

A tool or device that facilitates communication for a person with a disability, including but not limited to captioning, sign language, and personal listening systems.

### **"Disability"**

As defined in the AODA, disability means:

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 developmental disability, learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language, 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*; ("handicap").

### "Reasonable Efforts"

The Customer Service Standard requires organizations to make reasonable efforts to meet the needs of people with disabilities. The Library 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 Library staff and volunteers, the security of Library property and existing laws and contracts.