Ministry of Community and Social Services

2014 ODA Accessibility Plan

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Executive Summary

This plan outlines our accessibility commitments, the progress achieved so far and our vision for the future. In Section One, we report on our 2014 commitments. In Section Two, we outline what we have planned for 2015 and 2016.

At the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), we are responsible for delivering services to vulnerable people within Ontario, including, but not limited to, the clients of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). We are taking steps to ensure ODSP offices have the features required to provide accessible customer service. We are also continuously improving customer service, as well as our information and communications to be more accessible to all citizens who require our services.

Though MCSS continues to meet legislative obligations, we also strive to embed accessibility into everything we do. We have made some progress achieving this goal so far. Within this plan, you will see how accessibility considerations were built into events, communication standards, emergency management plans, employment accommodations and more.

Additionally, we understand that fostering healthy, skilled and inspired employees requires that the ministry views accessibility, diversity, inclusion, employee engagement, and greening as overall components of a healthy workplace culture. The Corporate Services Branch leads many programs related to these components and have begun implementing an integrated approach to workplace culture. CSB staff will collaborate with divisional champions, working groups and the senior management committee to implement the approach.

The CSB is also responsible for compiling the feedback received from our program areas to draft the Accessibility Plan. While the CSB will raise awareness of the Accessibility Plan, implementation is a shared responsibility of the entire ministry.

We encourage you to review the plan and submit your feedback to us. You will find many methods to contact us on the final page of this plan.

Introduction

Under the [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA),](#) ministries are required to produce, and make available to the public, annual plans indicating how ministries will identify and remove barriers to accessibility.

The ODA Accessibility Plan (the Plan) is an opportunity to showcase our ministry's accomplishments and to demonstrate how we are modeling compliance with regulated accessibility requirements.

In 2010, MCSS began complying with the first accessibility standard established under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)](#) - [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#). In 2011, [the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)](#) was introduced, establishing phased-in requirements in the following accessibility standards:

- Information and Communications;
- Employment;
- Transportation; and,
- Design of Public Spaces.

Each year, the Ontario Public Service (OPS) as an obligated organization, confirms its compliance with the requirements of these standards to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The Plan provides an opportunity for our ministry to go beyond confirming compliance with these regulated requirements. Specifically, it allows us to highlight the measures taken by the ministry to identify and remove barriers in the previous year while proposing measures for the coming year that will make the ministry more accessible.

The IASR establishes that obligated organizations, shall create and maintain a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) that outlines the organization's strategies to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. To meet the MYAP requirement, the OPS released [Leading the Way Forward](#) in 2012.

Organizations are also required to develop an annual status report that highlights progress in advancing the MYAP strategy and in meeting the requirements of the IASR. In 2013, the OPS released its first Annual Status Report, highlighting progress made in 2012.

MCSS' 2014 ODA Plan demonstrates how the measures our ministry has taken and the measures we propose for the coming years support the key outcomes and deliverables of the MYAP.

To access MCSS' and other ministries' 2014 ODA Accessibility Plans, visit Ontario.ca.

Section One: Report on Measures Taken by MCSS in 2014

Customer Service

OPS MYAP Key Outcome

People with disabilities who are OPS customers receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

2014 Deliverables and Published Commitments

- New staff trained on accessibility.

- Exceed the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service by requiring all staff to complete the Centre for Leadership and Learning (CFLL)'s two online training modules on providing accessible customer service.

- Accessibility criteria are built into decision-making, project management, procurement, technology, infrastructure, Information and Information Technology (I&IT) and training.

- Increased awareness in the OPS of accessibility best practices in customer service.

- Promote and encourage staff to complete the range of diversity and inclusion training programs provided through the CFLL.

- Develop and host advanced accessibility training for staff.

- Implement the ministry multi-year diversity and inclusion plan. Key highlights include surveying staff for ideas to inform programming and developing educational supports for staff.

- Encourage the use of the OPS Inclusion Lens when developing/renewing service agreements.

Measures Taken by MCSS in 2014

- The following customer service courses are listed as mandatory as part of our orientation for new employees:
  - May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities

- May I Help You? Supplementary: Ten Things You Need to Know about Accessible Customer Service

- 90% of MCSS staff has completed these mandatory training courses

- The Ontario Municipalities Social Services Association (OMSSA) has developed a thorough Conducting Accessible Meetings Guide. To increase awareness of best practices for customer service, this guide is followed by the Corporate Services Branch when planning ministry-wide events for staff such as employee orientation or division days. For example, at the annual Leadership Summit, which brings the ministry's leaders together from across the province:

  - The Corporate Services Branch conducted a site visit to ensure the venue was accessible. The meeting rooms were inspected to ensure they were large enough and could be set up for participants to move about easily.

