

 Hôpital général de la baie Georgienne GEORGIAN BAY General Hospital	Policy	Page 1 of 5 Internal ID: 4213
Title: Accessibility Policy		
Folder: Human Resources		
Approved by: Document Management Committee		Approval date: December 11, 2023

Purpose

Georgian Bay General Hospital (GBGH) is committed to promoting an environment of trust and belonging based on providing person-centred care and an inclusive workplace, in alignment with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

GBGH seeks continual excellence, encourages belonging and strives to provide personalized experiences for patients, in alignment with our values of *Inspire Dedication, Think Forward, Lead with Empathy, Empower Others* and *Patients First*. GBGH acknowledges and incorporates the recommendations on the Accessibility Standard for Health Care, that is not required by law, in the creation of this policy and the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

This policy is intended to provide clear expectations in the delivery of care and services, employment and information when interacting with an individual with a disability.

Policy Statement

GBGH strives to not only meet, but exceed the requirements established by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) in alignment with the strategic theme of *Continual Excellence*. GBGH notes that a consultation occurred in 2021 on the development of health care standards under the AODA. The initial recommendations from this consultation are considered by GBGH in the multi-year accessibility plan established beginning in 2024. GBGH is committed to ensuring that patients and families feel comfortable and safe in coming to our hospital with their health needs.

GBGH's purpose statement - *We Make Excellent Care **Personal*** – reflects our commitment to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the AODA. To facilitate this commitment, GBGH will establish, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan that will be reviewed and updated (at least once every five years) to identify progress made in addressing barriers.

Updates on progress and opportunities for feedback will be sought regularly and made available publicly on GBGH's website.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of GBGH, as well as professional staff, volunteers, students, and contractors. These individuals are collectively referred to as workers.

Definitions

Accessible format: Formats that are an alternative to standard print and are accessible to people with disabilities. These may include large print, recorded audio, electronic formats, and Braille.

Assistive Devices: These are tools, products or types of equipment that help people with disabilities perform tasks and activities. These may include wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, crutches, prosthetic devices, orthotic devices and hearing aids.

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of the hospital because of their disability. Barriers can be physical, architectural, attitudinal, technological or systemic.

Communication Supports: Supports that individuals with disabilities may need to access information. Some examples include plain language formats, sign language, as well as reading out loud, captioning, or using written notes to communicate.

Disability:

1. 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,
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language OR
4. a mental disorder

Service Animal: An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability OR if the person provides a letter from a qualified medical practitioner confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to disability.

Support Person: In relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or with access to goods and services.

Worker: Includes GBGH staff, professional staff, volunteers and students

Procedure

Assistive Devices

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our goods, services or facilities. If a health care worker has a safety concern with a personal assistive device, they should discuss with their leader and Occupational Health and Safety as needed. If the leader, in consultation with Occupational Health and Safety determines that the personal assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health and safety concern other measures will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the person with a disability can access the Hospital and our services.

The Hospital will ensure training is provided to staff on the use of assistive devices and that staff are aware of where assistive devices owned by the Hospital are available. A list of assistive devices will be developed and maintained by Occupational Health in consultation with appropriate clinical leadership. Any requests to purchase assistive devices for hospital use should be submitted by the leader during the capital budget or through the minor capital equipment request process if urgent.

Communication

The Hospital will use a variety of formats as required to support the sharing of information to persons with disabilities. Requests for alternate formats should be directed to the Director of Communications and Community Relations. Responses will be provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost. Requests for alternate formats could include requests related to invoices, policies, emergency plans, documents etc.

GBGH IT will ensure all public hospital websites meet the AODA requirements of World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

The website will be updated on a regular basis with the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, Accessibility Plan Annual Status Reports, and this policy. Where required, other accessible formats will be used to ensure this information is effectively communicated.

Notices of service disruption will be posted. This information will include information about the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration, and a description of the alternate facilities or services (if any). These notices will be posted on the entrances to GBGH, the website, and social media. Alternative formats will be provided on request.

