



**AFGHAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION  
REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT SERVICES**

## **Accessibility Standard Policy (AODA)**

### **Intent**

AWO, provides accessible employment in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and its associated regulations. This policy sets out the Organization's commitment to standards for accessibility across employment, customer service, transportation, information and communications, and the design of public spaces.

### **Statement of Commitment**

AWO is committed to providing an accessible environment for all clients, employees, job applicants, volunteers, students, 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 AODA 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 Organization 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.

### **Definitions**

Accessible format: Includes but not limited to large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

Communication support: Includes but not limited to captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

Guide dog: A dog trained as a guide for a blind person that has completed a training program at a designated training facility as set out in the *Guide Dogs Regulation*.

Redeployment: The reassignment of an employee to another department or job in the Organization as an alternative to layoff when their job or department has been eliminated by the Organization.

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 a designated regulated health professional colleges confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the 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, medical needs, or access to goods, services, and facilities.

## **Guidelines**

### **Accessible Employment**

#### Hiring

Accommodations are available from the beginning of the recruitment process. Information regarding the availability of accommodations is included in all job postings. Applicants selected to participate in an assessment or the selection process are informed that accommodations are available upon request. Where an accommodation is requested, the Organization consults with the applicant and provides or arranges for suitable accommodation that meets their individual needs. Successful applicants are made aware of the Organization's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when an offer of employment is made.

#### Accessible Workplace Information

AWO ensures that new employees are aware of the policies and supports available for employees with disabilities as soon as reasonably possible after beginning employment and all employees are informed of any updates to existing policies. The Organization has the following policies to support employees with disabilities:

- Accommodation policy – H.800

Upon request, the Organization provides or arranges for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for employees with disabilities regarding information needed to perform their job and other information that is generally available to all employees in the workplace. Individualized workplace emergency response information is also provided to an employee with a disability where necessary. An employee who requires workplace information in an accessible format or with communication supports should contact their managers. The Organization consults the employee making the request to determine the best way to provide the accessible format or communication support.

#### Individual Accommodations

AWO creates and documents individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities upon request. An employee with a disability who requires an individual accommodation plan should inform their manager. These plans include:

- Information regarding accessible formats and communication supports, where requested;
- Individualized workplace emergency response information, where necessary; and
- Details of any other accommodation provided.

Where an employee is absent from work due to a disability and requires accommodation to return to work, the Organization develops and documents individual return-to-work processes.

### Performance Management and Career Development

The accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are considered in all aspects of the employment relationship, including during performance management processes, career development or advancement opportunities, and in the event of redeployment. Individual accommodation plans are consulted where they exist as part of these process.

### **Accessible Customer Service**

AWO makes every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices, and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity by:

- Allowing clients with disabilities to do things in their own ways and at their own pace when accessing goods, services, and facilities, as long as this does not present a health and safety risk;
- Using alternative methods of access when necessary to ensure that clients with disabilities have access to the same goods, services, and facilities in a similar manner;
- Taking into account individual accommodation needs when providing goods and services; and
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the client's disability.

Upon request, the Organization provides a person with a disability with a copy of this policy, or the information contained within it, in a format that meets their accessibility needs. Requests should be directed to the program manager.

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices and/or Organization-provided assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services or facilities. In cases where the assistive device presents a health and safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, the program manager should be informed so that other reasonable measures can be put in place to ensure the access of goods and services.

### Guide Dogs and Service Animals

A client with a disability who is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal is welcome to access to premises that are open to the public and keep the animal with them unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. "No pet" policies do not apply to guide dogs or service animals. If a client's guide dog or service animal is excluded by law, AWO offers alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods, services, and facilities.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a guide dog or service animal, employees may respectfully ask whether an animal is a guide dog or service animal but must not ask the nature of the person's disability or purpose of the animal. If they reveal the animal is not a guide dog or service animal, they should be asked to remove the animal from the premises promptly.

The client who is accompanied by a guide dog or service animal is responsible for maintaining control of the animal at all times. If a service animal becomes out of control, causing a clear disruption or a threat to the health and safety of others, and the animal's behaviour is not corrected by the owner, this should be reported to the program manager who may ask them to remove their service animal from the premises.

Information pertaining to the use of guide dogs and service animals found in this policy is also provided in accessible format documents that are available to all patrons and clients of AWO. These documents may be posted in a conspicuous place or on the municipal website; if they are not posted, patrons will be made aware that they are available.

