



Accessibility Framework and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

March 2025



Table of Contents

Overview

Description of Family Services Windsor-Essex

Statement of Organizational Commitment

Purpose

Definitions

Types of Barriers

Methodology for Identification of Barriers

Accessibility Compliance Plan

Non-Applicable AODA Standards

More Information

Appendices and References

Overview

Family Services Windsor-Essex's *Accessibility Framework and Multi-Year Workplan* outlines our vision that all clients, employees, and members of the public are provided a barrier-free environment that supports the dignity of everyone.

This will be reflected throughout the organization by:

- *People with disabilities being able to enter our premises and reach their destinations without encountering barriers;*
- *People with disabilities receiving the services they require without encountering barriers;*
- *People with disabilities working without encountering barriers;*
- *Accessibility being incorporated into our policies and practices; and*
- *Accessibility being accepted as everyone's responsibility.*

This accessibility plan outlines measures that Family Services Windsor-Essex will take to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities, including our employees and those who use our services. It will also detail our strategy to ensure compliance with accessibility legislation.

We will ensure that this plan is available to the public.

Description of Family Services Windsor-Essex

Family Services Windsor-Essex is a non-profit, charitable organization serving Windsor and Essex County. We help people to restore their ability to choose their own place in the world through counselling and individual support services. For organizations of all sizes, we offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and wellness solutions.

Statement of Organizational Commitment

Family Services Windsor-Essex is supportive of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and its objective of achieving accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises. As such, we are committed to identifying, removing and preventing barriers that clients, employees, and members of the public may face when interacting with us.

Purpose

The purpose of the *Accessibility Framework and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* is to outline our organization's strategy to identify, remove and prevent barriers that clients, employees, and members of the public may face when interacting with us. This plan will also address our strategy to meet all requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA).

Definitions

A “**barrier**” refers to anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability.

Our definition of “**disability**” is informed by definitions used by the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code. It refers to any physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

Types of Barriers

- **Architectural:** Any physical factor that makes accessibility difficult for an individual. Examples include narrow doorways or hallways, poor lighting for visually impaired individuals, washroom facilities that are not physically accessible for all.
- **Environmental:** An item or characteristic of the setting that hinders service delivery by impacting the comfort level of the client, personnel, or stakeholders. Examples can include noise, lighting, scents and temperature.
- **Attitudes:** Ways of thinking or feeling by individuals that could result in behaviour that hinders positive interactions and possibly impacts service delivery. Examples can include the language and terminology the organization uses in its literature or when communicating with persons with disabilities, how disabilities are treated and viewed by the organization, consumers and the community. Other examples can include a lack of acceptance or inclusion, gender differences, or cultural difference.

- **Employment:** Barriers to recruiting and retaining qualified personnel. Examples can include employment practices, reputation of the organization, insufficient training or equipment. Family Services Windsor-Essex is committed to providing a barrier-free interview process and work environment and will make accommodations available to applicants with disabilities upon request during the recruitment process.
- **Communication:** Barriers that may impede how employees, persons served, and other stakeholders communicate to receive services or conduct the business of the organization. Examples include language, terminology, technological formatting, and the ability to communicate with persons who have visual or hearing deficits.
- **Transportation:** Limitations in a person's ability to physically access the organization. Examples include the availability of public transportation to get to the organization or service, lack of knowledge or information on transportation support services among persons served.
- **Community Integration:** Factors affecting a person's ability to access their community. An example could include lack of knowledge of available services and supports in the community by persons served.
- **Any Other Barrier:** Any other barriers that impact accessibility for the persons served, employees or other stakeholders. Examples can include upkeep of previous repairs or changes, issues raised by evolving technology.

