

# Accessibility Plan

2020-2025

## ***Preface***

This is Wesway's fifth Accessibility Plan, and is in effect from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2025.

This document is intended as a guide and should not be construed as constituting legal advice.

It does not replace the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) or any policies of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario as final authority.

## Preamble

The Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) received Royal Assent in June 2005. The purpose of the legislation is to develop, implement and enforce standards in order to achieve accessibility for all Ontarians. Until the new standards under the AODA come into effect, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA) remains in place. Wesway was required to be compliant with the Customer Service Standard of the Act by January 2012, and by components of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) by January 2014. As part of the AODA legislation that went into effect January 1, 2012, all organizations with more than 20 employees must have an Accessibility Plan. By 2014, large organizations are required to have a multi-year Accessibility Plan.

This is Wesway's fifth Accessibility Plan. Although an actual plan has only been required since 2012, Wesway has made accessibility a priority for many years. Considering previous legislative obligations as well as the type of service that Wesway provides, Wesway has been able to pride itself on being ahead of the curve in terms of barrier reduction. While Wesway now meets the requirements of the current AODA legislation in effect, the organization aims to be compliant with the remaining elements of the AODA legislation ahead of the deadlines set out by the province, as well as any other legislation that may come forward regarding accessibility.

This plan for 2020-2025 has been prepared by the Health and Safety Officer at Wesway. To summarize, the report describes:

1. The measures that Wesway has employed in the past five years and prior to the AODA legislation.
2. The measures that Wesway will take during the 2020-2025 calendar years to further identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities who work in or use any of the Wesway facilities (Main Offices, Court Street Respite Home, Junot Avenue Respite Home and Jean Street Respite Homes).

To develop, implement and enforce the mandatory standards, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)* calls on the:

- business community
- public sector
- not-for-profit sector
- people with disabilities or their representatives to develop, implement and enforce mandatory accessibility standards

These standards are the rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario will have to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

The AODA is made up of five standards, as well as some general requirements, and they include the:

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

The AODA standards are part of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The IASR includes, in addition to requirements specific to each standard, the following general requirements:

1. provide training to staff and volunteers
2. develop an accessibility policy
3. create a multi-year accessibility plan and update it every five years
4. consider accessibility in procurement and when designing or purchasing self-service kiosks

Wesway's Accessibility Plan will be updated every five years; however, a public notification will be posted on our website and social media every year to give details on how the organization is meeting or exceeding its accessibility requirements.



## **Aim**

The aim of this plan is to:

1. Briefly highlight the measures that Wesway has undertaken in the past, up to December 31, 2019.
2. Identify additional measures that we will take between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2025.
3. Clearly define how we will continue to develop our service to meet the needs of persons with various forms of disabilities.

## **Objectives**

This report intends to:

1. Describe the process by which Wesway has identified, removed and prevented barriers to people with disabilities, based on the present AODA legislation and expected future legislation.
2. Demonstrate Wesway's compliance with the AODA standards as part of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).
3. List the policies, programs, practices, and services that Wesway will review in 2020-2025 to identify barriers to people with disabilities.
4. Describe the measures Wesway will take in 2020-2025 to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities; and
5. Describe how Wesway will make this accessibility plan available to the public.

## **Our Mission**

Wesway enhances the well-being of caregivers by:

- offering personalized respite services,
- providing dedicated support, and
- advocating for a more responsive and inclusive community of care.

## Statement of Commitment

Wesway is fully committed to providing excellent service to families and to the general public. Wesway will deliver our services and public communication in a way that is sensitive to the varying needs of people with disabilities.

Wesway is dedicated to serving individuals with disabilities and will provide these individuals with a level of service that meets or exceeds their individual needs.

Wesway will strive to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following core principles as outlined in the AODA:

- **Dignity** – Services are provided in a manner that is respectful to people with a disability.
- **Independence** – Accommodating people with a disability means respecting their right to do for themselves and to choose the way they wish to receive services.
- **Integration** – Wherever possible, services will be provided in a manner that enables people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as others. This may require alternative formats and flexible approaches. It means inclusiveness and full participation. This is a fundamental human right.
- **Equal Opportunity** – Service is provided to persons with disabilities in a way that their opportunity to access goods and services is equal to that given to others.



