



YMCA of Northeastern Ontario

# Accessibility & Customer Service Policy (AODA)

Approval Status | February 2018

Last Revised | December 2018

*Building healthy  
communities*



## Contents

Accessibility & Customer Service Policy.....	3
Introduction .....	3
Policy Statement .....	3
Definitions.....	4
Roles and Responsibilities.....	5
Assistive Devices, Service Animals, Support Persons .....	7
Use of Assistive Devices .....	7
Use of Service Animals, Guide Dogs and Service Dogs .....	7
Exclusion Guidelines: .....	8
Applicable Laws:.....	8
Notice of Temporary Disruptions.....	8
Training .....	9
Training Provisions .....	9
Training Schedule.....	9
Record of Training.....	9
Notice of Availability and Format of Documents.....	10
Feedback Process.....	10
Resources Available .....	10



## Accessibility & Customer Service Policy

### Introduction

On June 13th 2005, the government of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The purpose of the AODA is to make organizations in Ontario more accessible to people with disabilities. Accessibility standards are laws that government, business, non-profits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible.

- Access
- Design of Public Spaces Standard;
- Customer Service Standard;
- Employment Standard;
- Information and Communication Standard; and
- Transportation Standard

All services provided by the YMCA will follow the principles of dignity, respect, inclusiveness, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

### Policy Statement

In accordance with the AODA, the YMCA is committed to being an organization that encompasses social inclusion and diversity. The YMCA recognizes the dignity and worth of every individual and will seek to create an environment in which everyone, regardless of their background, experiences, or circumstances, is able to participate fully in. In order to fulfill this commitment, YMCA of Northeastern Ontario will do its best to ensure:

- Barriers to the point of undue hardship are removed so that YMCA environments are accessible to every individual;
- Accessibility related complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively; and
- Policies, practices, and procedures that relate to the delivery of services are consistent with the principles of dignity, respect, inclusiveness, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.



## Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this policy:

**Accommodation:** is a way through reasonable efforts or measures, of preventing or minimizing barriers that impede a person with a disability from fully participating in the services offered. For example; accommodation means allowing a member or program participant to use their personal assistive device and or be accompanied by their support person, guide dog, or any other service animal unless it is prohibited by law.

**Assistive Device:** is any device that helps a person with a disability do everyday tasks and activities. Assistive devices include digital audio players, hearing aids, teletypewriter machines (TTY) for people unable to speak or hear by phone, mobility devices (scooters, walkers, crutches, white canes, oxygen tanks, etc.) and speech generating devices.

\*Bell has a Relay Service from any phone for free (1-800-855-0511)

**Barrier:** is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. This may include architectural or physical barriers, information or communications barriers (when a person can't easily understand information), attitudinal barriers (discrimination against people with disabilities), technological barriers (when technology can't be modified to support various assistive devices), and or organizational barriers (organizational policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities).

**Customer:** is any person who uses the services of the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario.

**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 coordination, 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 device;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A 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.



**Guide Dog:** is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the Blind Persons' Rights Act, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

**Service Animal:** an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

- the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- The person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:
  - A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
  - A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
  - A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario;
  - A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
  - A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario;
  - A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
  - A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
  - A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario; or
  - A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

**Service Dog:** As reflected in Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 s60 (2), a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- It is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or
- The person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

**Support Person:** is another person who accompanies a person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with accessing the programs and services offered by YMCA of Northeastern Ontario.

## Roles and Responsibilities

**All supervisors and managers shall:**

- Comply with this policy
- Help staff in their program area(s) adjust to the terms of this policy
- Provide staff and volunteers with training based on accessibility standards
- Make sure that their program area(s) accommodate assistive devices, service animals and support person, as outlined under "Procedures for Assistive Devices, Service Animals & Support Persons"



- Make sure that notice of temporary disruption is provided as outlined under “Notice of Temporary Disruptions”
- Reply to suggestions as outlined under “Suggestion Process”
- Ensure that the appropriate people are aware of, and have access to the “Evacuation Procedures for People with Disabilities”

**All staff, including volunteers, shall:**

- Comply with this policy
- Take part in the training program for accessibility standards
- Forward all suggestions that people may have to their direct supervisor or manager for handling
- Support the implementation of accessibility standards by providing service in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, including permitting the use of assistive devices, service animals and support persons as outlined under “Procedures for Assistive Devices, Service Animals & Support Persons”. Suggested practices and tips for providing customer service for persons with disabilities are available by contacting a supervisor

**All senior leaders shall:**

- Identify training needs Association-wide
- Ensure that mechanisms are put in place to support managers who are implementing accessibility standards for customer service and or responding to accessibility-related concerns
- Ensure that AODA reporting requirements on implementation of accessibility standards for customer service are completed and forwarded to the Ontario government
- Ensure that YMCA of Northeastern Ontario policies, practices, and procedures related to the AODA are available to any person upon request
- Ensure that communications with a person with a disability are completed in a manner that takes into account their individual circumstances



## Assistive Devices, Service Animals, Support Persons

### Use of Assistive Devices

People with disabilities are allowed to use their own personal assistive devices while accessing the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario programs or services at any location. If any barriers hinder the use of assistive devices the barriers will be removed if possible.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access to the services. For example, open flames and oxygen tanks cannot be near one another. Therefore, the accommodation of a customer with an oxygen tank may involve ensuring the customer is in a location that would be considered safe for both the customer and the YMCA. Or, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the customer.