  - Volunteers received a pre-event orientation session and were briefed on the location of elevators, accessible washrooms and accessible fire exits.

  - A post-event evaluation form was developed and participants were asked whether their accommodation or dietary needs were met.

  - This year, presentations were videotaped, captioned and posted online for all staff to view.

- The OMSSA guide has been posted in the Tools and Resources section of our Diversity and Inclusion intranet page.

- Additional diversity and inclusion e-learning courses are listed as mandatory for new employees. All staff will be advised of the requirement to take new courses as they are developed through ministry-wide communications.

- When deciding to purchase goods or services, MCSS procurement activities are guided by the Management Board of Cabinet procurement directive which includes the principle of accessibility. Business case templates include questions and answers about accessibility.

- The 2013-16 MCSS Inclusion Plan was launched to all staff and posted on the ministry's intranet site. The Corporate Services Branch will organize events and raise awareness by working with Diversity and Inclusion Champions to strengthen and implement the goals of the Inclusion Plan within our organization.

- The ministry has an ongoing commitment to encourage all staff to use the OPS Inclusion Lens when developing or renewing materials for internal or external use.

- Ontario Works programs and services are delivered by the municipalities. Municipalities are obligated to meet the requirements of the AODA.

Information and Communications

MYAP Key Outcome

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

2014 Deliverables and Published Commitments

- Accessibility criteria are built into decision-making, project management, procurement, technology, infrastructure, I&IT and training.

- MCSS will roll out secure email to ODSP staff to communicate with clients. Secure email will be phased into other business areas in the ministry as needed.

- Convert all new English and French PDFs to text-only versions for posting on the ministry's public website.

- Continue to review all websites to ensure that Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level AA are met.

- Hold an Accessibility Expo.

- Develop training offerings in sign language to support ministry staff in providing an active offer of communication supports to people who communicate in sign language.

- Ensure that all branch level emergency management plans outline the requirement to make emergency plan information available in an accessible format upon request, as soon as practicable.

Measures Taken by MCSS in 2014

- The I&IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACOE) team developed a new version of the IASR Reference document to provide effective statements on accessibility requirements and to assist OPS projects in the creation and review of project collaterals.

- The Children, Youth, & Social Services I&IT Cluster (CYSSC) provided guidance to I&IT projects in assessing overall compliance with accessibility regulatory requirements during Corporate and Cluster Architecture Core Team (ACT) reviews.

- The ministry successfully implemented secure email communication in December 2013. Currently, there are over 1,600 registered staff and approximately 1,100

ODSP clients across the province and we continue to encourage participation from clients who identify a need for this.

- Information is made available in alternate formats upon request for any existing PDFs. To improve the accessibility of our Internet site, the Communications and Marketing Branch is reviewing existing materials on an ongoing basis to determine if conversion to a text only format is required. If required, it will be converted.

- Public facing websites are monitored by the Communications and Marketing Branch on a monthly basis to ensure the WCAG 2.0 level AA standard is met. New content and features are tested against this standard before being made available to the public.

- The ministry is beginning to implement a streamlined approach to workplace initiatives such as accessibility, inclusion, employee engagement, and learning and development. Although we did not host an Accessibility Expo in 2014, the CSB will host an open house in 2015 to raise awareness of the streamlined approach as well as the various initiatives.

- In late 2013, an American Sign Language awareness session was held. We will host another awareness session in early 2015 and evaluate our needs for further ASL training for staff.

- All approved branch level emergency plans include a "Commitment to Accessibility" statement that stipulates the alternate format request.

- A number of ministry initiatives in support of the Transformation of Developmental Services and the Developmental Services Investment Strategy are improving access to ministry-funded programs and services, including:

  - Work with Developmental Services Organizations (DSOs) is improving the application process for Ministry-funded adult developmental services and is achieving consistent, accessible, high-quality service delivery across Ontario; and,

  - New Passport Program funding is supporting more individuals with developmental disabilities in accessing activities that are meaningful to them and direct funding is providing them greater choice and more options in how supports are provided.

Employment

MYAP Key Outcome

OPS employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

2014 Deliverables and Published Commitments

- Conduct management review of accommodation for employees with disabilities.

- Increase awareness in the OPS of accessibility best practices in the workplace.

- Senior managers have accessibility performance commitments.

- Evaluate the disability awareness sessions and implement sessions at a staff level.

- Develop educational sessions for staff on the AODA regulations.

- Launch training for managers to increase knowledge on providing accommodation for employees with disabilities.