## **Purpose of the Accessibility Plan**

The Wesway Accessibility Plan will:

1. Ensure Wesway's compliance to the AODA
2. Track and report progress
3. Show the implementation of other initiatives that help make Wesway and its services more accessible to all people

## **Health and Safety Officer**

The Wesway Health and Safety Officer will:

1. Bring accessibility issues forwarded as required
2. Review legislation, and seek out templates or other data to assist in developing a multi-year Accessibility Plan
3. Prepare a report on measures taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities
4. Seek support and consult with others as necessary
5. Assist when required, in developing mechanisms for addressing any recommendations that come forward through legislation or other source
6. Make the Accessibility Plan available to the public after it is approved by Senior Management

## **Wesway commitment to accessibility planning**

Wesway is committed to:

1. The continual improvement of accessibility.
2. The participation, where possible, of people with disabilities in developing and reviewing of our annual accessibility plans.
3. Working to ensure policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of accessibility.

## Disability: Definition

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act adopts the broad definition for disability that is set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. "Disability" is:

- 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 a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- c) A learning disability, or dysfunction in one 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*.

## What is a barrier?

A "barrier" is anything that could prevent or hinder a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.



## Evidence of Commitment to Addressing Potential Barriers

1. Training provided to all staff on the AODA Customer Service Standards and our related policies and procedures, including:
  - a. How to provide customer service to persons with varying disabilities
  - b. How to use on-site assistive devices such as lifts, as well as how to respond when people with a disability ask to use their own assistive devices
  - c. Allowing Service Animals onto Wesway premises
  - d. Welcoming Support Persons who accompany a person with a disability
  - e. Creation of a customer feedback system
  - f. Use of onsite and electronic notification of building closures or when other accessible services are unavailable



2. Compliance with applicable sections of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, including:
  - a. Development of a multi-year Accessibility Plan
  - b. Creation of a Statement of Commitment to help ensure Wesway continues to strive toward becoming more accessible
    - i. Ensuring this Statement of Commitment is available to the public
  - c. Development of a new Accessibility Policy to ensure the organization continues to ingrain the concepts of improved accessibility into Wesway's operations
    - i. Ensuring that the new policy is available to the public
  - d. Consultation with people with disabilities to ensure Wesway is taking proactive steps to barrier reduction, and improvement of its multi-year Accessibility Plan
  - e. Upgrade of a new website that has improved accessibility features that comply with *World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0 Level A*, the leading standard on web accessibility
  - f. Notify employees and the public about the availability of any accommodation for applicants with disabilities in the recruitment process
  - g. Notify successful job/volunteer applicants of any accommodation available to them
  - h. Inform its employees of its policies used to support its employees with disabilities
  - i. Develop and have in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities
  - j. Develop and have in place a return-to-work process for its employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work. Wesway will document this process
3. Physical and other barrier reduction initiatives, including:
  - a. A new ground level accessible entrance and reception area at the Wesway office
  - b. A large secondary ramp to exit the building from the upper level
  - c. A powered lift has been installed to allow access between the upper level of the office and the newer reception area
  - d. Accessible entrances at Wesway's Respite Homes, as well as lifts and elevators present at the Respite Homes, where stairs would be an obstacle

- e. Accessible washroom facilities at all three Wesway locations, including wide automatic doors, large turnaround spaces and stalls, grab bars etc.
- f. Use of consistent format for notification of any and all displayed service disruptions
- g. Providing alternative accessible services such as large format print, upon request
- h. New font standard for readability by persons with vision impairments
- i. Improved marking of Accessible Parking space in main parking lot
- j. Appropriate height signage now on all four washroom doors

## **Accessibility Goals Wesway Achieved By December 31, 2014**

### Physical:

- 1. Improvement of building signage by the gradual replacement of old signage to newer signs that are easier to read and understand and are placed at a level that is readable by people who use mobility devices such as wheelchairs
- 2. Signage fonts inside and outside of the main office are potentially too small to read by those with vision disabilities. There was a need for a larger sign on Wesway office building

### Information:

- 1. Continuing to make further improvements to accessibility features on the Wesway website
- 2. Provide a public update on our accessibility goals and requirements
- 3. Look for methods of improving our delivery of documents and web pages to ensure they are clear and understandable to persons with disabilities
- 4. Create an online version of Feedback Form

### Policies & Procedures:

Inclusion of Human Rights Code education as it applies to the AODA Integrated Standard in our staff training.

## **Accessibility Goals Wesway Achieved By December 31, 2015**

### Physical:

1. Reviewed communications material to look for ways to improve accessibility

### Information:

1. Provided a public update on our accessibility goals and requirements
2. Created alternate delivery method for Feedback Process (ie: online/large print
3. Ensured Wesway website conforms to WCAG 2.0 Level AA

### Policies & Procedures:

1. Review of Accessibility Policies
2. Ensure that training is provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in this Regulation and on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities
  - a. Records of training will be kept on file by Wesway.

