
Subject:	County Accessibility Policy
Scope:	All County and Library Board Employees and Members of County Council
Issued:	October 27, 2009
Revised:	June 11, 2013; November 8, 2016; April 11, 2017; April 2022
Reviewed:	September 13, 2016 –Middlesex County Council

COUNTY ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

PURPOSE

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requires all public organizations to meet the accessibility standards in this legislation. The purpose is to provide the overarching framework to guide the review and development of Middlesex County goods, services, programs and facilities in an inclusive manner that considers the AODA and needs of people with disabilities.

This policy will act as the main accessibility policy for Middlesex County and meet the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)*. This regulation establishes the accessibility standards and sets forth requirements Municipalities must meet, which includes: information and communication, employment, transportation, design of public spaces, and customer service. Further accessibility related requirements beyond the AODA and IASR can be found in both the *Ontario Building Code* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Requirements set out in the Accessibility Policy are not a replacement or substitution for the requirements established under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* nor does the policy limit any obligations owed to persons with disabilities under any other legislation.

Further amendments to the Accessibility Policy may occur if Standards under the IASR are amended or developed and will be brought forward to Council approval based on timelines and compliance requirements. The policy will be reviewed and updated on an as needed basis.

For information pertaining to each section, visit the list of supporting documents at the end of this policy. This list includes policies, procedures and guidelines relating to accessibility.



STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The County of Middlesex is committed to identifying, removing, and eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for people with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

The County of Middlesex recognizes the diverse needs of all our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide goods, services and facilities that are accessible to all.

The County of Middlesex is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents and employees. In order to meet the needs of people with disabilities the County will:

- Ensure policies address dignity, independence, integration and provide for equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
- Allow people with disabilities to use their own personal devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the County.
- Accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods, services, programs and facilities.
- Communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

The County will promote accessibility by ensuring that compliance is met for all regulations made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, c. 11

POLICY STATEMENT

The County of Middlesex establishes a framework for compliance with the County's commitment to accessibility, requirements under the AODA and IASR, and any additional municipal requirements.

The AODA provides for the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities in all aspects of society.

The County must meet requirements in key areas including:

- General Requirements (Procurement, Training and Policy)
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- Accessible Built Environment
- Customer Service

The AODA requires the County to:

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1. Identify, prevent and remove barriers people with disabilities face in accessing the Municipality's goods, services, and facilities
 2. Accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can obtain, use or benefit from municipal goods, services, and facilities, and that they can do so in a timely manner, at a cost no greater than the cost for people without disabilities
 3. Develop and train municipal employees on providing accessible goods, services, and facilities.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County, whether the person does so as an employee, member of Council, agent, volunteer, student placement, committee member, or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing the County's policies governing the provision of goods, services or facilities to members of the public or other third parties.

DEFINITIONS

Disability as defined by the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 19

Disability means,

- a. 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 co-ordination, 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,
- b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. a mental disorder, or
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; ("handicap")

Barrier: means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his, her or their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice

Service Animal: For the purposes of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

- 1) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- 2) the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:
 - i. A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
 - ii. A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
 - iii. A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
 - iv. A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
 - v. A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.
 - vi. A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
 - vii. A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
 - viii. A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
 - ix. A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

Guide Dog: a guide dog as defined in the *Blind Persons' Right Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7 s. 1(1)

"guide dog" means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations. ("chien d'aveugle")

For all other definitions, refer to the *Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation* (O. Reg 191/11).

Support Person: means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him, her or them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING

The County will establish, implement, maintain and document a Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), which will outline the County and Local Municipal Partner's strategy to identify, prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg 191/11).

The County will establish and implement a Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan in consultation with the public, people with disabilities and the Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee.

The plan will be posted on the County and Local Municipal Partner's websites, and will be available in an accessible format and/or with communication supports upon request. The plan will be updated at least once every five years.

A Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report will be prepared outlining the progress taken to implement the strategy and goals set out in the Joint MYAP. The Joint Annual Accessibility Status Report will be posted on the County and Local Municipal Partner's websites.

PROCUREMENT OF GOODS, SERVICES, OR FACILITIES

The County will incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when purchasing or acquiring goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so.

Should the County determine that it is not practicable to incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when purchasing or acquiring goods, services or facilities, it will provide an explanation upon request. The explanation shall be made available in an accessible format and/or with communication supports, upon request.

Each department is responsible for ensuring accessibility considerations have been made. Employees must follow the internal Accessible Procurement Guidelines and Procurement Policy. Procurements for items or services intended for use by the public must always incorporate accessibility where these options are available.

