

## Access and Accommodation of Individuals with Disabilities

Version: 5

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### 1.0 SickKids Commitment to Accessibility

The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) is committed to providing equitable treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of Hospital services, programs, goods, and facilities. Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), Ontario hospitals must meet accessibility standards to identify, remove and prevent barriers.

SickKids is dedicated to being accessible and compliant with all accessibility standards and to creating a welcoming, barrier-free environment for its community, including patients, families and staff. SickKids is also committed to ensuring that all persons within its community are aware of their rights and responsibilities to promote an accessible and inclusive environment with and for persons who have disabilities.

SickKids has established an Accessibility Steering Committee which is comprised of a broad representation of SickKids' community members, including people with lived experience with disability. The Committee is responsible for ongoing enhancements to accessibility at SickKids and advises senior management about matters related to the requirements of the AODA.

**If you would like to request this policy in an alternative format or have any questions or comments related to accessibility at SickKids email [accessibility.questions@sickkids.ca](mailto:accessibility.questions@sickkids.ca) or call (416) 813-7654 ext. 228315.**

### 2.0 Policy

Consistent with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code and SickKids Mission and Values, SickKids will continually strive to provide an accessible environment for people with disabilities, including patients and their families, visitors, staff, trainees, and volunteers. SickKids will strive to meet all applicable requirements of the AODA, 2005. Plans and policies will be updated on a regular basis to reflect work on these requirements in accordance with the schedule set out in the AODA, 2005. Multi-year accessibility plans will be reviewed annually and updated in consultation with the Accessibility Steering Committee.

### 3.0 Application

- 3.1. This policy applies to all employees, healthcare professionals, researchers, trainees, interns, students, volunteers, patients, family members, visitors, advisory groups, suppliers, contractors and community-based partners, research partners and business partners.
- 3.2. This policy applies to all activities at SickKids and to hospital-related activities which occur elsewhere. Those include, but are not limited to business undertakings, teaching or training programs, research initiatives, community projects, partnership activities, social functions, fundraising events, and activities involving access to the Hospital's computer or communication systems.

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- 3.3. This policy applies to all contractual relationships between the Hospital and its business, research, and community partners.

## 4.0 Procedure

### 4.1 Use of Assistive Devices

SickKids staff, trainees, volunteers and third-party contractors will accommodate the use of personal assistive devices, including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, canes, walkers, scooters, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems. The following applies to assistive devices available throughout the Hospital:

- Assistive devices will be kept in good working order, and the public will be informed of their availability.
- The Hospital will ensure that relevant staff members know how to access and use the assistive devices available at the Hospital and that instructions are available for these devices.
- The use of assistive devices by staff may require assessment by Occupational Health and Safety Services and/or the Health and Absence Management Program (HAMP).
- Patients and families requiring assistive devices can contact their healthcare team.

### 4.2 Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

#### 4.2.1 Service Animals

People with disabilities who are assisted by a guide dog or service animal as outlined in the SickKids [Animals & Pets](#) policy may be accompanied by the animal within the Hospital, unless the animal is excluded from the environment by another law. Please note, If the service animal is any animal other than a dog assessment and approval is required on a case-by-case basis by Volunteer Resources and Infection and Prevention Control.

Service animals may accompany an individual if:

- a) It is clear the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability.
- b) The animal is always wearing proper identification (e.g., vest/tags).

Persons with a guide dog or service animal may be asked to show documentation confirming the animal is needed for reasons related to a disability. To facilitate communication, Service Dog letter templates are available for patients/families, staff or volunteers. Area Managers may provide patients/families with a letter on request. If the service dog is accompanying a staff member or volunteer, the individual should consult with their supervisor and complete the template.

SickKids is committed to the safety of all patients, and there may be situations where the presence of a service animal may interfere with Hospital operations, pose a risk to other patients, or break another law. If the animal is excluded for any of these reasons, discussion should occur between the employee/patient/family and the appropriate manager/staff members to ensure that the needs of the individual are met while minimizing any potential risk to others.

- If a person with a disability is prevented from accessing their support animal, the Hospital will attempt to arrange an alternative service where appropriate and available.

- Individuals accompanied by service animals are responsible for the care and supervision of their service animals at all times. All animals on SickKids property must always be restrained on a leash or other device and be held under the control of a person. This person is responsible for the care and behavior management of the service animal, including any recovery and disposal of excreta.

