

Accessibility for Individuals with Disabilities

This policy is copied on Southlake's external website. A revised copy needs to be sent to Corporate Communications whenever this policy is updated.

POLICY

Southlake Regional Healthcare Centre (Southlake) is committed to providing accessible customer service to individuals with disabilities. Consistent with the principles of understanding, acceptance, and inclusion that are based on the requirements within the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

Southlake will establish an Annual Accessibility Plan that describes the measures used to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities. Ensure that documents and practices comply with the [AODA and its regulation 191/11](#) (integrated accessibility standards) which include but are not limited to Customer Service Transportation Built Environment Information and Communications Employment.

Concerns or questions regarding accessibility should be referred to:

- Patient Relations Office at (905) 895-4521 x 5294
- Manager of Facility Operations at (905) 895-4521 x 2094
- Coordinator of Patient Experience, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at (905) 895-4521 x. 2198
- Or other appropriate personnel as defined in the Customer Feedback Policy and Customer Feedback Procedure

All policies, procedures, and plans for providing accessible service are published on the Southlake internet website and are available to customers upon request. All information will be provided in a format that takes into account a person or family member's ability.

DEFINITIONS

Accommodations - Measures used to make something accessible to an individual with a disability. Provision of assistive devices or services, changes to policies, programs, or procedures, allowing a person with a disability to participate, even though they may participate differently, are some examples of accommodations.

Adaptive or Assistive Devices - Includes tools such as computers or special communication devices that facilitate access to information or services for people with disabilities, as well as devices/supports such as mobility aids, service animals, etc.

Barrier – As defined by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. It includes a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a policy, or a practice barrier.

Disability – Refers to all disabilities protected in the [Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990](#), Ch.H.19, as defined in sec.10 of the Code as follows:

- 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, including diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, and degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b. a condition of mental retardation or impairment,
- 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, or
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act."

Service Animal - An animal for a person with a disability, if

- a. if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability;
- b. if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

The customer service standard's provisions include animals used by people with autism, mental health disabilities, and those with physical or dexterity disabilities as well as others.

Support Person – in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies the person in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario Regulation 165/16).

RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive Team:

- Review of existing policies and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA).
- Ensure Southlake practices are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equity.

Managers:

- Implement, monitor and evaluate compliance of Accessibility Standards.
- Receive requests for accommodation from persons with disabilities.
- Determine, in consultation with the patient/hospital team member, the most appropriate accommodation.
- Ensure staff know accessibility standards and are aware of procedure for back up accommodation or to notify patients/clients/staff should accessibility be temporarily out of service (i.e.) elevator down.

Human Resources:

- Review policies, procedure and training needs, related to Accessibility, and ensure all records of training/ attendance sheets are in Human Resources for record-keeping.
- Ensure HR practices are consistent with Accessibility Standards.

Physicians, Employees, Affiliates:

- Participate in required education related to the Accessibility Standards.
- Forward feedback from patients/customers regarding the Accessibility Standards to the manager of the appropriate area.

Patients/Clients/Hospital Team Members:

- Self-identify if there is a disability for which they require assistance in accessing Southlake services and communicate such to the appropriate Southlake personnel.

PROCEDURE

1. Use of Service Animals

- People with disabilities who use a service animal have the right to enter Southlake with the animal and keep the animal with them in accordance with the Service Animals: Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy.

- Service animals are often recognizable as they are wearing a harness or a service vest that alerts the public to the fact that they are working.
- Any animal posing a direct threat to the health and safety of others, or exhibiting repeated disruptive behavior, may be denied access to Southlake. In this case, staff will ensure other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain services.
- This is not to be confused with Pet Therapy or Pet Visitations.

2. Use of Assistive Devices and Support Persons

- Southlake will make every effort to ensure persons with disabilities can use their assistive devices when accessing care and services.
- People with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person have the right to have access to that support person while accessing the goods and services of Southlake.

3. Notice of Temporary Disruptions

- In the event services are temporarily unavailable or anticipated to be, Southlake will provide public notice.
- A notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

4. Training for Accessibility

- All Southlake employees and volunteers will receive training on the requirements of the accessibility standards as well as providing customer service to people with disabilities. A variety of methods will be used including e-learning, booklet, in-service education, new employee orientation, and any other training as appropriate to individual job descriptions.

Training will include:

- a. The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- b. Requirements of the accessibility standards and Ontario Human Rights Code.
- c. How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- d. How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- e. How to access and use in-house resources or devices on Southlake's premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.
- f. What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Southlake goods and services.
- g. Southlake's policies, practices, and procedures relating to providing access to people with disabilities and all aspects of this program.

5. Feedback

- Opportunity for feedback and to respond to it is established through email, telephone, event management system, or in person.

6. Notice of Availability of Documents

- Provide public notice that the documents required by the Accessibility Act. Standards are available upon request in accessible formats.

7. Reporting

- Maintain policies and procedures to demonstrate compliance with the Accessibility standards.

- Submit an annual accessibility report, including an accessibility plan as per the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), to the executive team.
- File an annual accessibility report with the Ontario Government.

8. Workplace Emergency Response Information

- Provide emergency procedures and public safety information to members of the public in accessible formats, upon request.
- Provide individualized emergency response information to employees who self-identify as having disabilities. Emergency evacuation plans for employees with disabilities will be shared with their manager, security, and peer assistants if noted.

9. Transportation

- Where applicable, Southlake will help arrange accessibility transportation services upon request.

10. Procuring or acquiring goods and services

- Southlake incorporates accessibility criteria when procuring, acquiring, or designing goods and services.

11. Internet and Web Content

- As of 2014, all NEW internet websites and web content conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), 2.0, Level A (excluding live captioning and pre-recorded audio description).

12. Recruitment

- Staff and the public are notified about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities in the recruitment process
- Upon selection, applicants are notified that accommodations are available upon request.

13. Accommodation

- Staff is informed of policies to support employees with disabilities, including the provision of job accommodation.
- Individual accommodation plans are created for employees with disabilities.
- Return to work plans are created for those who have been absent from work due to a disability.
- Accessibility needs and accommodation plans are taken into account when redeploying employees with disabilities.

14. Performance Management and Career Development

- Accessibility needs of staff with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, will be considered during the performance management process and when providing career development and advancement to staff with disabilities.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Persons with disabilities have a right to privacy. Southlake has a responsibility to keep personal health information confidential, ensuring that it is not disclosed or made accessible to others, including support persons unless authorized.

REFERENCES

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA) <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191> Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)