TRAINING

The County will provide training to:

- All people who are an employee of, or a volunteer with the organization
- All people who participate in developing the organizations policies; and
- All other people who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization

The training will include:

- An overview of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*

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- A review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*
 - A review of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (O. Reg 191/11)
 - Specific review of *IASR* requirements, based on the duties associated with the employee.
 - 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 guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.
 - How to use equipment or devices available on the County's premises or otherwise provided by the County that may help with the provision of goods, services or facilities to a person with a disability.
 - What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the County's goods, services or facilities.

The training will be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other people. Employees will be trained as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to the aforementioned individuals with respect to any policy changes on an ongoing basis. Training logs will be kept in accordance with the *IASR*, and include details of the training provided, who received training, the dates for when training was provided, and number of individuals trained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS AND COMMUNICATION SUPPORTS

The County will provide alternate accessible formats of information and communications that are produced by, or in direct control of the County. This does not apply to information that the County does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship. Information produced by third parties, that is not controlled directly or indirectly by the County, can be requested to be converted into an alternative format that is accessible and/or with communication supports, if practicable.

Alternative accessible formats will be provided upon request in a timely manner and at a cost that is no more than the cost charged for the original format.

When it is not practicable to provide an alternate format, the County will provide an explanation and a detailed summary of the document in an accessible format.

The County will provide communication supports to members of the public upon request.



Human Resource Policy 5.01

If the County is unable to obtain the requested communication support, the County will consult with the individual to determine an appropriate alternative method of communication.

The County will consult with the individual making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES, PLANS AND PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION

The County will provide emergency procedures, plans and public safety information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, as soon as practicable, upon request. Individualized Workplace Emergency Response Plans for employees with disabilities will be provided, as is deemed necessary.

Individualized Workplace Emergency Response Plans will be reviewed when:

- The employee moves to a different location in the organization
- The employee's overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed
- The employer reviews the general emergency response policies

FEEDBACK

The County will accept feedback from members of the public relating to the provision of accessible goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities. The County will ensure that the feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing, or arranging for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports, upon request.

The County will develop procedures that specify the actions that will be taken if a complaint is received about the manner in which it provides goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities. Information regarding the feedback process will be posted on the County's website. Individuals can request this information by contacting the County.

In accordance with section 11 of the *IASR* when seeking feedback from the public, the County will provide accessible formats and/or communication supports to members of the public upon request.

LIBRARIES

The County will provide access to or arrange for the provision of access to accessible materials where they exist. Information about accessible materials can be found on the Middlesex County Library website.



Human Resource Policy 5.01

WEBSITE AND WEB CONTENT

In accordance with the *IASR*, the County will ensure that websites and web content are created in a manner keeping with the expectations of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG). The County will continue to maintain and create websites and web content in accordance with WCAG 2.0, Level A and Level AA. If an individual is having difficulty accessing any County owned or operated website, or content found on said websites, they can contact the County.

Accessible web content is being produced in the following ways:

In-House: Staff receive training that ensures PDF documents are created in accordance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA.

Purchased Documents or Videos: The Department purchasing a document or video that will be available on the County's website shall ensure that the document or video is created in a manner that ensures compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA.

Third-Party Documents: third-party documents that are provided to the County are expected to be provided in an accessible format.

In the event that the third-party document is not in an accessible format, the County will put forward efforts to provide the document in an accessible alternative format and/or with communication supports, upon request, unless it is not practicable to do so. If it is not practicable to do so, the County will provide an explanation and a summary of the document.

Third-party documents are any documents that are not in the County's direct control and/or produced through a contractual relationship.

EMPLOYMENT

The County is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. The Employment Standards in the *IASR* outlines requirements for the accommodation of persons with disabilities during the recruitment process and throughout their employment with the County.

RECRUITMENT ACCOMMODATIONS

The County will notify all potential applicants that the County will take steps to accommodate disability related needs in the interview or testing process. The County will communicate the offer of accommodation to all applicants at the beginning of the selection process. Applicants must make their accessibility needs known and put in a request for accommodations. Upon receipt of such request, the County will consult the person making the request and determine



Human Resource Policy 5.01

suitable accommodations. When making an offer of employment, the County will inform the individual of the County's commitment to providing accommodations in the workplace.

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations will be provided to employees with disabilities during the duration of their employment with the County of Middlesex. Employees must submit their request for accommodations in writing. Documented Individual Accommodations Plans will be created for employees with disabilities.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The County will take the accessibility needs and Individual Accommodation Plans into consideration for employees with disabilities during a performance management process, or during a career development and advancement, or when the employee is redeployed.