Methodology for Identification of Barriers

Family Services Windsor-Essex is committed to developing policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Services and operations are designed to promote and enhance the quality of life for persons served, support non-discriminatory employment practices, meet all legal and regulatory requirements, and meet the expectations of all our stakeholders in the area of accessibility. Barriers are identified using multiple mechanisms:

- **Feedback Process:** Feedback, suggestions and complaints from our clients, family members, caregivers, and members of the public may be received in person, by telephone, in writing, electronically, or otherwise. The feedback mechanism is posted on our public website (pending approval, March 2025).

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- **Health and Safety Concern Reporting:** Reported health and safety concerns are tracked and addressed by Human Resources with reporting support from Program Managers. There are multiple policies on Occupational Health and Safety that demonstrate our commitment to workplace safety and outline the roles of the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee, managers and employees in maintaining and contributing to a safe work environment.

Regular inspections serve as a vehicle to identify actual and potential accessibility barriers. Accessibility barriers are documented and reported to the Manager, Human Resources and/or the onsite manager.

- **Employee Input:** Employees are encouraged to report barriers that they have identified for themselves or others.
- **AODA Legislation:** Mandatory requirements of the legislation set targets for accessibility initiatives and changes in process

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Accessibility Requirement	Lead
Accessible Customer Service Policy and Procedures Develop, implement and maintain policies and procedures on providing goods and services to persons with disabilities. Policies will address: • <i>Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities</i> • <i>Use of Assistive Devices</i> • <i>Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs</i> • <i>Use of Support Persons</i> • <i>Notice of Service Disruptions</i> • <i>Training</i> • <i>Feedback Process</i> This policy will be made publicly available and in accessible format where requested.	EDI and Quality, Human Resources, Communications
Training Provide training to all employees, Board appointees, affiliate counsellors, volunteers, contractors, and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development policies and procedures and maintain training records as required. Training includes: • <i>Overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005</i> • <i>Family Services Windsor-Essex policies and procedures related to the CSS</i> • <i>Instructions on interaction and communication with customers with various types of disabilities</i> • <i>Unconscious Bias training including disability awareness module</i>	EDI and Quality, Human Resources

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Accessibility Requirement	Lead
<i>Instructions on interaction with people with disabilities who require assistive devices; require the assistance of a guide dog, service animal or service dog; or require the assistance of a support person</i> <i>Instructions on use of equipment or devices that are available or that may assist customers with disabilities</i> <i>Instructions on assisting a customer with a disability that is having difficulty accessing services</i>	Human Resources
Notice of Temporary Disruptions Provide public notice of disruption in facilities or services by posting a notice on premises FSWE website, and automated telephone recordings, including reason for disruption, anticipated duration and description of alternatives.	Human Resources/ Facilities/ Communications
Feedback Process Establish process for receiving and responding to customer feedback. Ensure that processes are accessible to persons with disabilities by providing accessible formats and arranging for communication supports upon request. The public will be notified of the feedback process.	Human Resources/ Communications

Accessibility Compliance Plan

Corporate Accessibility Policy and Procedures Develop, implement and maintain policies and procedures on the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) This Policy will address: • <i>Information and Communication Standard</i> • <i>Employment Standard</i> • <i>Design of Public Spaces Standard (if/where applicable)</i> • <i>Training</i> • <i>Communication</i> • <i>Feedback process</i>	EDI and Quality, Human Resources, Communications
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan • <i>Establish, implement and maintain multi-year accessibility plan outlining the strategy to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities. This Plan will be reviewed and updated in consultation with the Board of Directors.</i> • <i>This Plan will be posted on our website and made available in accessible format upon request.</i> • <i>An annual progress report on this Plan will be posted on our website as required by the IASR and internal policy.</i>	EDI and Quality, Human Resources, and Communications
Accessibility Reports Complete government accessibility reports as required in accordance with the AODA and Regulations and internal policy.	EDI and Quality and Human Resources