- Continue to hold quarterly Manager Community of Practice teleconferences highlighting various subjects related to employment accommodation.

Measures Taken by MCSS in 2014

- Staff accommodation needs are met on an as-needed and ongoing basis. This includes ergonomic assessments and workstation modifications. Accommodations plans for all employees who have self-identified as being a person with a disability were reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- New employees are asked to advise of any accommodation needs, and accessibility standards are included in onboarding and recruitment processes.

- When inviting ministry staff to events, the invitations, e-mails and promotional materials clearly indicate that participants can request special dietary, physical or other accommodations. Access to the meeting space and accessibility of all presentation materials for the event are considered regardless of a request for accommodation.

- All employees are to include an accessibility or inclusion performance commitment in their annual performance management plans. A memo from the Director of the Human Resources Strategic Business Unit was sent at mid-term to remind all senior managers of this requirement.

- The OPS Diversity Office created a new online learning course, IASR Employment Standards, which is mandatory for all managers and Human Resources staff. The course was advertised in May through a memo from our Chief Administrative Officer. As of September, 48% of applicable MCSS employees have completed this course. We are working to improve the compliance rate and have sent a reminder from the Chief Administrative Officer in the fall. We have also asked divisional champions and the Employee Engagement Working Group members to promote the courses at staff meetings.

- The ministry, along with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, formed a Manager's Community of Practice to provide managers with the opportunity to discuss issues or ask questions regarding employment accommodation. One teleconference was held in fall 2014. A survey has been sent to the participants to determine which topics would be most useful to discuss in 2015.

Built Environment

MYAP Key Outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around OPS facilities and public spaces.

2014 Deliverables and Published Commitments

- Continue to develop strategies for addressing infrastructure barriers.

- The ministry will continue to address accessibility in all its owned and leased spaces.

- Promote/refresh "Planning Accessible Meeting Guidelines" to include new policies and information on external meetings to reflect the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards and updated barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code.

Measures Taken by MCSS in 2014

- The new AODA Design of Public Spaces Standard has requirements that take effect on January 1, 2015 for the OPS. Current direction from Infrastructure Ontario (IO) is that work is carried out in accordance with the requirements as identified in IO Guidelines for Barrier-free Design of Ontario Government Facilities. The Capital Planning and Delivery Branch (CPDB) is leading the ministry's efforts in acknowledging and implementing accommodation criteria for people with disabilities in public service offices, which remove barriers and address a modern, respectful office environment. ODSP falls under CPDB's leadership and involvement whilst planning to re-modernize ODSP offices throughout the province.

- Addressing accessibility in ministry owned and leased space continues to be a key focus of ministry accommodation planning. CPDB ensured that accessibility standards are included in significant corporate offices as well as in the ODSP modernization projects in all regions throughout the province.

- Current efforts include the modernization of ODSP offices to enhance frontline client service and address AODA compliance by removing infrastructure barriers and implementing the new desk side model to improve accessibility into and around OPS offices and public spaces. The new model considers the following aspects to ensure accessibility requirements are met:
  - Reception counters that are the correct height for wheelchair users
  - 5' wheelchair turnaround radius in main artery corridors
  - Larger:
    - front entrance doors with automatic openers
    - public washrooms

- interview rooms
- These are some of the improvements being considered for public serving ODSP offices and we are striving to bring these improvements throughout our leasing portfolio.
- We have an internal "Green and Accessible" meeting guide for ministry staff to follow. This guide will be updated in 2015 to align with the updated Ontario Building Code.

Other Commitments

MYAP Key Outcome

OPS staff is able to identify barriers to accessibility, in OPS policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

2014 Deliverables and Published Commitments

- Ongoing consultations with persons with disabilities.
- Ministries continue to publish annual accessibility plans.
- Accessibility continues as a strong organizational commitment.
- The ministry will continue to play an active role on the Disability Advisory Council (DAC) which was established to prepare for the integrated accessibility standards, under the AODA by providing a consumer perspective on implementation. The council also helps to further develop leadership capacity of employees with disabilities in the OPS, with a broader goal of supporting the journey towards a barrier-free Ontario by 2025.
- Encourage all staff to use the OPS Inclusion Lens to review acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services.

Measures Taken by MCSS in 2014

- The ministry launched the Connecting Communities Initiative to test opportunities to engage community networks and stakeholders to improve employment outcomes for ODSP clients and people with disabilities. Six communities participated in the first series of dialogues: Hamilton, Kingston, Ottawa, Peel Region, Peterborough and Toronto. All six communities have completed their event and are participating in the evaluation process.
- The Social Policy and Development Division, ODSP Branch supported an innovative training and outreach program through the Hospitality Workers Training Centre's Hospitality Vocational Pre-employment Skills Training Project to train people with disabilities for employment opportunities in the hospitality sector.

