Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2024 – 2029

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Halton Healthcare's Commitment to an Inclusive and Accessible Environment

A Message from Melissa Farrell, President & CEO

At Halton Healthcare, our commitment to providing exemplary patient care extends beyond medical expertise to embrace inclusivity and accessibility for all individuals. As an organization, we are committed to enhancing accessibility within our organization and addressing the diverse accommodation needs of the communities we serve.

This Accessibility Plan aims to create an environment where everyone can fully participate in and benefit from the services we offer. We are dedicated to removing physical and systematic problems to ensure everyone experiences the highest standard of care. This plan aligns with our vision of exemplary patient experiences, always, and we know that fostering accessibility is fundamental to achieving this goal.

We thank the staff, credentialed staff, volunteers, patients, families, and members of the community who helped inform this plan.

In collaboration with our stakeholders and the community, we are excited about the positive impact our Accessibility Plan will have on the lives of those we serve. As we embark on this transformative journey, we invite your support and collaboration to make Halton Healthcare an exemplary model of accessibility in the healthcare sector.

Introduction

Halton Healthcare is dedicated to addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities, including employees, patients, and visitors. We are actively working to eliminate and prevent any obstacles that may hinder accessibility. Our organization is fully committed to meeting all obligations outlined in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. This plan outlines the actions Halton Healthcare is taking to fulfill these requirements and enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities. By implementing this plan, we aim to contribute to the goal of making Ontario an inclusive and accessible province for all residents.

To update our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, our Health Care Equity Committee underwent extensive stakeholder consultations. Staff, credentialed staff, and volunteers were surveyed. The Patient and Family Advisory Council provided input. Community partners, including the Halton Multicultural Society and E.C. Drury School for the Deaf also participated in identifying areas of focus for this plan.

Healthcare Equity Committee

Our Health Care Equity Committee works in partnership internally (staff, physicians, volunteers, Patient & Family Advisors) and externally to identify, recommend and initiate strategies involving all health equity domains, to enhance the patient and family experience. This committee includes Patient & Family Advisors, who provide valuable insights on the patient's experience and perspective.

Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers and Ongoing Work

Our accomplishments to date in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers can be found in Appendix A: Past Achievements to Identify, Remove and Prevent Barriers.

Customer Service

Halton Healthcare is committed to creating an accessible environment that always strives to provide care and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with both visible and non-visible disabilities, disabilities of differing severity and where the effects of the disability may be intermittent in nature. We are committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access and benefit from our programs and services as other individuals. These services will be provided in the same place and in an equivalent manner as individuals without disabilities unless an alternate measure is necessary.

Information and Communications

Halton Healthcare ensures our Information and Communications systems are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Through various initiatives and improvements, we have worked towards providing equal access to information and communication for all members of our community.

The requirement for the websites and web content to conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, initially at Level A and increasing to Level AA, have been applied to the intranet and extranet in accordance with the AODA where practicable.

Halton Healthcare partners with external contractors to deliver facilities management services at the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital and Milton District Hospital. Halton Healthcare has well-established procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of the accessible elements in public spaces, and for dealing with and communicating temporary disruptions when accessible elements are not in working order as outlined in s. 80(44) of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

Employment, Volunteerism and Third-Party Contractors

Halton Healthcare ensures it has appropriate policies and procedures in place in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. These policies are reviewed and revised regularly and when required by changes to legislation.

For employees, Halton Healthcare's accessibility practices are seen throughout the employee life cycle. During the recruitment phase, job postings contain the following language:

> *In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code, Halton Healthcare will provide accommodations throughout the recruitment and selection process. If you require an accommodation, we will work with you to meet your accommodation needs to ensure your equal participation.*

During the employment relationship, Health, Safety and Wellness (HSW) supports current and newly hired employees with access to tools and resources required for any accommodation under AODA (e.g., talk to text devices). HSW supports leaders in providing appropriate and timely accommodations to employees to ensure their on-going participation in the workplace and to facilitate suitable accommodations, if applicable. HSW works in collaboration with Emergency Preparedness to update the units' binders to ensure awareness of any staff who would require support during an evacuation. HSW has also developed Individual Accommodation Plans, for AODA accommodations, to ensure the employees with specific needs have a team around them for support.

Additionally, Halton Healthcare's benefit providers provide accessible options and opportunities for employees to access their benefit plans should they require them.

Training

The AODA training is mandatory required learning for all staff, physicians, and volunteers. We have an electronic learning system that electronically tracks the completion of the AODA training. Records are maintained and alerts sent to the department Leadership where the course has not been completed. Remedial priority training is delivered to departments where complaints and/or trends identify a need for training.