Please refer to the [Animals & Pets](#) policy for more information.

#### **4.2.2 Support Persons**

People with a disability who are assisted by a support person are entitled to bring that support person with them while accessing goods and services at the Hospital. However, the Hospital may limit a support person's access based on medical or safety considerations. In a situation where the Hospital deems it necessary to deny access to a support person, the Hospital will assume responsibility for basic care of the individual with a disability. The Hospital may also require the presence of a support person, if it is deemed by staff that a significant risk is incurred by an individual with a disability who is attempting to access Hospital goods and services without assistance.

### **4.3 Notice of Temporary Disruptions**

The Hospital will provide notice to the public in the event of planned or unexpected disruptions in the services and facilities used by people with disabilities. Temporary signage or communication notices (digital or non-digital) will be used to notify the public of the temporary disruption. Disruptions in services and facilities used by people with disabilities must be reported to the Accessibility Team and Communications and Public Affairs so that a notice of temporary disruption can be issued. Email [accessibility.questions@sickkids.ca](mailto:accessibility.questions@sickkids.ca) and [public.affairs@sickkids.ca](mailto:public.affairs@sickkids.ca) to report notices of disruption.

These notices will include information about:

- The reason for the disruption
- The anticipated duration of the disruption
- Alternative facilities and/or services, where possible
- Who to contact with questions

### **4.4 Emergency Response for Employees with Disabilities**

Plans will be in place to identify appropriate measures to assist employees with disabilities in the event of an emergency situation to ensure that all employees are able to evacuate a hazardous environment in a safe manner. For further information please reference the [Emergency Response Planning for Employees with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **4.5 Accessibility Training**

All SickKids staff, trainees, and volunteers and third parties providing goods and services to members of the public on SickKids' behalf, as well as those who develop the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties will receive accessibility training. This training will include a review of the purpose of the AODA, the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, the Integrated Accessibility Standards, and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Training also includes instruction about the following matters:

- Understanding how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Recognizing how to support people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service or support animal.
- How to access equipment made available by the Hospital to help people with disabilities access care and services.
- How to manage a situation where a person with a disability is experiencing difficulty in accessing a service.
- How to report an accessibility concern or complaint.
- Related Hospital policies and procedures.

The training will be appropriate to the duties of the employee, volunteer or third party. Training will take place as soon as practicable and is mandatory for all staff. Leaders are responsible for ensuring staff receive and complete appropriate training.

## 4.6 Feedback Process

The Hospital will actively encourage feedback and comments on the quality of care and accommodation provided to people with disabilities. All feedback will be reviewed and responded to as appropriate. The reporting process to address feedback related to accommodation for individuals with disabilities is as follows:

### 4.6.1 Patients and Families

- A member of the patient's healthcare team or Patient and Family Relations (PFR) receives feedback. To contact PFR email [patient.relations@sickkids.ca](mailto:patient.relations@sickkids.ca) or call or 416-813-6181.
  - Immediate action should be taken at the site to address the issue where appropriate/needed.
  - If required, a safety report is submitted by either the person providing or receiving the feedback.
  - If the feedback requires further follow-up, staff should consult with the PFR and/or their supervisor.
  - The feedback is managed via the standard process used by PFR for addressing patient and family feedback.
  - Please refer to PFR guidelines for additional information.

### 4.6.2 Visitors

- Visitors should address their concerns through PFR. To contact PFR email [patient.relations@sickkids.ca](mailto:patient.relations@sickkids.ca) or call or 416-813-6181.

### 4.6.3 Employees/Contractors/Third Party Agents

- The supervisor or manager of the area receives feedback.
- For employees, if the concern requires further attention, contact Occupational Health and Safety Services at:
  - [Hampteam.requests@sickkids.ca](mailto:Hampteam.requests@sickkids.ca) for Health and Absence Management Program (HAMP) general inquiries.
  - [Occupational.health-safety@sickkids.ca](mailto:Occupational.health-safety@sickkids.ca) for Safety and Hygiene Team inquiries.
  - [Occupational.healthnurses@sickkids.ca](mailto:Occupational.healthnurses@sickkids.ca) for the Occupational Health Clinic.