RETURN TO WORK PROCESS

The County has in place a return to work process for employees who have been away from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

A written procedure shall be developed to outline the steps the County will take to facilitate the employee's return to work, which may lead to an Individual Accommodation Plan. Such processes must be documented and must outline the steps the County will take to facilitate the employees' return to work.

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation standard focuses on making travel easier for people in Ontario, including persons with disabilities, older Ontarians and families travelling with children.

The County is committed to provided transit services through the Middlesex County Connect that is in accordance with the IASR, under the AODA. This will be accomplished through the development and implementation of policies, procedures, resources, equipment and training in the provisions outlined under the IASR.

Middlesex County Connect is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

Our buses are equipped with an accessible lift on the passenger side of the bus to assist passengers. The lift can be used by passengers with limited mobility or who require a mobility aid which prevents them from boarding at the front of the bus. The lift can be deployed by the bus operator upon request, however, you must be able to maneuver your mobility aid into the designated area on the bus.

More details can be found at the [Middlesex Community Transportation](#) webpage.

DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES

ACCESSIBLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The County is committed to designing public spaces that are free from barriers and accessible to all persons. The County will comply with the requirements found in Part IV.1 of the *IASR* where applicable, in relation to the design of public spaces. The Design of Public Spaces Standards requires the County to comply with respect to public spaces that are newly constructed or redeveloped, including:

- Recreation trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public use eating areas and rest areas
- Outdoor play spaces
- Exterior paths of travel
- Accessible parking
- Obtaining services

The County has created, in collaboration with the Middlesex Accessibility Advisory Committee, several guidelines to assist with the implementation of this Standard:

- a) Accessible Playground Consultation Document
- b) Recreational Trails Consultation Document & Guidelines

Further requirements pertaining to the Accessible Built Environment can be found in the [O.REG. 332/12 Ontario Building Code Act](#)

CUSTOMER SERVICE

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

The County allows people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain goods, services or facilities offered by the County. It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure their assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.



Human Resource Policy 5.01

If a person with a disability is unable to access a good, service or facility through the use of their own personal assistive device, or if their own personal assistive device poses a health and safety risk to others, the County will consult with the individual to determine an alternate means to obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods, services or facilities.

Staff within the applicable department will be trained in the application and use of the device the County has on site or that is being provided to be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods, services or facilities.

SERVICE ANIMALS

The County will ensure that an individual accompanied by a service animal is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with the individual, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.

If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the County will ensure that other measures are available to ensure a person with a disability is able to obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods, services or facilities. Individuals will be informed by County about the alternative measures and accommodations available.

The individual with the service animal is responsible for the care and control of their service animal at all times, while on County premises.

Further information on service animals and guide dogs is provided under the definition section above.

SUPPORT PERSON

The County will allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person in all County-owned and operated public facilities. The County reserves the right to request a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if, after consulting with the person with a disability and considers the available evidence, the County determines that:

- A support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises; and
- There is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and the health or safety of others on the premises.

Admission fees will be waived for support persons who accompany a person with a disability.

TEMPORARY SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

Temporary service disruptions in County services or facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the County's control or knowledge.

If a temporary service disruption is planned or unplanned the County will make reasonable efforts to provide notice of the disruption. Notice of the disruption will include: the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.

Procedures for specific service disruptions will be developed, and a copy of the procedures will be available to individuals upon request.

If the disruption is anticipated, the County will provide a reasonable amount of advance notice. Notice will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place as well as by posting the information on the County or Library website.

COMPLIANCE

The County may incur costs in implementing staff training required to meet the IASR Customer Service Standards, and the AODA and *Ontario Human Rights Code* training requirements. The other potential financial implications is in regard to non-compliance with the law. Enforcement provisions exist under the AODA allowing inspectors to have the power to request documents and records. Individuals and businesses can be fined under the AODA for non-compliance.

All employees shall monitor current practices to ensure compliance with this Policy.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions relating to this Policy and other Accessibility related policies, procedures or guidelines, contact the Accessibility Coordinator at the [County Accessibility Page](#)

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11

Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg 191/11)

Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 19

O.REG. 332/12 Ontario Building Code Act

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

POLICIES

5.02 Accommodations Policy

4.16 Procurement of Goods and Services Policy (2020)

PROCEDURES

Accessibility Training Procedure

Accessibility Feedback Procedure

Support Person Procedure

Request for Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure

Service Animals in the Workplace Procedure

Temporary Service Disruptions Procedure

Accessible Maintenance Procedures

PLANS AND REPORTS

Return to Work Plan

Middlesex County and its Local Municipal Partners Joint Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-2027

Joint Annual Accessibility Status Reports

GUIDELINES

Style and Design Guideline

Accessible Playground Consultation Document

Recreational Trails Consultation Document & Guidelines