



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy - Update

Date: October 30, 2023

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval of amendments to Toronto Public Library's (TPL) [Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy](#).

In June 2023, the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility conducted a desk audit of TPL's Accessibility Policy and Plans. As a result of this desk audit, the Ministry requested modifications to TPL's Accessibility Policy to include explicit commitment statements regarding TPL's accessibility-related staff training programs. The proposed amendments to the policy address these changes requested by the Ministry.

Additional amendments have been made to the policy to more closely align with TPL's current practices, legislative requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), and the City of Toronto's [Corporate Accessibility Policy](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the proposed amendments to the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy, as outlined in Attachment 1.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy aligns closely with the Library's strategic pillars of a democratic society and public service excellence. It also aligns with the focus on fostering diversity amongst our staff and ensuring that they understand and are responsive to the unique needs of our communities.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities policy has a positive impact on persons with disabilities. The amendments to the policy will enable the Library to continue supporting its employees and customers with disabilities by reaffirming its commitment to providing equitable access to our services, programs, employment practices, and digital and physical spaces.

DECISION HISTORY

At its January 18, 2010 meeting, the Toronto Public Library Board (the Board) approved the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy in response to the requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 ("AODA") and the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

At its March 27, 2013 meeting, the Board [approved](#) revisions to the policy to incorporate new regulations.

At its December 6, 2021 meeting, the Board [approved](#) the revised [Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy](#).

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Under [section 3](#) of the IASR TPL is required to establish an accessibility policy outlining what the Library must do to meet its compliance obligations. On December 6, 2021, the Board approved the revised [Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy](#).

On June 20, 2023, TPL received notice from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility that a desk audit was being conducted. The audit was intended to ensure TPL is meeting its compliance obligations under specific sections of the IASR, one of which was our accessibility policy.

On August 8, 2023, following a review of TPL's desk audit submission, the Ministry requested that clause 1.4 of the Policy be amended to more clearly outline requirements in this area. TPL has also taken this opportunity to update the Policy to more closely align with TPL's current practices, legislative requirements under the IASR, and the City of Toronto's Corporate Accessibility Policy.

The proposed changes to the policy are summarized below.

Clause 1.4 (Training)

- The proposed amendments to clause 1.4 include:
 - The addition of the word “mandatory” within the first sentence.
 - An indication that any individual involved in the development of TPL's policies must also receive mandatory accessibility training on an ongoing basis.
 - An indication that training will be provided is appropriate to the duties of TPL staff. For example, staff in Human Resources would receive training on the Employment Standards under the IASR.

- The addition of “as practicable”, which reflects wording from section 7 of the IASR.

Other Changes

- The Scope, Procurement, and Training clauses have been expanded to include wording related to any third parties providing goods, services, products, or facilities on the Library’s behalf to the public.
- Clause 4.3 (Documented Individualized Accommodation Plans) has been changed from “supervisor” to “manager”. This amendment reflects TPL’s current practice for developing individualized accommodation plans for TPL employees with disabilities.
- The Definitions section has been amended to update existing terminology, and add new terms found throughout the policy.

The proposed amendments to the Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy do not alter the purpose and intent of the policy. These changes serve to clarify and strengthen TPL’s approach to removing barriers and advancing accessibility for our staff and customers with disabilities.

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy

Policy Title: Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy
Policy Classification: Board Policy

Page # 1

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy

POLICY CLASSIFICATION: BOARD POLICY

MOTION# and APPROVAL DATE:

10-013 – January 18, 2010

MOTION# and LAST REVISION DATE:

13-049 – March 27, 2013

21-191 – December 6, 2021

Effective Date

December 6, 2021

Purpose

The goal of this policy is to ensure that Toronto Public Library (“the Library” or “TPL”) meets or exceeds the compliance requirements set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

The objective is to provide an accessible, equitable, and inclusive work environment for its employees and Library services to its customers.

Scope

The Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy (“the Policy”) applies to all aspects of the Library’s operations, including its services and facilities, information and communications, technology, and employment opportunities. It further applies to staff, volunteers, and any third parties providing goods, services,

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy

~~products, or facilities on the Library's behalf to the public, to all staff, at all levels of the Library.~~

Underlying Principles

Toronto Public Library's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy is founded on the following underlying principles:

- TPL is committed to implementing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), along with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR);
- TPL's implementation of the accessibility legislation will be in alignment with the Library's mission, vision, and values, including the values of equity, inclusion, and diversity;
- TPL acknowledges that accessibility is a shared responsibility between all Library users, including staff, customers, contractors, vendors, and the general public; and
- TPL upholds the principles of accessibility, including dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity, which will be reflected in all aspects of the Library.