## 4.7 Notice of Availability of Documents

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Notice of the availability of documents will be provided on the Hospital's websites and through other printed methods. Anyone who wishes to obtain a copy of this policy should contact Communications & Public Affairs at [public.affairs@sickkids.ca](mailto:public.affairs@sickkids.ca) or (416) 813-5058.

## 5.0 Accessible Formats & Communication Supports

Except as otherwise provided by the AODA, upon request, departments/clinics will provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities in consultation with the person making the request, other relevant departments, and the Accessibility Contact, as needed.

Accessible formats may be requested through the relevant department/clinic or by following instructions on the [Accessible Format Request Form](#) page on the SickKids website. Accessible formats will be provided at a cost that is no greater than the regular cost.

## 6.0 Emergency Procedures, Plans & Information

SickKids will provide all existing public emergency procedures, plans and public safety information, upon request, in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports in a timely manner.

## 7.0 Employment Standards

In line with the Employment Standard the following employment practices have been implemented to make the workplace more accessible to employees with disabilities:

- Preparing accessible employment policies.
- Letting job applicants know that the recruitment and hiring process can and will be modified to accommodate their disabilities, when requested.
- Providing information about a job, including applications, in accessible formats on request.
- Giving disability awareness training to all employees.
- Creating a process for developing and documenting individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities and individual return to work plans for employees who are returning to work after being away for reasons related to their disabilities.
- Preparing accommodation plans to help employees perform their job.
- Preparing individual emergency response plans when necessary.

Please refer to the following SickKids policies for additional information:

[Hiring Policy](#)

[Health Absence Management and Accommodation](#)

[Emergency Response Planning for Employees with Disabilities](#)

[Respect in the Workplace: The Management of Disrespectful Conduct](#)

Please contact the Health Absence Management Team (HAMP) in Occupational Health and Safety Services at [Hampteam.requests@sickkids.ca](mailto:Hampteam.requests@sickkids.ca) for more information on workplace accommodation or emergency response plans for employees with disabilities.

## 8.0 Responsibilities

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The SickKids Accessibility Steering Committee is responsible for reviewing this policy annually and recommending amendments to ensure on-going compliance with regulated accessibility standards and legislated obligations.

### **8.1 SickKids Accessibility Steering Committee**

- Provides advice and direction on the implementation of this policy.
- The Committee is comprised of SickKids staff from various areas of the Hospital, Family Advisors, volunteers, and people with lived experience with disability.
- The Accessibility Specialist role supports the Accessibility Steering Committee as needed.
- Working groups are established as needed.

### **8.2 Supervisors, Managers & Staff**

- Managers and Supervisors should ensure that they and their staff and trainees are familiar with and comply with this policy.
- Managers and Supervisors should ensure that they and their staff receive and complete appropriate accessibility training.
- Monitor current practices to ensure compliance.
- Managers and Supervisors process accommodation requests from employees with disabilities and consult Occupational Health and Safety Services to support employee needs.

## **9.0 Definitions**

### **9.1 Disability:**

The AODA defines disability as:

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

### **9.2 Accommodation:**

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A term used to describe the support, resources and or services provided to individuals with temporary or permanent disabilities to remove barriers that may arise due to their disability and support them in achieving their full potential. Accommodations in relation to care may include, but are not limited to, facilitating access to care, providing extra time to communicate with individuals and using technology to provide information. Accommodations in the workplace may include, but are not limited to, modified work hours, modified work and access to assistive devices.

### **9.3 Assistive Devices and Interpretation Services**

Assistive devices are auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (e.g., canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids). Please contact your manager or healthcare provider for support obtaining assistive devices and interpretation services.

The following assistive devices and interpretation services are available at SickKids:

#### **Bell Relay Service:**

A free service where Bell acts as an intermediary between a hearing person and a person with a hearing disability talking over the telephone. The service can be reached at 1-800-855-0511.

#### **Computer Accessibility Features:**

Microsoft provides a variety of accessibility features in their operating systems to assist users with diverse needs, including visual, hearing, and control enhancements. You can review the various features in IMT's [Accessibility Knowledge Base Article](#) along with additional information on how to request these features and how to install proprietary software that staff are already comfortable using. For more information on this topic please email the Service Desk at [Service.Desk@sickkids.ca](mailto:Service.Desk@sickkids.ca).

