



Accessibility Policy

Purpose:

This policy ensures that all people who come to Good Shepherd Ministries for services/programs, and who work with Good Shepherd Ministries have equal access to programs, services, resources, and facilities, including those available online, regardless of ability.

General Application

This policy applies to:

- i. all employees of Good Shepherd Ministries ('co-workers'), and all co-workers assigned to Good Shepherd Ministries from temporary or partner agencies ('assignment workers').
- ii. clients, residents, visitors, and volunteers who use our services and programs and who come to our premises to provide services and programs for Good Shepherd Ministries.
- iii. internal and external applicants who apply for job opportunities within Good Shepherd Ministries.
- iv. all Good Shepherd Ministries owned or operated computer hardware, operating systems, website, social media, mobile devices, and any on-line information and documents. This includes any information in digital electronic format, including but not limited to electronic mail, digital images, and any digitized information that may be requested by those who are described above.

Statement of Organizational Commitment

Good Shepherd Ministries is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's accessibility laws.

Good Shepherd Ministries is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

Good Shepherd Ministries understands that obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

Good Shepherd Ministries is committed to excellence in serving and providing programs, services or facilities to all customers including people with disabilities. Our accessible customer service

policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Training

We are committed to training all staff and volunteers in accessible customer service, other Ontario's accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

In addition, we train:

- i. all persons who participate in developing the organization's policies; and
- ii. all other people who provide programs, services, or facilities on behalf of the organization.

Training of our coworkers and volunteers on accessibility relates to their specific roles.

Training includes:

- purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards
- our policies related to the Customer Service Standards
- how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- how to use the equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing programs, services, or facilities to people with disabilities.
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our organization's programs, services, or facilities.

We train every person as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect of any changes to the policies.

We maintain records of the training provided including the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Assistive Devices

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our programs, services, or facilities. In cases where the assistive concerns presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern or may not be permitted for other reasons, other measures will be used to ensure the person with a disability can access our programs, services, or facilities.

We ensure that our coworkers are trained and familiar with various assistive devices we have on site or that we provide that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods, services, or facilities.

Communication

We communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will work with people with disabilities to determine what method of communication works for them.

Service Animals

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and third parties.

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask for documentation (template, letter, or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

If service animals are prohibited by another law, we will do the following to ensure people with disabilities can access our programs, services, or facilities:

- explain why the animal is excluded.
- discuss with the customer another way of providing programs, services, or facilities.

Support Persons

- i. Individuals with a disability are entitled to have a support person accompany them on Good Shepherd Ministries premises and where our drop-in service and services by appointment are offered. Fees are not charged for support persons. Case Workers or other responsible coworkers at Good Shepherd Ministries will notify service users of this through appointment, intake process, etc.
- ii. In certain cases, this organization might require a person with disability to be accompanied by a support person for the health or safety reasons of:
 - the person with a disability
 - others on the premises

Before making a decision, Good Shepherd will:

- consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs,
- consider the health or safety reasons based on available evidence,
- determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities, this organization will notify customers promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Feedback Process

Good Shepherd welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible client service. Client feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns. Service users who wish to provide feedback on the way Good Shepherd provides services to people with disabilities can do it verbally or in writing. A feedback form will be provided at our reception desk. Service users can send an email to info@goodshepherd.ca. Regardless of the method chosen, service users are expected to provide their contact information that includes name. Feedback is directed to the [Manager of Human Resources](#) who will direct the feedback to the most appropriate Department. Every effort will be made to respond and resolve complaints/issues as quickly as possible. Good Shepherd ensures our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

Information and Communications

We communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. When asked, we will provide information about our organization and its services, including public safety information, in accessible formats or with communication supports.

We will also meet internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario's accessibility laws.

Employment

We notify coworkers, job applicants and the public that accommodation can be made during recruitment and hiring. We notify job applicants when they are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process that accommodation is available upon request. We consult with the applicants and provide or arrange suitable accommodation.

When and where necessary, in compliance with the Human Rights Code, Good Shepherd will discuss and create individual accommodation plans and/or return to work plan for any coworkers who have a disability, in accordance with the Return-to-Work Policy. Good Shepherd takes into account the accessibility needs and accommodation plans of coworkers with disabilities at all stages of the employment cycle including hiring process, training, performance management and career development.

Design of Public Spaces

Good Shepherd Ministries meets the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces.

Changes to Existing Policies

Any policies of Good Shepherd Ministries that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

This document is publicly available. Accessible formats are available upon request.