### Support Persons

If a client with a disability is accompanied by a support person, AWO will ensure that both persons may enter the premises together and that the client is not prevented from having access to the support person. In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent must be obtained from the client before any potentially confidential information is mentioned in the presence of the support person.

The Organization may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on the premises if the support person is required to protect the health and safety of the person with the disability or others in the workplace and there are no other reasonable measures that can be taken to ensure this. The Organization consults with the person with the disability and assess available evidence before making such a decision. Employees are informed of any such arrangements.

Information pertaining to support persons found in this policy is also provided in accessible format documents that are available to all patrons and clients of AWO. These documents may be posted in a conspicuous place or on our website, and if they are not posted patrons will be made aware that they are available.

### Notice of Temporary Disruptions

AWO makes all reasonable efforts to provide notice of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that clients with disabilities rely on to access or use goods or services. In some circumstances, notice may not be possible.

When disruptions occur without notice, the Organization informs clients by:

- Posting written notices in conspicuous places, including at the point of disruption and all entrances;
- Informing clients verbally upon arrival; and
- Sending emails to clients

The following information is provided regarding the disruption, unless it is not readily available or known:

- Goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable;
- Reason for the disruption;
- Expected duration; and
- A description of alternative services or options that are available.

Employees are informed of this information as soon as reasonably possible in the event of a disruption so that they can inform clients and respond to inquiries.

A document that covers the steps AWO takes in connection with a temporary disruption is available to anyone upon request. This information may be posted in a conspicuous place or on the municipal website.

### Customer Feedback

AWO has established a feedback process to provide the public with the opportunity to provide feedback on how goods, services, and facilities are provided to clients with disabilities. Feedback may be shared verbally (in person or by telephone) or in writing (handwritten, delivered, website, or e-mail). AWO ensures the feedback process is accessible by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports. These are available upon request.

The Organization addresses feedback received case by case and takes any actions necessary to remedy any issues. Clients who wish to submit feedback should be directed to the program manager. If a complaint is received regarding how AWO provides goods, services, or facilities to persons with disabilities, the Organization will take action accordingly.

A document that covers the details of the client feedback process is available to anyone upon request. This information may also be posted in a conspicuous place or on our website.

### **Accessible Information and Communication**

AWO strives to provide information and communications to all in a format or manner that meets their needs. The Organization provides or arranges for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities upon request. This includes but is not limited to the feedback process and all publicly available safety and emergency information, such as evacuation procedures and floor plans. The Organization also ensures that its website and web content meet the standards required by the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* to enable accessible information and communications online.

The clients and visitors are informed of the availability of accessible formats and communication supports by the employees upon their arrival at the AWO offices. Requests for accessible formats or communication supports should be submitted to the program manager by email, in-person, letter, or phone. The Organization consults with the individual making the request to ensure a suitable format or communication support is provided. Accessible formats and communication supports are provided in a timely manner and at a cost no more than the original format.

## Exceptions

These standards do not apply to:

- Products and product labels;
- Unconvertible information or communications; or
- Information that the Organization does not control through a contractual relationship.

### *Unconvertible Information or Communications*

Information or communications are classified as unconvertible where it is not technically practicable to convert them, or the technology required to make the conversion is not readily available. If AWO determines that information or

communications are unconvertible, the Organization provides the individual who made the request with an explanation as to why and a summary of the information or communications.

## **Training**

AWO provides accessibility-related training to all employees, volunteers, students, and board members. Retraining is provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures, policies, or practices. Retraining is provided as soon as practicable to ensure compliance with the Organization's policies and procedures. Employees may be required to attend additional accessibility-related training on a case by case basis.

For all accessibility-related training, AWO keeps a record that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

### General Human Rights Training

All AWO employees must participate in training on accessibility standards, AODA, found in the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* and the *Human Rights Code* that are appropriate for the duties they complete while at work.

### Customer Service Training

Training is provided to employees, volunteers, those who participate in the development of organization policies, and any other person who provides goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the Organization.

Customer service training covers:

- A review of the purpose of the AODA;
- 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 or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or a support person;
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at the premises or that AWO provides that may help people with disabilities;
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing municipal services; and
- Policies, procedures, and practices of the Organization pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

AWO