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OUAC Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Effective date: November 1, 2013
Compliance: AccessON

Reference(s):

- Accessibility (AODA): Multi-Year Plan
    - Policy / Training / Accessible Emergencies(Evacuation)
    - Reporting: due: Dec 31, 2012; due: Dec 31, 2014 (FYI: qualifying questions)
- Statement of Commitment

This 2011-2021 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that has been (or will be) put in place by the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Our Statement(s) of Commitment

The OUAC is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
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Accessible Emergencies / Evacuation

- We are committed to providing our customers/clients and stakeholders with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way, upon request.
- We will provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information, when necessary.

AODA Standard: Customer Service Policy / Training

- The OUAC is committed to excellence in serving all customers including persons with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:
    - Communication
    - Telephone Services
    - Billing
    - Online Application Systems and Websites
    - Use of Support Persons and Service Animals
    - Assistive Devices

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AODA Standard: Information and Communications Policy

- We are committed to meeting the communication needs of persons with disabilities. We will consult with persons with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.
- All new websites and content on those sites conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA.
- We will ensure existing internal feedback processes are accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request.
- We provide all publicly available information in accessible format, upon request.
- We are embarking on a multi-year project to make all websites and content conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA, by January 1, 2021.

AODA Standard: Employment

- We are committed to fair and accessible employment practices.
- By January 1, 2016, we will determine steps required to:
  - notify employees and members of the public that, when requested, we will accommodate persons with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired;
  - develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability;
  - ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account if when using performance management, career development and redeployment processes;
  - prevent and remove other accessibility barriers identified.

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AODA Standard: Transportation

- Not applicable to the OUAC

AODA Standard: Design of Public Spaces (previously 'Built Environment')

- We will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces.
  Public spaces include:
  - Recreational trails/beach access routes
  - Outdoor public eating areas like rest stops or picnic areas
  - Outdoor play spaces, like playgrounds in provincial parks and local communities
  - Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals
  - Accessible off street parking
  - Service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas
- **Disruption of Service**
  - We have procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to its accessible parts of its public spaces.
  - In the event of a service disruption, we will notify the public of the service disruption and alternatives available.

Our Accessibility Policy

- AccessibilityPolicyAllStandards

Our Training

- Training will be provided to employees, in keeping with their responsibilties, on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to persons with disabilities.
- We will ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario's accessible laws by January 1, 2015.
  - Self-driven Customer Service Standard (part of Employee Orientation): Customer Service Training
  - Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR): Human Rights Code Training

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Our Statement(s) of Commitment

Further Information

AODA Goal

The goal of the AODA (2005) is to make Ontario accessible by 2025 through the development of accessibility standards. In addition to *customer service (compliance date: Jan 2012)*, development of standards in other key areas is underway, including:

- *information and communications (various compliance dates: January 1, 2012 through January 1, 2021)*
- *employment (large organization compliance date: January 1, 2016)*
- *transportation (various compliance dates: July 1, 2011 through January 1, 2017)*
- *design of public spaces* (previously 'built environment') *(compliance date: TBC)*

Legislation

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (also referred to as the accessible customer service regulation or the "customer service standard"), came into force on January 1, 2008. It is the first accessibility standard created under the authority of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

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Definition(s)

Alternative formats Alternative formats are simply ways of providing information in ways other than it was originally produced.

- **Why are alternative formats important for persons with disabilities?**
  Persons with disabilities receive, convey and make use of information in a wide variety of ways.
- Some persons with disabilities may not be able to read print but can access the information using other formats such as audio, Braille, enlarged text and screen-reading software.
- Although we often think of people with vision loss needing alternative-to-print formats, many people with learning disabilities also benefit from having access to information in other formats. For example, some people with auditory processing difficulties prefer written rather than spoken information.
- Closed captioning, CART (communication access real-time translation), sign language and text are all different types of alternative formats that people with hearing loss use to access information.
- Some people with physical disabilities (such as low upper body strength) may find it easier to access information using audio formats as the effort to hold a book or sheaf of papers can be quickly tiring.

Assistive Device is an auxiliary aid such as communication aid, cognition aid, personal mobility or medical aid (e.g., canes, crutches, wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc.).

Barrier
A barrier is anything that keeps someone from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. Barriers can be visible or non-visible. Furthermore, while barriers are often unintentional, they can restrict access to goods and services.
Common *barriers* include:

- **Attitude:** This barrier is about what we think and how we interact with persons with disabilities. It is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome because our attitudes – based on our beliefs, knowledge, previous experience and education – can be hard to change. For instance, some people

don't know how to communicate with persons with disabilities – they may assume that someone with a speech problem also has an intellectual disability. Some people worry about offending someone by offering help and deal with this by ignoring or avoiding persons with disabilities.

- **Architectural or structural:** Architectural or structural barriers may result from design elements of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and room layout. These barriers may also occur through everyday practices, such as when we store boxes or other objects in hallways, obstructing accessible pathways.
- **Information or communication:** Information or communication barriers – like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background or not facing the person when speaking – can make it difficult to receive or convey information.
- **Technology:** Technology, or the lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Common tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers if they are not set up or designed with accessibility in mind.
- **Organizational:** Organizational barriers can result from an organization's policies, practices and procedures if they restrict persons with disabilities, often unintentionally.

Disability AODA defines a disability as:

1. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and 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,
   b. a condition of mental impairment or a development disability,
   c. a learning disability, or 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.

Service Animal is any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability.

Support Person is any person, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend, who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or with access to services.
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Four Principles: Accessible Customer Service

Under the customer service standard, each workplace must ensure that its policies, practices and procedures address the requirements of the standard, and use reasonable efforts to ensure they are consistent with the following principles:

Dignity	Providing service with dignity means the customer maintains his or her self-respect and the respect of other people. Dignified service means not treating persons with disabilities as an afterthought or forcing them to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.
Independence	Ensuring people are able to do things on their own without unnecessary help, or interference from others.
Integration	Integration means providing service in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers.
Equal Opportunity	Equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services, it means that persons with disabilities have the same opportunity as others to benefit from the way you provide goods or services.

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COU website

The COU website linked above provides a wealth of information on accessibility. It will continue to be populated with new resources as the work from each of the committees is approved and posted.

Version Control	Description	Status	Date
v1.0	2013 version - OUAC's multi-year accessibility plan (drafted from Template)	Approved by Mgrs @ Oct 23'13 MOP	Effective: Nov 1, 2013
v1.1	(r10) deleted "awareness quiz & answers"	Approved by Mgr, Communications	Jun 18, 2014

-- AlexisNagami - 2013-10-30

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