Policy Statement

Toronto Public Library is committed to providing an open, accessible, and equitable environment that meets the changing needs of its employees and customers, including persons with disabilities, in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The Library will develop and support a work and service environment where the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in accordance with the principles of dignity, independence, equal opportunity, and integration.

In accordance with its vision, mission, and values, the Library is guided by the service values of equity and diversity in the treatment of its employees and customers. TPL will meet or exceed the standards set by the AODA and the IASR.

The Library will establish, implement and monitor policies, services, and practices that balance the needs of persons with disabilities and others to support the accessibility standards of customer service, information and communication, employment and the built environment established under the AODA.

1.0 General Requirements

1.1 Library Policies

Library policies will be applied in a manner that considers the individual accessibility needs of persons with disabilities and respects the principles of dignity, independence, equal opportunity, and integration.

1.2 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The Library will establish, deliver, and maintain a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP). The MYAP outlines the projects and initiatives that will be developed and implemented to identify, remove, and prevent systemic accessibility barriers and meet its legislated compliance obligations under the IASR.

The MYAP will be developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, and posted to the Library's external website. The Library will also prepare an annual status report on its Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, and post these reports to its external website. The MYAP and status reports will be provided in an accessible format upon request.

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be updated at the same time, and span the same number of years, as the Library's Corporate Strategic Plan.

1.3 Procurement

The Library will incorporate accessibility criteria and features into the procurement of any goods, services, products, or facilities~~services~~, obtained through a formal contract or agreement with a third-party, except where it is determined by the Library to be not practicable, ~~as defined within the IASR~~.

Any third parties that provide goods, services, products, or facilities on the Library's behalf to the public must ensure their staff has received appropriate accessibility training as required under the IASR.

The Library will also incorporate accessibility features and criteria when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks such as self-check-out terminals.

In the event where it is not practicable to procure accessible goods, products, services, facilities, or self-serve kiosks, staff will document the reason within any files and reports related to the project.

1.4 Training

The Library will establish, provide, and document ongoing mandatory~~mandatory~~ training on the AODA, IASR~~Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, related Library policies~~, and the Ontario Human Rights Code, as it relates to persons with disabilities.

This training will be provided to any individual involved in the development of the Library's policies, and, to any individual involved in the development of the Library's policies and to its employees, volunteers, and any third parties providing goods, services, and by contractors facilities conducting business on behalf of the Library to the public, as soon as practicable.

As part of its accessibility training, the Library will provide~~include~~ i information on the requirements of the AODA standards under the IASR to its staff as appropriate to the duties of their role(s), including, but not limited to:

Information on

- the providing accessible Customer Service Standards for public service and branch staff persons with disabilities, including, but not limited to, the use of assistive devices within its branches and facilities, and accessing its goods and services;
- the Employment Standards for staff in Human Resources; and
- the Information and Communications Standards for staff in Information and Technology Services.

Relevant information from the Library's accessibility training will be provided to staff based on the specific duties of their role at the Library.

2.0 Information and Communication

The Library will communicate with, and provide information to, its employees and customers with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their individual accessibility needs.

2.1 Accessible Websites and Web Content

The Library will ensure its external website, web content, and any web-based applications, developed internally or procured through a third party, comply with all applicable level AA success criteria established under the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG).

2.2 Accessible Formats & Communication Supports

The Library will provide accessible formats and communication supports to its employees and customers with disabilities upon request, in a timely manner, and at no additional cost to the individual.

The Library will inform its employees and customers of the availability of accessible formats and communication supports on its website and any internal and external documents related to a meeting, program, employment opportunity, and/or event.

2.3 Feedback Process

The Library welcomes continuous feedback from persons with disabilities on the accessibility of its goods, services, programs, and facilities. The Library will accept feedback in a variety of accessible manners, including phone, email, TTY, and its online feedback form, and will communicate with its staff and customers with disabilities in a manner that meets their individual accessibility needs.

Responses to customer feedback will be sent within ~~two business days~~48 hours, in accordance with the Library's [Customer Feedback Standard](#).

2.4 Emergency Procedures, Plans, & Safety Information

The Library will provide its emergency procedures, plans, and health and safety information, that it makes available to the public, to persons with disabilities in an accessible format or with an appropriate communication support upon request.

2.5 Public Libraries

The Library will provide equitable access to ~~library reading and learning~~ materials in accessible formats, where they exist, to its employees and customers with disabilities, including archival materials and special collections.

The Library will inform the public, through its external website, of the availability of accessible materials and any additional accessibility services offered within its branches and facilities for persons with disabilities.

