



2023-2028

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (AODA) – Ontario

Intent

This accessibility plan outlines the strategy of John Howard Society Durham Region to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities and comply with the requirements of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This plan is in effect from 2023 to 2028.

Statement of Commitment

John Howard Society Durham Region is committed to providing an accessible environment for all clients, employees, job applicants, suppliers, and visitors who may enter our premises, access our information, or use our services. As an organization, we respect and comply with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and its associated regulations. We strive to provide an accessible and welcoming environment for everyone by identifying and removing barriers in our workplace and ensuring that new barriers are not created. The company ensures that persons with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities. We are committed to meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and integrative manner that respects their dignity and independence.

Multi-year Accessibility Plan

The John Howard Society of Durham Region is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. This accessibility plan outlines the steps we are taking to meet those requirements and to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

Our plan shows how we will play our role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians. The plan is reviewed and updated at least once every 5 years.

We train every person as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect of any changes to the policies. We maintain records of the training provided including the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

If you want to receive a copy of the plan in a different accessible format, please contact accessibility@jhsd.ca or 905-579-8482.

Achievements in Removing and Preventing Barriers

John Howard Society Durham Region has completed the following initiatives to prevent and remove barriers and comply with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*:

Customer Service Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region has remained compliant with the Customer Service Standards and recognizes that all people deserve to access goods, services, and facilities in ways that respect their independence and dignity. The Agency employs staff training and feedback mechanisms to ensure that we honour our commitment to maintaining high standards for accessible and inclusive customer service.

Training:

Training is provided to:

- Every person who is an employee of, or a student on placement with, the Agency.
- Every person who participates in developing the Agency's policies.

Regardless of the format, training covers the following:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- A review of the requirements of the Customer Service Standards.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - o use assistive devices;
 - o require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - o require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).

Feedback Mechanisms:

The John Howard Society of Durham Region has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way it provides goods and services to persons with disabilities. Feedback may be provided in person, by telephone, in writing through our website or by delivering an electronic text by email or on media device to a staff member in reception of any of our JHS Durham locations.

Information and Communications Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region has remained compliant with the Information and Communication Standards and recognizes that people deserve an equal chance to be active in their communities.

An accomplishment includes the opportunity provided to two of our employees in 2021 to participate in the Signing Naturally 1A American Sign Language course through Durham Deaf Services.

The Agency is also committed to creating, providing, and receiving information and communications that people with disabilities can access, having successfully maintained

transparent and accessible communication to the public during unprecedented office closures due to reasons such as building maintenance, including the length of time expected for the service disruption, as well as alternative means of service. These updates were not only posted to our physical office location, but across our digital platforms (i.e., website and social media).

In 2023, our Employment and Training Services also launched an updated version of our employment services website with the aid of a skilled developer, ensuring full compliance with WCAG 2.0 AA.

Employment Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region has remained compliant with the Employment Standards and recognizes the importance of creating an equal opportunity environment where everyone has a chance to use their skills in the workplace.

At John Howard Society we value inclusion and diversity. We are committed to fostering a culture that is respectful, inclusive, and accessible and to employing a workforce that is representative of the diverse community we provide services to. As an equal opportunity employer, we welcome applications from all qualified applicants. Accommodation is provided in all parts of the recruitment and assessment process in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

As part of the Agency's ongoing commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, the Agency has an established both a staff EDI committee and an Adhoc EDI Committee of the Board of Directors to advise on and effectively maintain best practices. Committee membership consists of all levels of the organization. In addition to these committees, input is collected from external community partners and service users both formally and informally.

Design of Public Spaces Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region has remained compliant with the Design of Public Spaces Standards and recognizes the importance of creating and maintaining spaces that are accessible.

An automated standing desk and keyboard riser was purchased in 2020 for our Employment and Training Service's Learning Alternatives Program for service users requiring accommodation.

In 2023 an update was made to the doorbell system at our accessible entrance to ensure that those requiring the accessibility entrance can be heard throughout the building.

Strategies and Actions

John Howard Society Durham Region plans to take or is in the process of completing the following initiatives to prevent and remove barriers and comply with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*:

Customer Service Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods, services, and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others.

Information and Communication Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities.

We are currently revising our Agency brochures in collaboration with a skilled developer to ensure that our information is presented in an accessible manner. Additionally, these materials will be adaptable and available in various formats to cater to the diverse needs of individuals accessing our services.

Employment Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. As part of our ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion, we actively review and enhance our hiring practices. This includes implementing measures to attract a more diverse pool of candidates and ensuring an unbiased and equitable selection process.

Design of Public Spaces Standards

The John Howard Society of Durham Region will meet accessibility laws when building or making major changes to public spaces.

One way we hope to accomplish this is to enhance accessibility at the rear of our building, where we currently have an accessibility entrance. We are in the process of enhancing accessibility by adjusting our doors to open inward. We also hope to designate accessible parking spaces at the back of our building. This initiative aims to provide convenient and easily accessible parking for individuals who require accommodations due to mobility challenges. This decision aligns with our values of inclusivity and ensuring that our facilities are welcoming to everyone. The designated accessible parking spaces at the rear of the building will be reserved exclusively for staff and service users who require accessible parking.

With our current accessibility entrance located at the back of our building, our goal is to investigate the possibility of an accessible front entrance.

Conclusion

We look forward to continuing this journey towards creating a workplace that is inclusive and accessible, and contributing to an Ontario that is accessible for all Ontarians. We are committed to investigating and accomplishing the initiatives identified within this Accessibility Plan. If you have any questions or concerns about this plan or its initiatives, please contact accessibility@jhsd.ca or 905-579-8482.