Feedback

Halton Healthcare is committed to continuous improvement over the coming years. To do so, Halton Healthcare engages in a robust stakeholder engagement and feedback collection process

at all three (3) hospitals and its off-site locations on an ongoing basis. This process incorporates the unique communities each of our hospitals services and their needs with the goal of generating a list of potential initiatives to be implemented either at a hospital-specific level and/or organization-wide.

Halton Healthcare has taken the following steps to ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities. A wide variety of options are currently available for people to provide feedback including through Patient Relations, contacting us through our website and social media, Patient Satisfaction Surveys along with bedside interactions between patients, families, and their care team. Halton Healthcare also actively solicits feedback on accessibility through our Patient & Family Advisory Council and through surveys of our staff, physicians and volunteers which are in an accessible format. We will work with those who require communication support to meet their needs.

Procurement
Halton Healthcare works closely with Mohawk Medbuy Corporation (MMC) to procure goods and services. We are committed to our responsibility to ensure that MMC conducts its procurement activities on our behalf in accordance with AODA regulations.

Self-service Opportunities
We have a number of self-service kiosks in place for way finding, parking and automated teller machines. All are AODA compliant. Halton Healthcare continues to look for opportunities to allow our patients and staff to use technology themselves to enhance their experiences.

Design of Public Spaces
All our hospitals and off-site locations are accessible, and as we continue to renovate and redevelop spaces within our facilities, those projects will also comply with all relevant accessibility legislation. Accessible parking is available for employees, physicians, volunteers, and third-party contractors.

Strategies and Actions Planned for 2024- 2029

Halton Healthcare is committed to creating an accessible environment that always strives to provide care and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities including both visible and non-visible disabilities, disabilities of differing severity and where the effects of the disability may be intermittent in nature. We are committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access and benefit from our programs and services. These services will be provided in the same place and in a comparable manner as individuals without disabilities unless an alternate measure is necessary.

AODA Requirement	Plan	Accountability and Status
S. 3(1) Policies Develop and maintain policies governing how Halton Healthcare will achieve accessibility. The policies are publicly posted and available in an accessible format upon request.	• AODA policies established, reviewed, and updated as required by legislation. • Update Health Care Equity Committee Terms of Reference • Policies available in accessible format upon request. Public-facing policies include: • *Accessibility – Integrated Accessibility Standards Requirements* • *Interpretation Services* • *Service Animals*	• Health Care Equity Committee Ongoing
S. 4 Plan Develop a multiyear accessibility plan, outlining strategies to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. Maintain accessibility plans.	• Halton Healthcare is committed to reviewing our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and updating our progress on providing barrier-free employment and access to healthcare. Completed items will be moved to Appendix	• Health Care Equity Committee Ongoing

	B: Past Achievements to Identify, Remove and Prevent Barriers	
S. 5(1) Procurement When procuring goods, services, and facilities on behalf of Halton Healthcare thoughtful attention is made to incorporate accessibility criteria as required by the AODA. Incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, and facilities unless it is not practicable to do so.	• Halton Healthcare works closely with Mohawk Medbuy Corporation (MMC) to procure goods and services. We are committed to our responsibility to ensure that MMC conducts its procurement activities on our behalf in accordance with AODA regulations	• Finance Ongoing
S.6 Self-Serve Kiosks Accessibility features are incorporated when designing, procuring, or acquiring self-service kiosks. "Kiosk" means an interactive electronic terminal, including a point-of-sale device, intended for public use that allows users to access one or more services or products or both.	• As required the Health Care Equity Committee will provide input into the location of future self-serve kiosks (e.g., for patient self-check-in for appointments) • Implement a wayfinding application that assists patients in finding their way around the hospital, which will assist those with limited mobility, and those with intellectual disabilities. • Update software used for booking appointments to allow for self-scheduling appointments and check in on personal devices either onsite or remotely, which will support patients with impaired hearing and those with limited mobility. • Establish a patient portal where patients will be able to view information from their visits including access to their reports and results,	• Health Care Equity Committee • Information and Communication Technology • Communication and Public Affairs Ongoing