3.0 Customer Service

In keeping with the Library's commitment of providing free, equitable, and accessible service in a welcoming and supportive environment, the Library will:

- Provide services in a manner that respects the dignity, integrity, and independence of persons with disabilities, and provides equal opportunities to learn about, use, and benefit from library services.
- Integrate services for persons with disabilities. The Library understands that equitable access may require separate or specialized services and equipment/technology. Such services will be offered in a manner that respects the full participation of persons with disabilities.

3.1 Service Animals

The Library welcomes service animals, within its branches, facilities, and Book Mobile vehicles, that are needed to assist persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities, accompanied by a service animal, shall be permitted to enter a library branch, facility, or Book Mobile vehicle, and shall not be separated from their service animal unless the animal is otherwise excluded from the premises by law.

If a service animal is excluded from entering ~~the Library's~~ its premises by law, the

Library will ensure the person with a disability can perform the duties of their employment and/or access ~~our~~the Library's goods, services, programs, and facilities in a manner that meets their individual accessibility needs.

While accessing the Library's premises or performing the duties of their employment, the person with a disability is responsible for ensuring their service animal is clearly identified by a vest, harness, or documentation provided by the individual, and that the animal behaves in a professional manner.

3.2 Support Persons

The Library welcomes persons with disabilities and their accompanying support persons within its branches, facilities, and Book Mobile vehicles. If discussing personal or confidential information, staff will ask the person with a disability if they prefer their support person to remain present.

While accessing the Library's premises, or performing the duties of their employment, the person with a disability shall be permitted to remain with their support person at all times.

In the event where an admission fee is charged for a library program, service, or event, this fee will be waived for support persons, or advanced notice will be given of any admission fees related to support persons.

3.3 Assistive Devices

The Library supports the use of assistive devices that enable persons with disabilities to use the Library's goods, services, and facilities. The Library will offer a broad range of assistive devices, including communication supports, to help meet the reading and learning needs of persons with disabilities.

The Library also recognizes that equitable service can be achieved by supporting the person's individual accessibility needs. Customers with disabilities may use personal assistive devices while accessing the Library.

3.4 Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions

In the event of a scheduled service disruption to its goods, services, or facilities, the Library will notify its employees and customers of this disruption at least two business days~~48 hours~~ prior to its planned start date and time. The notice should include the reason for the disruption, how long the disruption will last, and a description of available alternatives, if any.

In the event of an unplanned disruption, notice will be provided as quickly as possible through the Library's internal and external communication channels.

3.5 Accessibility Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

The Library will provide accessibility accommodations, upon request, as required under the Ontario Human Rights Code, to its employees and customers with disabilities.

When a request for an accessibility accommodation is received, the Library has a legal duty to provide the requested accommodation in a timely manner that respects the dignity, integrity, independence, and individual accessibility needs of the person.

4.0 Employment

4.1 Recruitment and Hiring Process

The Library will incorporate the requirements, established under the Accessible Employment Standards, into its recruitment and hiring practices and procedures, including, but not limited to, the provision of accessible formats and communication supports upon request for candidates with disabilities throughout the entire hiring process.

4.2 Workplace Emergency Response Information

The Library will provide its employees with disabilities with workplace emergency response information. Upon consultation with the employee and their ~~direct supervisor~~ and/or manager, this information will be delivered in a manner that takes into account the employee's individual accessibility needs.

4.3 Documented Individualized Accommodation Plans

The Library will establish a process for the development of documented individualized accommodation plans for its employees with disabilities.

In consultation with the employee, their ~~direct manager, supervisor~~, and union representative, if applicable, the Plan will document the workplace accommodations that will be required by the employee to perform the duties of their role at the Library.

4.4 Return to Work Process

When absent from work due to a disability, the Library will adhere to its return to work process, as outlined in its Collective Agreement, for its employees, including the provision of accessibility accommodations if required.

The process referenced in this section does not replace or supersede an existing return to work process created, or mandated, under another statute. Rather, it will support the successful return to work of all employees.

4.5 Performance Management

The Library, throughout its performance management process, will take into account the individual accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities and their documented accommodation plan, if one has been established.

4.6 Career Development & Advancement

When establishing policies, programs, or strategies that support the career development and advancement of its employees, the Library will take into account the individual accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities, and their documented accommodation plan if one has been established.

4.7 Position & Location Changes

When transferring or relocating employees with disabilities to a new work location or position, the Library will take into account their individual accessibility needs, as well as their documented accommodation plan if one has been established.

5.0 Built Environment & Public Spaces

When designing newly constructed or renovated branches or facilities, the Library will incorporate the requirements established under the City of Toronto's Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG).

