



Scarborough Health Network (SHN) Accessibility Plan

Annual Status Report 2023

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This publication is available on the hospital's website and in alternative formats upon request.

www.shn.ca

Introduction

The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005) is to develop, implement and enforce standards for accessibility for Ontario employers, related to ensuring that goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation and buildings are accessible and inclusive.

The AODA highlights the following five standards:

1. Customer Service Standard
2. Information and Communication Standard
3. Employment Standard
4. Transportation Standard
5. Design of Public Spaces Standard

Our Actions to Achieve Excellence in Accessibility

This Annual Status Report outlines our progress on actions taken in 2023 to meet the requirements of the AODA. In 2023, Scarborough Health Network (SHN) continued to comply with its requirements under the AODA and undertook several accessibility-related initiatives, detailed below:

SHN continues to move forward with our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2024-2027). To review the Accessibility Plan, please visit the SHN website: <http://shn.ca>.

At SHN, we are committed to providing an inclusive and barrier free environment by ensuring that our services, premises and information/communication strategies are accessible to patients and their families, employees and members of the public with disabilities. This is achieved with the help of the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).

The AAC was reconvened in December 2022 and includes representation from various departments within in the hospital, Patient and Family Advisors, Canadian Hearing Services (CHS), and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB).

The purpose of the AAC is to ensure accessibility for all individuals living with disabilities. This is achieved by identifying, establishing, and implementing appropriate accessibility measures by removing barriers to full participation within the SHN community. The AAC meets on a quarterly basis to identify and address barriers and provide recommendations/strategies for ongoing improvements.

Highlights of Initiatives

Accessibility Training

In January 2023, SHN in partnership with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) hosted a virtual training session for all staff and volunteers. The focus of this training was to provide attendees with the knowledge and tools to work more effectively with patients who are blind or have a vision impairment. This session was offered in addition to the mandatory training on accessibility, which all new hires attend as part of SHN's employee orientation/onboarding procedures. All other individuals are required to complete a web-based training module at least every two years.

In addition, every year in October, SHN recognizes National Disability Employment Awareness Month and dedicates our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) education session to invite subject matter experts on inclusivity for disabled people in the area of employment.

The Working Mind Training

In 2023, SHN proudly offered The Working Mind (TWM) training, resulting in 471 staff members becoming certified in promoting mental health. TWM trains individuals to reduce stigma and promote mental health in the workplace, creating a more resilient and supportive culture among employees and leaders.

PeopleFirst: Compassionate Care Training Program

SHN is dedicated to creating a seamless experience for everyone in our care and see providing care not just as their job but as their privilege.

We are committed to supporting staff by providing them with training that will enhance the skills required to provide patients, family members, visitors and employees with a positive lasting impression of their interactions at SHN. All staff and leaders are required to attend the PeopleFirst: Compassionate Care Training Program starting in November 2023 – December 2024.

Review of Corporate Policies

This year, SHN's Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Specialist conducted an in-depth review of corporate policies that address discrimination in the workplace. The focus was on three policies: Code of Conduct policy; Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention policy; and Recruitment policy. We also conducted one-hour monthly EDI virtual sessions covering a variety of anti-oppression topics such as anti-racism, homophobia and transphobia, conflict-resolution methods, gender equity, and spiritual wellbeing, among others. The purpose of these sessions is to create a safe space for our staff to explore new and familiar concepts with a sense of safety and to unlearn embedded biases and prejudices. We invite internal and external guest speakers to share their expertise in the topics of interest and share lived experiences and evidence-based strategies to eliminate behaviours and beliefs that can contribute to toxic work environments.

In 2022, SHN conducted an in-depth review of the Emergency Preparedness/Codes Policies to provide guidelines and establish prompt responses and appropriate interventions for staff and patients. This is to ensure the safety of our staff and patients in emergency situations.

Call Ahead Volunteer Assistance (CAVA) Program

Patients or visitors who require mobility assistance can call to reserve a volunteer up to 24 hours before their hospital visit through our Call Ahead Volunteer Assistance (CAVA) Program. This program includes an option for departments to call ahead for a volunteer to support inpatients with finding the exit when leaving the hospital. This initiative has been very well received by our patients.

Corporate Wayfinding Project

The Corporate Wayfinding Project is a multi-year plan that was officially implemented in July 2023. Our Go-Live event was launched on October 10th, wherein we successfully tied in our new nomenclature with our patient-facing Epic and application systems. This includes our registration kiosks, patients' My Chart app, Twilio appointment reminders and all electronic referral letters. Patients will now be able to tie in their appointments with a single clinic name to their destination. Much of the physical signage from the main doors to clinic doors will be installed by the end of February 2024. For this year, all destination signage has been put up to have clinics be identified with their new name. All new signs have braille included and are AODA compliant. We are also actively exploring options to consider not just the AODA, but also the new Code+ which addresses seniors needs.

Wayfinding App

Our Volunteer Services department introduced a wayfinding app at the Birchmount hospital as a resource for patients to use when volunteers are not available to provide wayfinding. The digital format has improved the patient experience at our hospitals by providing straightforward, intuitive and clear directions when navigating through the hospitals. Volunteer Services worked with facilities to ensure compliance with accessibility standards for images (i.e. pictograms). They also worked with multilingual volunteers to ensure a variety of languages were taken into consideration. We aim to extend this app usage over to the General and Centenary hospitals.

SHN New Public Website

In July 2022, SHN launched our new public website, which follows AODA Communication Standard and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA. The website is a main channel for sharing hospital information with the public, including continuing to help the community to access COVID-19 related services.

Design of Public Spaces

Redevelopment plans are being designed and will integrate design considerations around accessibility and compliance with standards. As an example, we have modified the front-end area of the Emergency Department at the Birchmount hospital and have incorporated AODA recommendations for our counters and kiosks. The future Emergency Department at Centenary hospital will have fully accessible washrooms, barrier-free entry points, low height counters and

new wayfinding signage that are AODA compliant. A universal washroom is also included as part of the project, as dictated by the OBC requirements. Our recent renovations have included new automated doors, rest areas, installation of ceiling lifts, and other equipment to support accessibility, where required.

Patient Registration Kiosks

In 2021, patient registration kiosks were implemented at all three hospitals to facilitate patient self-registration for appointments. All accessibility measures were taken into consideration at the time of deployment of this equipment.

Removing Barriers and Improving Communication and Patient Satisfaction

At SHN, people with disabilities also reflect the cultural, linguistic and racial diversity of the Scarborough community. For our patients with linguistic barriers, SHN has made enhancements to the Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) Service at all three hospitals to provide interpretation support during virtual sessions. We also offer VRI to patients who are deaf and/or hard of hearing. This allowed healthcare providers and patients to communicate with the assistance of a sign language interpreter, facilitating ongoing provision of high-quality care to our community throughout the pandemic.

The pandemic demonstrated the significant challenges for patients who are deaf and/or hard of hearing to communicate effectively whilst observing social distancing and masking. To address this issue, SHN partnered with Canadian Hearing Services to provide sign language interpreters with clear masks. This allowed patients to be able to lip read and continue to observe safety measures.

Virtual Care Services

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for virtual care services for patients who identified as having a disability. SHN addressed this need by implementing videoconferencing platforms across all three hospitals for clinical appointments. These platforms, in conjunction with telecommunication services, helped to facilitate the provision of accessible care while keeping our patients safe at home.