

Scarborough Health Network (SHN) Accessibility Plan Annual Status Report 2024

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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 2024 to meet the requirements of the AODA. In 2024, 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 October 2024, SHN in partnership with the Canadian Hearing Services (CHS) 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 deaf or hard of hearing. 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.

PeopleFirst: Compassionate Care Training Program

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

We are committed to providing 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, leaders and physicians are required to attend PeopleFirst: Compassionate Care Training Program starting in May 2023 – present. To-date, 2,818 participants have taken this training, including 134 leaders, 438 physicians and 2,246 staff. This training also aligns with one of the elements of AODA which is centered around customer service.

The Working Mind Training

SHN also continues to offer The Working Mind (TWM) training, offered by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which is an evidence-based program designed to promote mental health and reduce the stigma around mental illness in the workplace.

By reducing stigma and discrimination, TWM helps organizations create a culture that fosters greater awareness and support for mental health among employees, managers, and employers. SHN is committed to supporting staff by providing them with training that will enhance the skills required to provide themselves and their teams with a preventative approach to promoting their mental health and reducing stigma at SHN.

SHN Public Website

SHN launched its 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.

Review of Corporate Policies

In 2024, SHN's Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Specialist continued our in-depth review of corporate policies that address discrimination in the workplace. This year, the focus was on four policies: Dress Code and Appearance Policy; Staff Duress System Policy, Family Presence in the NICU Policy, and Staff and Leader Performance Review Policy. We also conducted one-hour monthly EDI virtual sessions covering a variety of 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.

Call Ahead Volunteer Assistance (CAVA) Program

We continue to offer our Call Ahead Volunteer Assistance (CAVA) for patients or visitors who require mobility assistance. They can call to reserve a volunteer up to 24 hours before their hospital visit through our CAVA. 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 and will come to a close in December 2024. In addition to the use of braille, our signage incorporated more pictograms associating it with the clinical programs. This allows for images to be used as a universal language to help patients navigate from the point of entry to the department.

Internal Organizational Accessibility Audits

SHN is geared towards taking accessibility onto a higher level by auditing our spaces and looking for opportunities to uphold accessibility in our existing spaces. For the first year, we have surveyed our spaces and see where we can install automatic door operators to allow for a more fluid access for all our patients and visitors. We are currently working on a 5-year plan and identifying which ones can be done in a year's time with the allocated budget.

Design of Public Spaces

Our facilities planning team is putting together our very own SHN Accessibility Manual that will be our compass for our minor works and renovations. It is expected that all design and construction projects once approved will all be guided by these standards to uphold accessibility in our hospitals. Target completion of this manual is by Summer 2025.

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 General and Birchmount hospitals and have incorporated AODA recommendations for our washrooms, door openings, signage, counters and kiosks. The future Emergency Department at Centenary hospital (target start: November 2025) 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

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 allows 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.

SHN is excited to announce our official partnership with the Interpretation and Translation provider Voyce Global. Voyce connects through an easy-to-use app, delivering instant VRI and Over the Phone Interpretation services 24/7 in more than 240 languages through iPads, laptops and desktops with audio and video capabilities.

For patients who are deaf and/or hard of hearing to communicate effectively SHN has partnered with CHS to provide sign language interpreters with clear masks. This allowed patients to be able to lip read and continue to observe safety measures.