Accessibility Compliance Plan

Accessibility Requirement	Lead
Training Provide training on the IASR to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development policies and procedures and maintain records of the training. Training will include: • <i>An overview of the AODA, and the requirements of the IASR</i> • <i>An overview of the Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities</i> • <i>Our policies and procedures related to the IASR</i>	EDI and Quality, Human Resources
Employment Recruitment Process • <i>Notify applicants invited to participate in the interview or assessment process that accommodations are available on request to support participation in the process.</i>	Human Resources

Accessibility Compliance Plan

Accessibility Requirement	Lead
- Consult with the applicant to provide suitable accommodation that consider the participant's accessibility needs due to a disability. - When making offers of employment notify successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.	Human Resources
Employment Informing Employees of Supports Inform employees of policies used to support employees with disabilities.	Human Resources
Employment Workplace Emergency Response Information - Provide individualized workplace emergency response information to help employees with disabilities when required in accordance with established procedures. - When an employee who receives individualized workplace emergency response information requires assistance, and with the employee's consent, the employer shall provide this information to the person designated by the employer to provide assistance to the employee. - Individualized workplace emergency response information shall be reviewed when the employee moves to a different location in the organization; their overall accommodations needs or plans are reviewed; or when the employer reviews its general emergency response policies.	Human Resources
Employment Individual Accommodation Plans Have a process in place to provide individual workplace accommodate plans when requested by an individual with a disability. Individual accommodation plans will be developed in accordance with the requirements of the IASR. Employees requesting individual accommodation plans may participate in the development of the plan.	Human Resources

Accessibility Compliance Plan

Accessibility Requirement	Lead
Where requested, individual accommodation plans will be provided in an accessible format that considers the employee's accessibility needs due to disability.	
Employment Return to Work Process Develop and implement return to work process that outlines the steps the employer will take to facilitate the return to work of employees who were absent due to disability. <i>This plan may follow the process for development of an individual accommodation plan.</i>	Human Resources
Employment Performance Management, Career Development and Advancement Take steps to ensure that performance management, career development and advancement considers the employee's accessibility needs.	Human Resources
Employment Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Where requested by an employee, provide accessible formats of communications supports for information that is needed to perform the employee's job and information that is generally available in the workplace.	Human Resources
Accessible Websites and Web Content Internet website and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A	Communications
Websites and Web Content Internet website and web content conforms with WCAG 2.0 Level AA.	Communications

Non-Applicable AODA Standards

AODA Standard	Not Applicable	Reference
Educational and training resources and materials	Not applicable as we are not an educational or training institution, library or textbook producer	Reg sec 15, 16, 17, 18, 19
Transportation Standards	Not applicable as we do not provide transportation to the public or employees.	Reg - sec 33 - 80

More Information

To learn more about our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, please contact Ciara Holmes, Acting Executive Director (519-966-5010 x 5010), cholmes@fswe.ca, or Karen Smallwood, Director of EDI and Quality (519-966-5010 x 1016), ksmallwood@fswe.ca.

Appendices

- **Appendix A – Accessibility Statement Verbiage for Website**
- **Appendix B – Full Accessibility Statement and WAG Compliance Statement**
- **Appendix C – Feedback Process (verbiage for website)**
- **Appendix D – Reporting Instructions and Next Steps for FSWE**
- **Appendix E – Compliance Checklist**

Appendix A Accessibility Statement for FSWE

This is an accessibility statement from Family Services Windsor-Essex.

Conformance status

The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) defines requirements for designers and developers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. It defines three levels of conformance: Level A, Level AA, and Level AAA. FSWE is fully conformant with WCAG 2.1 level AA. Fully conformant means that the content fully conforms to the accessibility standard without any exceptions. Family Services Windsor-Essex believes that the internet should be available and accessible to anyone and are committed to providing a website that is accessible

to the broadest possible audience, regardless of ability. To fulfill this, we aim to adhere as strictly as possible to the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG 2.1) at the AA level. These guidelines explain how to make web content accessible to people with a wide array of disabilities. Complying with those guidelines helps us ensure that the website is accessible to blind people, people with motor impairments, visual impairment, cognitive disabilities, and more. This website utilizes various technologies that are meant to make it as accessible as possible at all times. We utilize an accessibility interface that allows persons with specific disabilities to adjust the website's UI (user interface) and design it to their personal needs. Additionally, the website utilizes an AI-based application that runs in the background and optimizes its accessibility level constantly. This application remediates the website's HTML, adapts its functionality and behavior for screen-readers used by blind users, and for keyboard functions used by individuals with motor impairments.