	which will facilitate access to records for those who have limited mobility	
S.7 Training Ensure that training is provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in this Regulation and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities to employees, volunteers and persons who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf Halton Healthcare	• Review and revise Halton Healthcare training programs as required. • Update training programs to reflect changes to policy and legislation. • Implement and prioritize communication training for hospital staff and physicians to enhance their ability to interact effectively and sensitively with patients and families of varying abilities. This includes sensitivity training, effective use of assistive technology and understanding diverse communication preferences. • Create clear and accessible communication channels for patients, considering diverse needs such as plain language materials and accommodation for those with disabilities.	Human Resources is responsible for: • Orientation • E-Learning • Remedial training • Tracking and maintenance of training records Volunteer Services is responsible for Volunteer training. Medical Staff Office is responsible for professional staff (Physicians, Midwives, Dentists) training
Information and Communication **S. 11 Feedback** Halton Healthcare is committed to providing feedback processes that are accessible to persons with disabilities and provide information in accessible formats upon request.	• Patient Relations responds to all feedback, including triaging and escalating issues as required. • Contact information including e-mail and a phone number is posted on the external and internal webpage.	• Quality & Patient Relations • Communications & Public Affairs Ongoing

	- Communication support is available on request. - Establish accessible channels for feedback and actively seek input from individuals with varying abilities to continually enhance accessibility initiatives. - Partner with local accessibility advocacy groups and experts to leverage insights and plan to align with the diverse needs of the community. Policy: *Patient and Family Feedback Management*	
S.12(1) Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Halton Healthcare upon request will arrange to provide accessible formats and communication support for persons with disabilities.	- Performed an internal review of American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services and have partnered with a new vendor that provides ASL remote video interpretation services. An evaluation of this service will be undertaken following implementation. We will also continue to provide in-person ASL interpreters where required. - Continue to provide written/electronic materials in alternative formats upon request in accordance with the legislation. Ensure that responses to such requests are tailored to the individual needs of the person. - Develop comprehensive communication strategies to inform the staff and the	- Quality & Patient Relations - Communications & Public Affairs - Information and Communication Technology Ongoing

	community about Halton Healthcare's accessibility initiatives. This includes sharing information through various channels, conducting workshops and actively seeking feedback to continuously improve accessible communication. • Communicate advancements in accessible technology adoption, ensuring staff and stakeholders are aware of new tools and features that enhance accessibility.	
S. 13(1) Emergency Procedure, Plans or Public Safety Information Halton Healthcare is committed to providing emergency procedures, plans or public safety information available in an accessible format or with appropriate communication support, as soon as practicable, upon request.	• Process in place for communicating with the staff and public when accessible elements (e.g., elevators, power-assisted doors) are not in working order and what alternatives are available. • Information is available online, posted across Halton Healthcare on digital screens in highly conspicuous areas and available in accessible format upon request. • Put in place a digital display board for codes to be shown throughout the hospital to accommodate patients and visitors with hearing difficulties, so they are aware of their surroundings.	• Communications & Public Affairs • ICT Ongoing
S.14(1) Accessible Websites and Web Content	• AODA requirements for accessible websites have been applied to both our internal and	• Communication & Public Affairs

Halton Healthcare is required to meet the criteria for accessibility.	external websites. Changes to these requirements and availability of additional accessibility enhancements will be monitored and applied as available	Ongoing
S.20 - 32 Employment Halton Healthcare is committed to providing equal opportunity within a safe and respectful environment for Persons with Disabilities. The Employment Standard sets out accessibility requirements to ensure that all phases of the employment cycle - including recruitment, the selection process, notice to successful applicants, informing employees of supports, accessible communication supports for employees, individualized workplace emergency response information, individual accommodation plans, return to work process, performance management, career development and career advancement - are followed to support Persons with Disabilities	• Halton Healthcare ensures it has appropriate policies and procedures in place in accordance with the AODA. These policies are reviewed and revised regularly and when required by changes to legislation. Policies include: *Individual Accommodations Plans Policy* *Accommodations and Return to Work Planning* *Early and Safe Return to Work* *Emergency Response for Persons Requiring Assistance*	• Health, Safety and Wellness Ongoing
S.76 (1) Transportation	Halton Healthcare does not provide transportation however, Halton Healthcare has worked extensively with the Towns and the Region in creating an environment on our sites, particularly Oakville, that accommodates public transportation for people with disabilities. Furthermore, all transportation planning related to improvements or changes to Public Spaces must meet current accessibility standards.	