Feedback regarding the way GBGH provides services to people with disabilities can be made by requesting a form from our Switchboard Receptionist or by requesting by e-mail on our website. All feedback will be directed to the Manager of the department in which service was received. Individuals can expect to hear back within 48 hours of receipt of feedback with an acknowledgement and next steps.

When providing services, all workers will use proper terminology and conduct themselves consistently with training provided to support an inclusive environment for those with disabilities.

Employment

GBGH maintains policies on Talent Acquisition, Recognition, Ethical Discipline and Return to Work, Sick and Accommodation. These policies should be consulted for procedures and direction. These policies comply with the AODA standards.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

GBGH will create a multi-year Accessibility Plan to be reviewed a minimum of once every five years. Feedback and input from those who self-disclose identifying as a person with a disability will be sought. Broad consultation will seek to engage those with a disability even if there is no voluntary disclosure. The plan will be maintained by the Vice President, People & Culture and will be posted to the hospital's website by the Director of Communications and Community Relations. The plan and reports will be provided in alternate formats on request.

The plan and annual reports will be approved by the Senior Management Team and presented to the Board of Directors.

Service Animals

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in those areas of GBGH open to the public unless the animal is excluded by law or may cause a health and safety issue. If a worker has a concern about a service animal, they should discuss with their leader. The leader should consult with applicable stakeholders such as Occupational Health, IPAC or Patient Relations to determine a decision. The leader should communicate the decision to the worker and to the patient if the service animal cannot proceed.

Support Persons

Persons with a disability who use a support person are entitled to bring that person with them while accessing services at GBGH. In the event of an outbreak or other restriction on access, this will be addressed through the Essential Care Partners Program.

Support persons are required to follow health and safety and/or IPAC precautions when on GBGH property.

If a worker has a concern about a support person, they should discuss with their leader. The leader should consult with applicable stakeholders such as Occupational Health, IPAC, Patient Relations or Security to determine a decision. The leader should communicate the decision to the worker and to the patient if the behaviour is required to be adjusted by the support person.

Training

Training required by AODA will be provided by GBGH to workers. The Learning and Development Specialist will determine this training and assign as appropriate. Workers have the responsibility to complete assigned training and leaders have the responsibility to ensure training is completed. Records of training will be retained by Learning and Development.

Training will be completed as soon as possible after work begins. Training will be provided on changes to policy.

Design of Public Spaces

GBGH will meet accessibility laws and engage in inclusive design with building or making major changes to public spaces. When capital or redevelopment projects include significant renovations or development, the Project Lead will identify appropriate stakeholders for consultation to ensure accessibility is considered and met.

Public spaces are required to include service counters and waiting areas, public outdoor paths, outdoor public use eating areas, and off-street parking. GBGH will consider inclusive design in all areas of development unless it is not consistent with the principle of sustainable growth.

Procurement

The Vice President Performance, Corporate Services and CFO will ensure that during the procurement process, accessibility is considered and an appropriate statement for accessibility is included. This includes the procurement of self-service kiosks. In some cases, it may not be possible and practical to procure an accessible good, service or

facility. In this case, GBGH will provide an explanation on request. Requests should be directed to the Vice President, Performance, Corporate Services and CFO.

Transportation

At this time, GBGH does not provide services covered by the Transportation standard. GBGH acknowledges the standards and undertakes to include them in the event service models are adapted to engage this standard.

References

Accessibility in Ontario – Ministry Guidance <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-create-accessibility-plan-and-policy#section-0>

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Ontario Human Rights Code

Collingwood General Marine Hospital Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Health Care Standards Development Committee

Headwaters Health Centre Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The Ottawa Hospital Accessibility Policy

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre Accessibility Policy

Trillium Health Partners Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Trillium Health Partners Accessibility Policy

Supporting Documents *(related GBGH docs)*

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2024-2029

Accessibility Plan Annual Report 2022

Accessibility Plan Annual Report 2023

Return to Work, Sick and Accommodation Policy

Revision Date	Significant Changes
December 2023	Update to establish multi-year accessibility plan. Archive of plan established in 2015. Update to summarize obligations and establish accountabilities.