Appendix B – Full Accessibility Statement and WAG Compliance Statement

AODA Compliance Statement for Website

We believe that the internet should be available and accessible to anyone and are committed to providing a website that is accessible to the broadest possible audience, regardless of ability. To fulfill this, we aim to adhere as strictly as possible to the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG 2.1) at the AA level. These guidelines explain how to make web content accessible to people with a wide array of disabilities. Complying with those guidelines helps us ensure that the website is accessible to blind people, people with motor impairments, visual impairment, cognitive disabilities, and more. This website utilizes various technologies that are meant to make it as accessible as possible at all times. We utilize an accessibility interface that allows persons with specific disabilities to adjust the website's UI (user interface) and design it to their personal needs. Additionally, the website utilizes an AI-based application that runs in the background and optimizes its accessibility level constantly. This application remediates the website's HTML, adapts its functionality and behavior for screen-readers used by blind users, and for keyboard functions used by individuals with motor impairments. If you wish to contact the website's owner, please use the following email info@fswe.ca

Screen-reader and keyboard navigation

Our website implements the ARIA attributes (Accessible Rich Internet Applications) technique, alongside various behavioral changes, to ensure blind users visiting with screen-readers can read, comprehend, and enjoy the website's functions. As soon as a user with a screen-reader enters your site, they immediately receive a prompt to enter the Screen-Reader Profile so they can browse and operate your site effectively. Here is how our website covers some of the most important screen-reader requirements:

1. **Screen-reader optimization:** we run a process that learns the website's components from

top to bottom, to ensure ongoing compliance even when updating the website. In this process, we provide screen-readers with meaningful data using the ARIA set of attributes. For example, we provide accurate form labels; descriptions for actionable icons (social media icons, search icons, cart icons, etc.); validation guidance for form inputs; element roles such as buttons, menus, modal dialogues (popups), and others. Additionally, the background process scans all the website's images. It provides an accurate and meaningful image-object-recognition-based description as an ALT (alternate text) tag for images that are not described. It will also extract texts embedded within the image using an OCR (optical character recognition) technology. To turn on screen-reader adjustments at any time, users need only to press the Alt+1 keyboard combination. Screen-reader users also get automatic announcements to turn the Screen-reader mode on as soon as they enter the website. These adjustments are compatible with popular screen readers such as JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver, and TalkBack.

2. **Keyboard navigation optimization:** The background process also adjusts the website's HTML and adds various behaviors using JavaScript code to make the website operable by the keyboard. This includes the ability to navigate the website using the Tab and Shift+Tab keys, operate dropdowns with the arrow keys, close them with Esc, trigger buttons and links using the Enter key, navigate between radio and checkbox elements using the arrow keys, and fill them in with the Spacebar or Enter key. Additionally, keyboard users will find content-skip menus available at any time by clicking Alt+2, or as the first element of the site while navigating with the keyboard. The background process also handles triggered popups by moving the keyboard focus on them as soon as they appear, not allowing the focus to drift outside. Users can also use shortcuts such as "M" (menus), "H" (headings), "F" (forms), "B" (buttons), and "G" (graphics) to jump to specific elements.