- The MCSS 2013-14 Accessibility Plan was published by December 3, 2013, the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

- The MCSS representative on the DAC has been an active member of the council as well as the DAC Employment Accommodation Group. They have provided input on a number of policies and programs that impact employees with disabilities.

- Staff from the Corporate Services Branch, Renewal Strategies Office (RSO) were trained on how to use the OPS Inclusion Lens. RSO will partner with the OPS Diversity Office to launch this training as a learning opportunity for interested staff to encourage broader use of the tool.

- Planning stage has begun for all Family Responsibility Office (FRO) managers, trainers, and policy and procedures staff to receive training on the Inclusion Lens in 2014/2015.

- FRO's Forms and Letters Review Committee is currently reviewing all public letters and forms using the OPS Correspondence Style Guide to ensure accessibility.

- In the Social Assistance Operations Division, employees are encouraged to use the OPS Inclusion Lens at time of onboarding, orientation, training sessions, regular team meetings especially when providing direction or sharing new information/ policies/clearinghouse responses.

- Employees in the Social Policy and Development Division are encouraged to use the OPS Inclusion Lens in all aspects of policy development and analysis. They are supported in this use through training, mentoring and job tools (e.g. submission guidelines). The ministry also seeks input from people with disabilities and various organizations representing the interests of the disability community to better understand the needs and experiences of people with disabilities for the purposes of policy and program design.

Section Two: Report on Measures Proposed by MCSS for 2015 and 2016

Customer Service

OPS MYAP Key Outcome

People with disabilities who are OPS customers receive quality goods and services in a timely manner.

Measures Proposed by MCSS for 2015 and 2016

- Staff and customer feedback sought on accessibility innovations and improvements.

- Implement the ministry multi-year diversity and inclusion plan.

- The Family Responsibility Office (FRO)'s Online Self Service website, to be launched by spring 2015, is being designed to be as compliant with accessibility standards as possible, within the constraints of the current technologies in use. This online self-service website will provide online services and information for FRO's clients, reducing barriers for persons with disabilities by providing another option for all clients to get information about their cases.

- Continue to:
  - exceed the requirement of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service by requiring all staff to complete the CFLL's two online training modules on providing accessible customer service, *May I Help You.*

  - promote the complete range of accessibility related training programs provided through the CFLL to all staff.

  - encourage the use of the Inclusion Lens for new policies, programs, practices and services.

  - remind managers to incorporate inclusion leadership commitments into their Performance Development Plans.

Information and Communications

MYAP Key Outcome

Information and Communications are available in accessible formats or with necessary supports to all OPS staff and customers.

Measures Proposed by MCSS for 2015 and 2016

- Accessibility is considered when developing communications, websites, technology solutions and documents.

- I&IT Accessibility Centre of Excellence (ACOE) will continue providing accessibility testing service and will develop online resources such as guides, videos and checklists to help staff identify and remediate key accessibility issues in their websites, web applications and documents.

- I&IT ACOE will coordinate reporting of assessment and remediation efforts from CYSSC business owners of websites and web applications to meet WCAG 2.0 AA.

- Exceed the IASR training expectation by requiring all ministry staff to complete the IASR Information and Communication Standards e-course.

- Continue to:

  - phase in secure email to allow ODSP staff to communicate with clients.

  - provide documents in an accessible format and, upon request, provide alternate formats to requesters' needs in a timely manner in order for them to participate fully and meaningfully.

- Develop and launch training offerings in sign language for client-facing ministry staff to support them in providing an active offer of communication supports to people who communicate in sign language.

Employment

MYAP Key Outcome

OPS employees with disabilities participate fully and meaningfully in their employment.

Measures Proposed by MCSS for 2015 and 2016

- Implement best practices on employment accommodation and return to work.

- Use the results from the OPS-wide 2014 Employee Engagement Survey to assess potential barriers for employees with disabilities and establish a plan to remove the barriers.

- The ministry emergency management plan exercise will incorporate an element of accessibility.

- Revitalize the Managers Employment Accommodation Community of Practice.

- Continue to ensure that training related to accessibility standards is included in onboarding of new employees.

- Managers will be advised that they are to include a performance commitment regarding accessibility in their 2015/16 performance plan.