S. 80.2(1) Design of Public Spaces The Design of Public Spaces applies to newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces. Halton Healthcare is required to ensure that that newly constructed, renovated, or redeveloped spaces are accessible, and the multi-year accessibility plan outlines how accessibility will be met, except where not practicable to do so. The areas covered by the standard: • Outdoor public-use eating areas. • Outdoor play spaces Exterior paths of travel (sidewalks, ramps) Accessible parking spaces • Obtaining service-related elements (service counters, fixed queuing guides, seating and waiting areas) Maintenance planning including emergency procedures to address temporary disruption to service affecting accessible services and facilities.	• Halton Healthcare has conducted numerous development and renovation projects and ensures that accessibility standards are met and exceeded. • Ensure compatibility between the renovation and redevelopment projects and the Health Care Equity Committee • Ensure that the accessibility perspective is integrated in the renovation, redevelopment and design of public space including furniture, colour, surfaces and finishes. • Explore feasibility of finding an alternate entrance for Outpatient Rehabilitation at Georgetown Hospital • Assess and enhance North Halton Mental Health Clinic in Milton to improve accessibility and access to care. • Evaluate the ramp in the OTMH cafeteria to allow for enhancements to improve accessibility.	• Redevelopment Ongoing For projects requiring funding, the program or site lead is accountable for securing the funding.

Process and Governance Structure

Halton Healthcare has a process and Governance Structure to ensure the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* are adhered to.

- Redevelopment to engage Halton Healthcare's Accessibility Working Group prior to major and minor renovations to ensure sign-off is obtained prior to implementation.
- Patient and Family Advisors partner with the organization to enhance the patient's experience, including participating in the Accessibility Working Group and the Health Care Equity Committee.

For More Information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact Quality & Patient Relations at 905-338-4138 or patientrelations@haltonhealthcare.com.

Please contact Quality & Patient Relations for an accessible format of this document, available upon request at no charge.

Appendix A: Past Achievements to Identify, Remove and Prevent Barriers

Halton Healthcare is pleased to share a list of our achievements to date in our ongoing efforts to provide a fully accessible service to our employees and communities.

- Newly designed and redeveloped spaces at our three hospitals to meet or exceed the Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment outlined in the Acce*ssibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA, 2005).
- Enhancement of additional Staxi (transport wheelchairs) available at all entrances and high traffic clinical areas tri-site to support movement across larger distances for those who need this assistance; transport wheelchairs are available at all three hospitals.
- Large team of transport volunteers to assist patients in getting them to their intended destinations.
- Parking adjacent to ambulatory areas (Cancer Care, Dialysis).
- Review and analysis of hospital entrances, parking lot by Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB), with recommendations implemented to improve visibility in those areas.
- Real-time medical remote video interpretation in American Sign Language (ASL) is available at all Halton Healthcare locations. With advance notice for in-person appointments, ASL interpreters can be scheduled through Canadian Hearing Services.
- Patient and Family Advisors partner with us to enhance the patient's experience, including participating on our Health Care Equity Committee.
- Establish and educate staff on "teach back" protocols that address the unique challenges of those with invisible disabilities, to ensure that the information we are sharing with the patients and families is understood.
- Increased the volume of the audible signal of the parking garage elevators and investigated the feasibility of in-car oral enunciator.
- Installed a push button door opener on the OTMH Breast Feeding Clinic door and the door to Volunteer Services to enhance ease of entry.
- Installed skid prevention on the OTMH Food Court ramp.
- Installed grab bars in the OTMH and MDH Diagnostic Imaging area.
- Ensured availability of adapted call bells for people with limited manual dexterity/paralysis.
- Increased availability of adjustable height commode chairs.
- Have mobility devices (stretchers/wheelchairs) available on level 0 OTMH and MDH for use in the event of a code.
- Approval of talk-to-text tools for employees who require as part of accommodation.
- Development of policies and procedures to support employee accommodations related to disability: Individual Accommodation Plans Policy, Emergency Response for Persons Requiring Assistance.
- Health, Safety and Wellness and Human Resources have enhanced recruitment processes for the early identification of employees requiring support.

- Addition of Bluetooth beacon technology (Blind Square) to aid people with vision impairment to navigate their immediate surroundings.
- We have strengthened mechanisms for feedback about building redevelopment to ensure we are responsive to this feedback.
- Website compliant with AODA requirements.
- Made assistive devices available, including wheelchairs, Staxi chairs (transport wheelchair), and Pocket Talkers.
- Service animals are welcome.
- Support persons are welcome.
- Staff receive training in accordance with the AODA.
- Virtual visits with patients and families support families who face mobility challenges.
- Virtual appointments with physician's support patients who face mobility challenges.
- Virtual face to face consults support patients who face mobility challenges.
- Aligned physician job postings with accommodation requirements.