

Accessibility Policy

1.0 PURPOSE

UHC – Hub of Opportunities (UHC) is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities on time and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

This includes providing equal access to employment, information, goods, and services, and treating persons with disabilities with dignity and respect in a way that takes their disability into account.

2.0 POLICY

UHC will comply with and meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005, including all applicable elements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards:

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

In addition, “accessibility” at UHC refers to the work we do to ensure people with disabilities can access our services equally with others. This includes removing barriers related to physical space, attitudes, communication, systemic practices, technology, and sensory considerations.

UHC will provide training to all staff and volunteers to ensure they are familiar with our policies, practices, and procedures for communicating with and providing services to persons with disabilities.

2.1 Oversight and Review

The HR Director (or designate) is responsible for overseeing the implementation and ongoing maintenance of this Accessibility Policy. This policy will be reviewed at least every three (3) years, or sooner if legislative requirements change or operational needs require updates. Any revisions to this policy will be approved by the Board of Directors.

2.2 Public Availability

This Accessibility Policy is publicly posted and available at the Food Bank premises in the client service area and will be provided in accessible formats upon request. Questions, concerns, or requests for accessible formats may be directed to the HR Director or designate.

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3.0 PROCEDURE

3.1 Information and Communication

- When requested, UHC will provide information and communications materials in accessible formats or with communication supports. This includes publicly available information about our goods, services and facilities, as well as publicly available emergency and safety information.
- UHC will consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

3.2 Employment/Volunteer Opportunities

- UHC welcomes and encourages volunteer applications from people with disabilities and will make reasonable efforts to ensure that volunteer and employment practices are accessible by providing accommodation throughout all stages of recruitment, placement, and engagement.
- If a volunteer applicant requests accommodation, UHC will consult with the individual and provide suitable accommodation that takes their accessibility needs into account.
- New staff and volunteers will be informed of UHC's accommodation policies as soon as practicable upon starting and notified of any future changes. Information will include available accommodations related to emergency response plans, health and safety requirements, and other applicable legislation.
- UHC will consult with staff or volunteers who request accessible formats or communication supports when providing information required to perform their role or information generally available to others in the workplace.

3.3 Customer Service

- **General Principles**
UHC will provide customer service in a manner that removes barriers for people with disabilities and is guided by the following principles of the AODA:
 - Services will be provided in a manner that respects dignity and independence
 - Service will be integrated unless an alternative approach is required

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- People with disabilities will be given equal opportunity to access and benefit from services
- Communication will be adapted to meet individual needs
- **Service Delivery**

UHC provides food assistance in a manner that respects dignity, privacy, and accessibility, ensuring equitable access to services for individuals and families in need.
- **Assistive Devices**
 - Individuals with disabilities may use their own assistive devices to access UHC services.
 - Service animals are welcome in areas open to the public, unless excluded by law (e.g., food preparation areas within the community kitchen). In cases where a service animal is legally excluded, UHC will make reasonable efforts to provide alternative arrangements to ensure access to services.
- **Support Persons**
 - Individuals accompanied by a support person may have that person accompany them on the premises.
 - Where confidential matters are discussed, the role of the support person may be agreed upon in advance.
- **Notice of Temporary Disruption**

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for people with disabilities, UHC will provide notice as soon as possible. Notices will include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration, and alternative arrangements where available.

Notices may be posted at the Food Bank entrance, at the Resource Centre, on social media, or through other appropriate communication channels.
- **Feedback Process**

Feedback regarding accessibility may be provided in person, by telephone, in writing, or by email. All feedback, including complaints, will be reviewed by the HR Director (or designate) and addressed in accordance with the Complaints Policy. Where appropriate, matters may be escalated to the CEO and/or Board Chair. UHC will make reasonable efforts to respond to accessibility related feedback within seven (7) business days.

Where contact information is provided by the individual submitting feedback, UHC will acknowledge receipt and provide a response in

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a timely manner and, where requested, in an accessible format or communication support appropriate to the individual's needs.

3.4 Design of Public Spaces

If UHC redevelops or redesigns outdoor public spaces (such as parking areas) or indoor public spaces (such as service counters or waiting areas), it will do so in compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard under the AODA. Any newly redeveloped spaces will be maintained in accordance with applicable standards.

3.5 Transportation

UHC does not provide conventional or specialized transportation services to clients. Should transportation services be introduced in the future, UHC will comply with the applicable Transportation Standard requirements under the AODA.

4.0 TRAINING

4.1 UHC will provide training for its staff and volunteers on Ontario's Accessibility laws and in accessibility aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that apply to persons with disabilities.

4.2 Training will be provided by the HR Director (or designate) and will include individuals who interact with the public or are involved in developing policies, practices and procedures.

4.3 Training will be provided to Board members, staff, and volunteers.

4.4 Training will occur within thirty (30) days of an individual starting with UHC and whenever significant changes are made to this policy.

4.5 Records of accessibility training, including dates and participants, will be maintained in accordance with AODA requirements.

4.6 Training will include:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- UHC's plan related to the customer service standard.
- 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 support person.
- How to use the equipment or devices available on-site that may help with providing goods or services to people with disabilities. This includes the client service counter.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing UHC's goods and services.

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4.7 Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service plan.

5.0 ACCESSIBILITY PRACTICES AT UHC

The following practices are examples of how UHC strives to reduce barriers and improve accessibility and may evolve based on client feedback, operational needs, and available resources.

5.1 Physical Accessibility Practices

- Ensuring an area where an accessible taxi can safely drop someone off.
- Ensure the entryway to the food bank is accessible to wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers.
- Ensuring designated accessible parking spaces are available in compliance with municipal requirements.
- Ensuring a rest area is available for folks with health conditions that limit their ability to stand for extended periods.
- Ensuring there is an area to wait in, protected from the weather and the elements.
- Ensuring that at least one washroom, where available on-site, is accessible and compliant with applicable accessibility standards, including grab bars and accessible fixtures.

5.2 Attitude Accessibility Practices

- Greeting clients as they enter the space.
- Collecting client feedback.

5.3 Communication Accessibility Practices

- Offering options for non-verbal communication.
- Communicating changes to stakeholders.

5.4 Systemic Accessibility Practices

- Ensuring service hours are sufficient to reduce wait times and crowding.
- Communicating the complaint process and how to report an accessibility issue.
- Ensuring employees and volunteers understand and agree with The Ethical Food Banking Code.
- Ensuring volunteers are trained in de-escalation or other methods for holding a safe space.
- Providing choice to clients whenever possible.

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- Providing cooking suggestions for items that may be unfamiliar to clients.

5.5 Technology Accessibility Practices

- Ensuring websites are accessible to screen readers
- Ensuring website graphs and charts have text to explain them
- Ensuring any publicly accessible computer stations or resource centre workstations are arranged to support accessibility needs, including appropriate physical access and adaptive technology where available.

5.6 Sensory Accessibility Practices

- Accommodating food restrictions as much as possible
- Ensuring sufficient lighting allows someone with low vision to navigate the space.
- Avoiding floors and wall colour contrasting with busy patterns

6.0 Modifications to this or other Policies

Any policy, practice or procedure of UHC that does not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

7.0 REFERENCE

7.1 Supporting Documents

- <https://www.aoda.ca/free-online-training/>
- <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)
- Ontario Human Rights Code

7.2 Cross-Reference Policies

- Complaints Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors: Alex Keenly
Date: March 17, 2026