Disability profiles supported on our website

- **Epilepsy Safe Profile:** this profile enables people with epilepsy to safely use the website by eliminating the risk of seizures resulting from flashing or blinking animations and risky color combinations.
- **Vision Impaired Profile:** this profile adjusts the website so that it is accessible to most visual impairments such as Degrading Eyesight, Tunnel Vision, Cataract, Glaucoma, and others.
- **Cognitive Disability Profile:** this profile provides various assistive features to help users with cognitive disabilities such as Autism, Dyslexia, CVA, and others, to focus on the essential elements more easily.
- **ADHD Friendly Profile:** this profile significantly reduces distractions and noise to help people with ADHD, and Neurodevelopmental disorders browse, read, and focus on the essential elements more easily.

- **Blind Users Profile (Screen-readers):** this profile adjusts the website to be compatible with screen-readers such as JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver, and TalkBack. A screen-reader is installed on the blind user's computer, and this site is compatible with it.
- **Keyboard Navigation Profile (Motor-Impaired):** this profile enables motor-impaired persons to operate the website using the keyboard Tab, Shift+Tab, and the Enter keys. Users can also use shortcuts such as "M" (menus), "H" (headings), "F" (forms), "B" (buttons), and "G" (graphics) to jump to specific elements.

Additional UI, design, and readability adjustments

1. **Font adjustments** users can increase and decrease its size, change its family (type), adjust the spacing, alignment, line height, and more.
2. **Color adjustments** users can select various color contrast profiles such as light, dark, inverted, and monochrome. Additionally, users can swap color schemes of titles, texts, and backgrounds with over seven different coloring options.
3. **Animations** epileptic users can stop all running animations with the click of a button. Animations controlled by the interface include videos, GIFs, and CSS flashing transitions.
4. **Content highlighting** users can choose to emphasize essential elements such as links and titles. They can also choose to highlight focused or hovered elements only.
5. **Audio muting** users with hearing devices may experience headaches or other issues due to automatic audio playing. This option lets users mute the entire website instantly.
6. **Cognitive disorders** we utilize a search engine linked to Wikipedia and Wiktionary, allowing people with cognitive disorders to decipher meanings of phrases, initials, slang, and others.
7. **Additional functions** we allow users to change cursor color and size, use a printing mode, enable a virtual keyboard, and many other functions.

Assistive technology and browser compatibility

We aim to support as many browsers and assistive technologies as possible, so our users can choose the best fitting tools for them, with as few limitations as possible. Therefore, we have worked hard to be able to support all major systems that comprise over 95% of the user market share, including Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Opera and Microsoft Edge, JAWS, and NVDA (screen readers), both for Windows and MAC users.

Notes, comments, and feedback

Despite our best efforts to allow anybody to adjust the website to their needs, there may still be

pages or sections that are not fully accessible, are in the process of becoming accessible, or are lacking an adequate technological solution to make them accessible. Still, we are continually improving our accessibility, adding, updating, improving its options and features, and developing and adopting new technologies. All this is meant to reach the optimal level of accessibility following technological advancements. If you wish to contact the website's owner, please use the following email info@fswe.ca

Appendix C – Feedback Process (verbiage for website)

We welcome your feedback on the accessibility of FSWE. Please let us know if you encounter accessibility barriers on our website. We aim to respond to feedback within 2 business days.

- Phone: 519-966-5010
- E-mail: info@fswe.ca
- Visitor Address: 1770 Langlois Avenue, Windsor
- Postal Address: N8X 4M5

Appendix D – Reporting Instructions and Next Steps for FSWE

Business or Non-profit organizations are obligated to report their compliance under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 and must complete and submit this [Accessibility Compliance Reporting Form](#). The compliance report must be filed every three years. The last reporting deadline was 2023. We are still required to file a report even though the deadline has passed. The next reporting deadline will be December 31, 2026.