#### **Communication Boards and Devices:**

Communication Boards and Devices are augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems which help individuals with disabilities communicate more effectively. Communication boards allow a person to use letters, words or visual icons to express themselves. Communication devices are electronic devices which allow a person to use letters, words, or visual icons to express themselves and may have voice output. For assistance with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems contact Child Life Services or the Speech Language Pathology Department.

- For Child Life Services, inpatients should contact Child Life Services through EPIC; outpatients should email [outpatient.childlife@sickkids.ca](mailto:outpatient.childlife@sickkids.ca).
- For the Speech Language Pathology Department inpatients should put in a Speech Language Pathology referral through EPIC; outpatients should email [inpatient.speech@sickkids.ca](mailto:inpatient.speech@sickkids.ca).

#### **Language Interpretation Services:**

Language access is a shared responsibility, supporting patients and their families in making informed decisions about their care.

SickKids Interpreter Services provides free spoken and sign language support to patients/families/caregivers who identify a non-English language preference, or who are deaf or hard of hearing. Interpretation services are provided specifically for the exchange of health information related to

direct patient care. Interpreter Services is committed to providing appropriate and equitable services to patients, their families, and health care providers. For assistance, please contact Interpreter Services at (416) 813-7654 ext. 206618 or email [interpreterservices.requests@sickkids.ca](mailto:interpreterservices.requests@sickkids.ca). See the [Interpreter Services](#) policy for more information.

### **Pre-Scheduled Interpretation**

Interpreter Services provides pre-scheduled interpretation services for spoken and sign language requests that are on-site and virtual (i.e., video and over the phone). These services are arranged through Interpreter Services.

### **On-Demand Interpretation**

On demand interpretation services are available during unexpected, brief, and/or unpredictable patient encounters, and/or when an in-person interpreter is not available.

On demand interpretation is available using:

- over the phone interpretation (OPI) by calling 416-504-2578,
- Interpreter on Wheels (IOW), or
- Zoom healthcare integration (i.e., used for virtual visits).

These services are available 24/7 in over 100 languages by trained interpreters and are accessed using the clinical area's specific Client ID.

### **Wheelchairs:**

There are several different wheelchairs available at SickKids. These include wheelchairs that tilt, have head rests and those that provide secure seating with a harness. They are generally available in 3 sizes: toddler, school age, and teenager. A few bariatric wheelchairs are also available for individuals who require a larger wheelchair. A limited supply of wheelchairs are available at the Hospital entrances at 170 Elizabeth Street and 555 University Avenue.

For help securing a wheelchair, patients/families should contact the Hospital Navigation Team at 437-240-8419 or [hospitalconciierge.requests@sickkids.ca](mailto:hospitalconciierge.requests@sickkids.ca), Monday - Friday 8:00 am – 9:00 pm; and 9:00 am – 9:00 pm on evenings and weekends.

## **9.4 Service Animal:**

An animal individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities. This includes, but is not limited to, people who have vision loss, hearing impairment, and seizure disorders. Service animals in the context of this document refers to dogs only. Any other animal that may meet these criteria would require assessment and approval on a case-by-case basis as outlined in [SickKids Animals & Pets policy](#).

## **9.5 Guide Dog:**

A dog trained as a guide for people who are blind and has the qualifications prescribed by the regulations R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7, s. 1 (1). Blind Persons Rights Act. A guide dog is a dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in the Ontario Regulation 58 under the Blind Persons' Rights Act to act as a guide dog for people who are blind.

### **9.6 Support Person:**

An individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or with access to goods or services. The support person could be a paid personal support worker, a volunteer, a friend, or a family member.

### **9.7 Unconvertible**

Information or communication that is not technically feasible to convert are termed unconvertible. Technology to convert the information is not readily available.

## **10.0 References**

1. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11
2. Blind Persons' Rights Act, RSO 1990, c B.7
3. Guide Dogs, RRO 1990, Reg 58
4. Health Protection and Promotion Act R.S.O. 1990, Chapter H.7.
5. Human Rights Code R.S.O. 1990, Chapter H.19.
6. Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. (2008). Accessibility Standards.
7. Ontario regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards.
8. Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.
9. AccessForward - [www.accessforward.ca](http://www.accessforward.ca).