## **Accessibility Goals Wesway Achieved By December 31, 2016**

### Physical:

1. Continue to look for ways to remove physical barriers in the Wesway office and our Respite Homes.

### Information:

1. Provided a public update on our accessibility goals and requirements
2. Made available, alternative delivery methods for documents that might be made available to families, employees (or prospective employees), volunteers, or members of the public

### Policies & Procedures:

1. Review of Accessibility Policies

## **Accessibility Goals Wesway achieved by January 1, 2017**

AODA Requirements: Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment)

Initiative: Meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making modifications to public spaces

### Description:

Public Spaces applicable to our organization include:

- a) Outdoor paths of travel such as sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps, off-street parking, parking lots
- b) Outdoor play spaces
- c) Service-related elements such as reception and waiting areas

### Action:

Wesway will address barriers in public spaces and buildings. The standards for public spaces will only apply to new construction and planned redevelopment and for Wesway should new construction or redevelopment occur.

## **Barrier identification methodologies**

As part of developing our Accessibility Plan, we will routinely ask staff and where applicable, the families we serve, and persons with disabilities in any role that would be qualified to identify potential barriers, for feedback on how we are doing in terms of addressing accessibility in our workplace. Improvements will continue to be made based on the input we receive, or as new legislation or standards become available.

## **Providing accommodations during the recruitment and process**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Wesway provides accommodation throughout the recruitment process. Redesign of the interview process to ensure identification of and availability of any assistive means is available to applicants when identified and requested.


## **Review and monitoring process**

The Health and Safety Officer will continue to provide annual updates, review suggestions and recommend both short and long-term objectives to ensure AODA compliance, as well as identify other barrier reduction strategies. They will continue to monitor any barriers or challenges that may be identified and addressed at any of the Wesway locations. The Health and Safety Officer will also commit to making reports or presentations within the office, or the public where necessary.

## **Communication of the plan**

This Accessibility Plan will be available in print format at our office and at the Respite Homes. A digital version will be available on our website. If requested, the Plan can be made available in large print or can be read by a member of the Wesway staff.

# **ACCESSIBILITY POLICIES**

<b>Accessibility</b>	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> September 30, 2013
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.1	<b>Signature:</b> 

## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

**Wesway ensures accessibility for people with a disability by meeting or exceeding its requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).**


## **PROCEDURES:**

The Health and Safety Officer brings forward all applicable requirements of the Act to the senior team. The AODA is made up of five standards, as well as some general requirements, and they include the:

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

The AODA standards are part of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). The IASR includes, in addition to requirements specific to each standard, the following general requirements:

1. Provide training to staff and volunteers
2. Develop an accessibility policy
3. Create a multi-year accessibility plan and update it every five years
4. Consider accessibility in procurement and when designing or purchasing self-service kiosks


<b>Accessibility Training</b>	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> June 29, 2011
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.2	<b>Signature:</b> 

## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

**Wesway provides Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) customer service training for employees, volunteers and others who may deal with the families we serve and with the general public.**

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. All employees and applicable volunteers receive sensitivity training which includes components on the following accessibility-related areas:
  - The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
  - Communication
  - Assistive devices
  - Service animals
  - Support persons
  - Feedback process
2. Employees and volunteers are required to review all relevant policies and procedures on a regular basis.

<b>Assistive Devices</b>	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> June 29, 2011
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.3	<b>Signature:</b> 


## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

**Persons with disabilities are welcome to obtain, use or benefit from Wesway's services through the use of their own assistive devices, or any that exist at any Wesway location.**

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Employees and volunteers who provide direct respite services receive training on the specific assistive devices that may be used to support the individuals with whom they are matched.
2. Employees who work at the Respite Homes receive training on the use of assistive devices owned by Wesway and located at the Respite Homes, such as lift and transfer devices etc.
3. Office employees receive training on Wesway's assistive devices located at the office.
4. Individuals with disabilities are welcome to use their own assistive devices as required.



<b>Accessible Information and Communication</b>	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> June 29, 2011
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.4	<b>Signature:</b> 

### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

**Wesway is committed to communicate with persons with disabilities in a respectful manner that takes into account their specific communication needs, strengths and preferences.**

**Wesway will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, upon request. Accessible formats and communication supports will be arranged or provided in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs due to a disability and at a cost that is no more than the regular charge to other persons.**

### **DEFINITIONS:**

Accessible Formats – include but are not limited to large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

Accommodation – the special arrangements made or assistance provided so that persons with disabilities can participate in the experiences available to persons without disabilities. Accommodation will vary depending on the person's unique needs.

