

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for delivery of library service to comply with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, its regulations, and any future regulations as may be implemented. Vaughan Public Libraries (VPL) is committed to providing quality library services and ensuring access to library materials and information for persons with disabilities.

Library services are to be available to persons with disabilities in a manner that:

- Is free from discrimination;
- Respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- Provides accessible formats and communication supports;
- Seeks to provide integrated services;
- Provides an opportunity equitable to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services; and,
- Considers a person's disability.

APPLICATION

The Accessibility Policy applies to all persons who provide library services to members of the public including employees, Vaughan Public Library Board Trustees (VPLB Trustees), and volunteers, or persons otherwise engaged in the provision of library services to our customers, and third parties who deal with customers on VPL's behalf.

DEFINITIONS

Accessible Formats

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

Assistive Device

A device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing library services and collections.

Barrier

Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in activities because of their disability. Barriers can be physical, architectural, communicative, attitudinal, technological, organizational (policy/practice), or any kind of obstacle.

Communication Supports

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

Disability or Disabilities

Per Section 2 of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Human Rights Code*, 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 coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

- (a) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- (b) a learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (c) a mental disorder or;
- (d) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*.

Service Animal

Per Section 80.45 (4) of AODA: “an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability:

- (a) if it is readily identified that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- (b) if the person provides documentation from an identified regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.”

Support Person

Per Section 80.45 (3) of AODA: “a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.”

Unconvertible

Information or communications are unconvertible if it is not technically feasible to convert the information or communications or the technology to convert the information or communications is not readily available.

GENERAL STANDARDS

VPL co-operates closely with the City of Vaughan (COV) in the requirements and implementation of AODA accessibility standards and reports, access to premises and other matters as they may be identified. VPL activities with the COV include recommendations or advice received from the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee and participation in the COV’s multi-year Accessibility Plan.

Procurement of Goods, Services, Facilities and Equipment

VPL through the COV’s Purchasing Department shall ensure that accessibility criteria and features are incorporated when it procures or acquires goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practical to do so. Where it is impractical to incorporate accessibility criteria and features, an explanation will be provided upon request.

Self-Service Kiosks

VPL shall facilitate accessibility for persons with disabilities and incorporate accessibility features when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service equipment.

Training

Persons who provide library services will be trained in accordance with the requirements of the AODA. Appropriate records of such training will be maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS STANDARDS**Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

Except as otherwise provided by the AODA, VPL shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities in a timely manner, taking into account the person’s accessibility needs and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons. VPL shall notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

This does not apply to products and product labels, unconvertible information or communications and information that VPL does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship. If it is determined that information or communications are unconvertible, VPL shall provide the person requesting the information or communication with:

- a. an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and
- b. a summary of the unconvertible information or communications.

Emergency Procedures, Plans and Public Safety Information

VPL will provide all existing public emergency procedures, plans, and public safety information upon request in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports in a timely manner.

Feedback on Services

Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of library services provided to persons with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other methods.

Websites and Web Content

The VPL website and web content shall conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**Assistive Devices**

VPL will make reasonable efforts to facilitate the use of assistive devices that enable people with disabilities to enjoy the library services available.

Accessibility can also be achieved and provided in different ways. Allowing the use of personal assistive devices is one such way unless the use of that assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or with other persons who use library services. Where such a risk exists, other reasonable assistive measures may be offered to the person with a disability.

Communication

When communicating with a person with a disability, persons who provide library services shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

Disruption of Service

VPL will make every reasonable effort to provide notice of planned or unplanned disruption of library services to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or service, if any, that may be available. In the case of an unplanned temporary disruption, advance notice may not be possible.

Document Availability

VPL will provide and publicize the Accessibility Policy on its website and, upon request, provide it to individuals based on a format agreed upon by the parties.

Service Animals

Persons with a disability are permitted to use service animals when accessing library services, unless such a service animal is excluded by law. If a service animal is excluded by law, VPL will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from library services.

Support Persons

Persons with a disability are allowed to be accompanied by a support person to access library services. Although most library services are available free of charge, where admission fees do apply, such fees will be waived for support persons.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS**Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Staff**

Upon a staff person's request, VPL shall consult with the staff person to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for:

- a. information that is needed in order to perform the staff person's job; and
- b. information that is generally available to staff in the workplace.

VPL will consult with the staff person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

Accommodation Plans

A written process for the development and maintenance of individual accommodation plans shall be developed for staff with disabilities as required, in accordance with the AODA. These plans shall include information on the staff member's restrictions, accommodations that are being made, a start and end date, and when the plan should be reviewed. If requested by the employee, the employee can participate in the creation of the plan. If requested, the plans shall also include individualized workplace emergency response information.

Emergency Response Information

If a staff person's disability is such that workplace emergency response information is necessary and VPL is aware of the need for accommodation, this information shall be provided to staff. In addition, this information shall be provided, with the staff person's consent, to the person designated to provide assistance. The information shall undergo review when the staff person moves to a different location, when the staff person's overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed, and when VPL reviews its general emergency response plan.

Performance Management, Career Development, and Redeployment

VPL shall take into account the accessibility needs of its staff with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans when providing career development, performance management and/or when considering redeployment.

Recruitment

VPL shall post information about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment process. Job applicants who are individually selected for an interview and/or testing shall be notified that accommodations for material to be used in the process are available, upon request.

VPL shall consult with any applicant who requests an accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's disability. Successful applicants shall be notified about VPL's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities as part of their offer of employment.

Return to Work Process

VPL shall have in place a documented return to work process for staff returning to work due to disability and requiring disability-related accommodations. This return to work process shall outline the steps that VPL will take to facilitate the return to work including accessible formats and communication support requirements; a process for development of documented individual accommodation plans; a process for returning to work from a leave of absence related to disability; and individualized workplace emergency response information.