\*Assistive devices are to be treated with respect and as part of the person's personal space. This means we must have permission before assistance is offered.

### Use of Service Animals, Guide Dogs and Service Dogs

Service animals, Guide Dogs and Service Dogs are permitted to accompany any person with a disability while accessing or using YMCA of Northeastern Ontario programs or services in any premises owned, leased or operated by YMCA of Northeastern Ontario, except where animals are excluded by law, or may affect the health and safety of other customers.

When an individual with a disability enters the building with a service animal, they shall be informed of the following:

- The service animal is to remain by their side at all times
- Staff will not be involved in any aspect of care for the service animal (i.e. feeding, picking up after it, etc.). This is the responsibility of the individual that requires the animal's service or the individual's support person
- If they are unable to manage their service animal, a designated support person must assume full responsibility for the animal during the transition period

In situations where it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, YMCA of Northeastern Ontario may:

- Ask if the animal is required because of a disability
- Ask what kind of work or tasks the animal has been trained to perform
- Request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability

However, YMCA of Northeastern Ontario shall not ask about the nature or extent of a person's disability.



*\*Service animals are to be treated as part of the individual's personal space, meaning that they are not to be touched, pet or distracted by whistling or other noises in attempts to get the animals attention while they are on duty.*

### **Exclusion Guidelines:**

If a guide dog, service animal is excluded by law (see applicable laws below) YMCA of Northeastern Ontario will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

### **Applicable Laws:**

The Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60, normally does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. It does allow guide dogs and service dogs to go into places where food is served, sold or offered for sale. However, other types of service animals are not included in this exception.

### **Allergies**

If a health and safety concern presents itself for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, YMCA of Northeastern Ontario will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

### **Use of Support Persons**

A person who requires the assistance of a support person shall be given access to our services with the support person. Where the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario requires a support person to accompany a person with a disability, and where the person with a disability has agreed to the accompaniment, YMCA of Northeastern Ontario will not charge the support persons for the cost of registration/entry. Additional costs may be incurred for food or for the cost of the field trips or special events. YMCA of Northeastern Ontario may require a person with a disability to be with a support person in order to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and or other people.

### **Notice of Temporary Disruptions**

YMCA of Northeastern Ontario is committed to informing people of any short-term disruptions of service at any of its locations. A short-term disruption is a planned or unplanned disruption to our property or services. This may include power outages, elevator repairs, and or program changes.

Regardless of the type of disruption, managers will inform the people who it affects through postings, voicemail, or by any other sensible method.

The notice will include

- Information about the reason for the disruption,
- How long it is likely to last, and





- Information about any other services that is available instead.

*If a disruption is unplanned and our patrons with disabilities require assistance to exit the building, staff and volunteers will assist them to their destination by reasonable means. (i.e. Members are in an upstairs room and need assistance to the main level. Staff and volunteers where necessary will carry/assist them down the stairs and/or find an alternate route.)*

## Training

Training will be provided to:

- Every person who is an employee of, or a volunteer with, the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario.
- Every person who participates in developing the provider's policies.

## Training Provisions

Regardless of the format, training will cover 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:
  - Use assistive devices;
  - Require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
  - Require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- YMCA of Northeastern Ontario's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

## Training Schedule

YMCA of Northeastern Ontario will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees and volunteers during the new employee/volunteer orientation. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures, policies, and/or practices.

## Record of Training

YMCA of Northeastern Ontario will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.



## Notice of Availability and Format of Documents

YMCA of Northeastern Ontario shall notify customers that the documents related to the Customer Service Standards are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place owned and operated by YMCA of Northeastern Ontario, the YMCA of Northeastern Ontario's website and/or any other reasonable method.

## Feedback Process

YMCA of Northeastern Ontario greatly appreciates all of the feedback that it receives as it allows us to learn and improve as an organization. Members, participants, customers, parents, donors, contractors or any other member of the public is encouraged to bring forward a complaint, concern, compliment, or suggestion by directly reaching out to a YMCA of Northeastern Ontario staff member, supervisor or manager. Alternatively, individuals are welcome to provide feedback through letters, telephone, and e-mail to the Human Resources Department.

All feedback will be directed to the General Manager for review and consideration. Complaints will be addressed according to complaint categories already established in YMCA of Northeastern Ontario's complaint management procedures. Customers can expect a reply within five (5) business days.

## Resources Available

This document will be available upon request in different formats that takes into account persons with disabilities.

In addition, the following are sources for information about Accessibility Standards in Ontario:

- [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)
- [www.accesson.ca](http://www.accesson.ca)