The TADG serves as a guiding set of standards that aims to meet and exceed the [Ontario Building Code](#) Barrier-Free design requirements and the technical requirements under the [AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards](#).

When conducting public consultations on a newly constructed or renovated branch or facility, the Library will hold such consultations in an accessible venue and location, include people with disabilities, and provide any related documents in an accessible format or through an appropriate communication support upon request.

Accountability

The City Librarian and Directors are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

The Director, Human Resources, through the Manager, Accessibility, is responsible for monitoring, analyzing, and reporting on any amendments made to the Standards under the IASR.

The Library is responsible for reporting to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility every three (3) years on its compliance with the requirements under the IASR.

Related Legislation

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#)
- [City of Toronto Corporate Accessibility Policy](#)
- [City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines](#)
- [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#)
- [Ontario Building Code](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#)

Definitions

Accessible Formats:

Accessible formats, sometimes called alternate formats, are ways of presenting printed, written, or visual material so that people with print disabilities can access it. People with print disabilities may:

- Be blind or live with low vision
- Have a learning disability that affects reading
- Have a physical disability and be unable to hold or turn pages

Accessible formats may include, but are not limited to:

- Plain language
- Large print
- Braille
- Electronic (MS Office, Rich Text, or PDF)
- Audio

Assistive Device:

An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating or lifting. Examples include, walkers, magnifiers for reading, computer hardware and software, white canes, wheelchairs, scooters, and smart phones or tablets.

Barrier:

A barrier is any systemic, attitudinal, technological, informational, or architectural limitation that prevents someone from participating fully in society due to their disability.

Communication Supports:

Communication supports are ways for people who cannot access verbal or audio information to receive it visually or ways for people who are non-verbal to communicate with people who speak. For instance, people who do not understand verbal communication may:

- Be Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing
- Be Deaf/blind

Some common communication supports include:

American Sign Language (ASL): [American Sign Language](#) (ASL) is a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face. It is the primary language of many North Americans who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, and hard of hearing, and is used by many hearing people as well.

Note: The 'uppercase D' in the word Deaf is used to describe people who identify as culturally Deaf to reflect their participation and belonging in Deaf Culture. The "lowercase d" in the word deaf refers to the physical condition of not hearing.

Communication Access Real-Time Translation (live captioning):

Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) is the live, word-for-word transcription of speech to text so that individuals who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard-of-hearing can read what is being said in meetings, events, or at personal appointments on a laptop, [iPad/iPhone](#), or a larger screen. CART services can be provided on-site or remotely, in both English and French, via a secure website.

Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ): Quebec Sign Language, known in French as Langue des signes québécoise or Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ), is the predominant sign language of Deaf communities used in francophone Canada, primarily in Quebec.

Deaf Interpreter: A Deaf Interpreter (DI) is a specialist who provides interpreting services in American Sign Language (ASL), Langues des signes québécoise (LSQ), and other visual and tactual communication forms used by individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind.

As a person who is Deaf, the Deaf Interpreter starts with a distinct set of formative linguistic, cultural, and life experiences that enables nuanced comprehension and interaction in a wide range of visual language and communication forms, which are influenced by region, culture, age, literacy, education, class, and physical, cognitive, and mental health. These experiences, coupled with professional training, give the Deaf interpreter the ability to effect successful communication across all types of interpreted interactions, both routine and high risk.

Intervener: An intervener is a trained professional who acts as the “eyes” and “ears” of a person who is deafblind, providing specialized communications services and supports.

Disability:

As defined in the AODA, disability means:

(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, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (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 insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.
("handicap")

Goods, Services, and Facilities:

All aspects of the Library as an employer and service provider, including: delivery of goods, services, and programs, all information and communication including verbal, print, audio, video, websites, web applications and web content, and other digital technologies including kiosks, and all buildings, facilities, public spaces, and the public realm.

Kiosk:

An interactive electronic terminal, including a point-of-sale device, intended for public use that allows users to access one or more services or products or both.

Practicable:

Capable of being done or put into practice; capable of being used. Factors relevant to determining if accessibility is practicable may include:

- Availability of accessible services, goods including commercial software or tools, or facilities
- Technological compatibility between older products and newer ones being procured.

Service Animal:

A service animal means any 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 professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

- A member of the College of Audiologists and SpeechLanguage 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
- A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

~~dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, episodic, intellectual, or a mental health disability. Tasks performed can include, among other things, guiding, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, alerting a person to a sound, reminding a person to take medication, or pressing an elevator button.~~

Support Person:

In relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies the individual with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods ~~or~~, services, or facilities.

Enquiries

Director, Human Resources