Directions to complete the Accessibility Compliance Reporting Form (hyperlinked above):

1. Download the form:
 - Business or non-profit organizations [use form on00468e](#)
2. Right click on the link to your form and choose "Save link as..."
 - Open the form with the latest version of Adobe Reader. Do not open it in your browser.
 - If you receive a message to install Adobe Reader, this means you have opened the form in your browser.
3. Once the form is open, print pages 1 and 2, or save the content in another document so that you have the detailed instructions on hand (the instructions will no longer be available when you click **Open Form** at the bottom of page 2).
4. When you have completed the form, click "**Submit**" located at the bottom of the last page of the form.
5. After submitting the report, a confirmation email will go to the certifier. This email includes a confirmation number and accessible PDF of the report.

Next Steps for FSWE

#	Step	Lead	Status
1	Understand Obligations	EDI	Completed
2	Create Accessibility Policies	ED/HR	Completed
3	Train Our Workforce	HR	Completed*
4	Create a Multi-Year Plan	EDI	Completed
5	Consider Accessibility in All Decisions	ED	Completed
6	Review Framework	ED/Board	In Progress
7	Update FSWE website with highlights of Accessibility Plan (e.g. parking, training, etc.), Accessibility Statement including tech specs, 2023 Report, Accessibility Policies including Disruptions in Service Policy, Support Persons Policy, Service Animals Policy; Complaint Process; More Information (POC including email and telephone)	EDI and Comms	Pending Approval and French Translation
8	Complete Required Reporting (submit report to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility via link . NB: Review 2023 report filed by JZ for previous submission details. File stored here: 2023 Report)	Certifier/ED/EDI	Due Dec 31, 2026** AODA Reporting Deadlines

*Refresher date and process required.

**Previous reporting period (2023) successfully completed.

Appendix E – Compliance Checklist

This checklist outlines the requirements of the customer service standards for organizations that provide goods, services, or facilities to the public in accordance with the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

Policies

- ☐ Develop, implement, and maintain policies regarding the provision of goods, services, or facilities to individuals with disabilities that are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

Ensure company policies consider and address the following areas required by the IASR:

Assistive Devices

- ☐ Determine whether there are any assistive devices that could pose a health and safety hazard if used in the workplace. Identify reasonable measures that could be put into place to address this hazard.

Guide Dogs and Service Animals

- ☐ Determine whether service animals are prohibited by law in the workplace or specific areas of the workplace.
- ☐ Where service animals are prohibited, develop measures that can be taken to ensure the customer has access to goods, services, and facilities.

Support Persons

- ☐ If admission fees are charged, determine whether you will charge support persons and how much they will be charged.
- ☐ If support persons are charged admissions, post the fee publicly to ensure they are provided with notice.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

- ☐ Identify accessibility features or services that people with disabilities rely on in the organization.
- ☐ Determine how you will inform the public if any accessibility features or services are temporarily unavailable.
- ☐ Determine alternative measures you can implement to assist customers with disabilities during a temporary disruption.

Feedback Process

- ☐ Establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback related to the provision of goods, services, or facilities to individuals with disabilities and the accessibility of the feedback process itself.
- ☐ Determine what actions will be taken if a complaint is received.
- ☐ Make information about the feedback process available to the public.

Format of Documents

- ☐ Inform the public that information and documents are available in accessible formats or with communication supports upon request.
- ☐ Be prepared to provide upon request all information or documents in an accessible format or with communication supports in a manner that meets the needs of the individual.

Training

Train employees, volunteers, those involved in the development of company policies, and other persons who provide goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the company on the following:

- ☐ The purpose of the AODA and the requirements of the customer service standards.
- ☐ The *Human Rights Code* and how it pertains to persons with disabilities.
- ☐ How to interact and communicate with customers with various types of disabilities.

- ☐ How to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices, require the assistance of a service animal, or require the use of a support person.
- ☐ How to use company provided equipment or devices that are available at the organization to help customers with disabilities.
- ☐ What to do if a customer with a disability is having difficulty accessing the company's goods, services, or facilities.

References

- [*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 and Regulations*](#)