- The ministry is participating in the pilot phase for the OPS Inclusion Continuum. The Continuum is a new tool being developed by the OPS Diversity Office that can help address gaps between the current culture and a more inclusive one. Anyone can use the tool to help nurture an environment where everyone feels like they matter and belong regardless of ability/disability, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Built Environment

MYAP Key Outcome

There is greater accessibility into, out of and around OPS facilities and public spaces.

Measures Proposed by MCSS for 2015 and 2016

- The ministry is ready to implement requirements of IASR standard on the Design of Public Spaces and the updated barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code (reflected in the OPS Guidelines for Barrier-free Design in Ontario Government Facilities), including the next phase of ODSP modernization.

- The ministry will continue to address accessibility in its owned and leased spaces.

- Ensure that meeting facilities used for public engagements are accessible.

- Continue to actively offer physical accommodations for staff engagements.

Other Commitments

MYAP Key Outcome

OPS staff is able to identify barriers to accessibility, in OPS policies, programs, services and facilities, and actively seek solutions to prevent or remove them on a continuing basis throughout the organization.

Measures Proposed by MCSS for 2015 and 2016

- Accessibility continues as a strong organizational commitment.
- Ensure all staff has completed the mandatory online training modules related to the AODA and the IASR.

- The OPS partners with the Job Opportunity Information Network (JOIN) to host an annual accessibility employer conference, referred to as the Accessibility Expo. Ministry delegates sent to the Accessibility Expo will learn about leading practices, strategies and supports for full inclusion of disability in the workplace. Delegates will be expected to develop and present training based on these conferences.

- The ministry will test the effectiveness of providing peer navigation support to people with disabilities though a Peer Employment Mentor Project. Through this pilot project, people who have lived experience with a disability will be employed as mentors by community-based delivery agents beginning 2014 to support ODSP clients as they consider taking steps towards looking for work.

- These Peer Employment Mentors are expected to be in place for one-year and this approach, if successful, will remove barriers to employment in the form of fears and concerns that ODSP clients may have about looking for work, which includes (but is not limited to):

  - Fear of looking for work and/or discussing employment with their caseworkers; and

  - Misinformation about ODSP that may dissuade clients from applying to ODSP Employment Supports.

- In addition, the ministry will provide support to the Kenora Chiefs' Advisory (KCA) First Nation Ontario Works cluster to pilot delivery of the ODSP employment supports program, which will enhance program delivery in First Nations communities in the Kenora area.

- The ministry may provide further support to the Connecting Communities Initiative and Hospitality Workers Training Centre in 2016 if these projects demonstrate success in 2014.

Section Three: Addressing the Identification of Barriers

In support of our commitment to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, the Ministry of Community and Social Services will continue to review government initiatives, including Acts, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services for the purposes of identifying and removing barriers.

Recognizing the importance of addressing accessibility barriers in laws that have a high impact on members of the public and persons with disabilities, the government is following a three-pronged approach that prioritizes the review of high impact legislation including:

1. Development of a standardized process and tools for identifying and addressing accessibility barriers;

2. By the end of 2014, review of 51 targeted high-impact statutes that meet the following criteria:
   a. Statutes that affect persons with disabilities directly;
   b. Statutes that provide for the delivery of widely applicable services or programs;
   c. Statutes that provide benefits or protections; or
   d. Statutes that affect a democratic or civic right or duty; and

3. Review procedural rules, policies and guidelines for select high-impact legislation, where necessary.

Acts, Regulations and Policies Reviewed in 2013-14

In consultation with our ministry's legal counsel and policy experts the ministry has used the Accessibility Legislative Review Tool to review the following statutes:

- *Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996*
- *Ontario Works Act, 1997; and*
- *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.*

In 2013-14, the OPS made significant progress in conducting this phase of the review which is estimated to be completed by the end of 2014. At MCSS, we will continue to embed accessibility and inclusion into our daily work by using the OPS Inclusion Lens. If additional statutes are identified through the coordinated accessibility legislative review, our ministry will work with the Ministry of Attorney General and the OPS Diversity Office to review applicable acts, regulations, policies, programs or services.

Links

Public Links

[OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan - Leading the Way Forward](#)

[Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#)

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)

[Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation](#)

[Accessibility Standards for Customer Service](#)

[Ontario Accessibility Website](#)

[Accessible, Fair and Sustainable Services for People with Developmental Disabilities Program](#)

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)

Contact Us

Questions or comments about the ministry's accessibility plan are welcome.

Toll free general inquiries: 1-888-789-4199

Toll free TTY number: 1-800-387-5559

Email: mcssinfo.css@ontario.ca

Ministry website address: http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/

For more information and resources on how to make Ontario an accessible province for everyone, please visit the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure's public web portal, **AccessON**.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request from:

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