Communication Supports – include but are not limited to captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

Information – includes data, facts and knowledge that exists in any format including text, audio, digital or images and conveys meaning.

WCAG Guidelines – how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. Web content generally refers to the information on a web page or a web application, including but not limited to text, images and forms.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Employees and volunteers receive sensitivity training on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities effectively and respectfully. Employees and volunteers recognize that different types of disabilities will require different forms of communication.
2. Employees and volunteers are trained to communicate with individuals over the telephone in clear and plain language, to speak clearly and slowly and to use other communication services, as necessary.
3. Employees and volunteers who provide direct respite services receive training on the specific communication needs, strengths and preferences of individuals with whom they are matched.
4. Employees and volunteers strive to meet the particular needs of individuals by offering to communicate in a variety of ways, such as:
  - telephone
  - in person
  - email
  - hard copy
  - large print
  - personal assistive devices
  - through a support person(s)
5. Wesway strives to ensure that written communications are clear and easy to understand, using a distinct and easily distinguishable font style.
  - Office employees use Verdana font when creating documents.
  - Font sizes in general communications are kept at a minimum of 11 point.
  - When asked by an individual for a large print format document, this font size is increased to a minimum of 14 points, and if possible 16 points.
6. Wesway will consult with the person making a request about information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace in determining the suitability of an alternative accessible format or communication support for them.
7. Wesway will take into account the person's accessibility needs in a timely manner due to a disability and at a cost no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.
8. Wesway will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports through their website.

9. Wesway will ensure it has an accessible website and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)2.0., initially at Level A and increasing to Level AA, and will ensure it is in accordance with the schedule set out as per AODA regulations.
10. Wesway informs their employees of its policies used to support its employees with disabilities, including but not limited to, policies on the provision of job accommodations that takes into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.
11. Employees are provided this information as soon as practicable after they begin their employment.
12. Wesway will provide employees updated information whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.

Support Persons	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> June 29, 2011
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.5	<b>Signature:</b> 

## POLICY STATEMENT:

**People with disabilities who may or may not be accompanied by a support person are welcome on Wesway's premises.**

## PROCEDURES:

Any person with a disability will always have access to their support person while on Wesway premises.

Service Animals	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> June 29, 2011
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.6	<b>Signature:</b> 

### POLICY STATEMENT:

**Wesway is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.**

### PROCEDURES:

1. Employees, volunteers and others dealing with the public are trained in interacting with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.
2. Employees and volunteers do not touch or interact with a service animal without permission from the animal's owner.
3. Employees and volunteers who provide direct respite services receive specifically tailored training if they are matched with an individual who uses the support of a service animal.


<b>Service Disruptions</b>	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> June 29, 2011
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.7	<b>Signature:</b> 

### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

**In the event that a temporary disruption occurs that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to Wesway services, Wesway makes the disruption known to individuals and families, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and alternate service locations if applicable.**

### **PROCEDURES:**

1. Individuals/families using or planning to use the service at the time of the disruption are contacted by telephone, email, in person or by the most timely and effective means of communication possible.
2. A notice of the service disruption is posted at the Wesway office and the Respite Home locations, as necessary.
3. Messages are posted on the Wesway website at [www.wesway.com](http://www.wesway.com), as necessary.
4. Notices of service disruption are communicated through the Wesway communication system, as necessary.
5. Notices may also be communicated by out-of-office email responders, as necessary.

<b>Accessibility Feedback Process</b>	
<b>Section:</b> Corporate	<b>Approval Date:</b> June 29, 2011
<b>Sub-Section:</b> Accessibility	<b>Reviewed/Revised:</b> February 13, 2025
<b>Policy No.</b> C 4.8	<b>Signature:</b> 

## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

**Wesway is committed to accessibility for individuals with disabilities and feedback is welcomed. We offer multiple means of providing feedback on our accessibility.**

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Feedback may be provided in person at the Wesway office, by telephone, in writing or electronically.
2. All feedback is reviewed in a timely manner by an appropriate Wesway employee.
3. Feedback is tracked and analyzed to facilitate continuous improvement in the way we provide service to individuals with disabilities.
4. If the feedback constitutes a complaint about Wesway's accessibility, attempts are made to resolve it immediately.
  - If this cannot be achieved, the complaint is forwarded to the Executive Director or designate.
  - The Executive Director or designate responds within ten business days using the same means of communication that was used to provide the feedback.
  - All reasonable efforts are made to resolve the complaint.