

SECTION	12. Accessibility
POLICY	12.1 Accessibility
LEGISLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) • Human Rights Code
COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n/a
OTHER POLICIES OR RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources Policies and Procedures • P. 2 Guidelines to Service Provision • Service User Complaints
TEMPLATES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service User Accessibility Feedback • DASO Accessibility Assessment
DRAFTED (NEW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2015
REVIEWED/REVISED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2015
TO BE REVIEWED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually

Purpose

This policy outlines the responsibilities of Staff and Volunteers who provide programs and services to Service Users with disabilities.

Definitions

- **Accessible Formats:** are those that pose no barriers to persons with disabilities. They must be made available to Service Users, within a reasonable timeframe, upon request. Accessible format refers to all methods of communication including print and electronic versions.
- **Alternate Formats:** are those that transmit information in a manner that is different from regular print format. Some alternate fonts can be used by everyone; others are designed to address the needs of a specific user. Print materials may need to be large print, recorded video, Daisy, electronic, Braille, etc. Video may need to be captioned, have descriptions and ASL Windows.
- **Assistive Devices and Technology:** are those that have been developed with features specifically helpful for people with disabilities. Staff and Volunteers may be asked to supply file formats that are compatible with particular types of assistive technology.
- **Barriers:** When you think about accessibility, it is important to be aware of both visible and invisible barriers. A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability.

Policy

Domestic Abuse Services Oxford strives at all times to be inclusive and to provide programs and services in a manner that respects the diversity, dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

DASO is committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access programs and services and allowing them to benefit from the same programs and services - in the same place and in similar ways - as other women and children served.

The goal is equitable service.

DASO will adhere to the AODA as applicable for the size of our agency (# of Employees); currently DASO has fewer than 20 Employees – we are in the Ontario Government category of 1-19 Employees.

This commitment is demonstrated in the areas of:

- **Communication**
 - We train Staff who communicate with women and children served on how to interact and communicate with people with various disabilities.
- **Telephone Services**
 - We train Staff to communicate with women served over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly. Staff who are required to communicate with Services Users by telephone will be trained in TTY systems or other comparable systems. We offer to communicate with women served by e-mail or relay or TTY or other methods if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.
- **Assistive Devices**
 - We are committed to serving women and children with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our programs and services.
- **Service animals**
 - We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. We will ensure that all Staff and Volunteers are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. In the event that a DASO staff or another resident is severely allergic to the particular service animal, alternative arrangements may be required.
 - Any service animal that poses a safety threat to others (e.g. aggressive or illegal in terms of Woodstock bylaws) may be excluded.

DASO may request a note from a professional (such as a doctor or nurse or health practitioner, etc.) verifying the need for the service animal.

Every effort will be made to ensure that any offsite event venues are compliant with DASO's commitment regarding service animals.

- **Support persons**

- We are committed to welcoming Service Users with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. We will ensure that all Staff and Volunteers are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person.

With the Service User's consent, a support person can be present during the provision of services, including the sharing of confidential information.

DASO may request a note from a professional (such as a doctor or nurse or health practitioner, etc.) verifying the need for the support person.

Please note: Due to Ontario Fire Regulations and the fact that we are not funded or licensed or able to provide "care or group home" services, any residential shelter user must be able to provide her own basic personal care. Essential criteria to this basic care includes: the ability to get in and out of bed independently and the ability to independently move around the shelter living spaces. If a woman requires safe shelter and also requires a higher level of care, Staff will:

1. Work with community agencies and supports to assist in researching appropriate, safe accommodation/shelter; every effort will be made to ensure that any offsite event venues are compliant with DASO's commitment regarding support persons.
2. The Service User will provide care workers to assist her to live in the shelter.

- **Records**

- DASO is committed to providing accessible records to all women served and will make every effort to provide alternate formats in a timely manner, generally within 10 business days, upon request.

- **Notice of temporary disruption**

- DASO provides women and children served with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or programs and services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or programs or services, if available.

Procedure

1. **DASO's Health and Safety Committee** will conduct a semi-annual (September and March) organization self-assessment of DASO's accessibility. This assessment will include the identification of any barriers (including feedback from Service Users, Staff and other Stakeholders) with recommendation(s) to minimize or remove any such barriers. If barriers are identified, the Committee will ensure that recommendations are followed and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken. This assessment will also identify trends and other key information for the purpose of future planning around accessibility and DASO's services.

2. Removing Barriers

- DASO is committed to preventing, identifying, removing or minimizing barriers to access with regard to, but not limited to: service, buildings, environment, transportation, information and communication.

3. Training for Staff

- DASO will ensure that Staff and Volunteers to whom this policy applies receive training as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. Training for new Staff will be provided as part of the orientation process; Staff will receive training in accordance with policy or legislative changes.
- A training component will be an agenda item at most all-staff meetings.
- Training is developed and delivered in various formats.
- Training includes the following:
 - The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the service standard.
 - How to interact and communicate with and accommodate people with various disabilities.
 - How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
 - How to learn about the use of various assistive devices.
 - What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing DASO's programs and services.
 - DASO's policies, practices and procedures relating to the service standard.
- Staff will be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

4. Feedback Process/Questions

- The ultimate goal of DASO is to meet and exceed the expectations of Service Users with disabilities. Comments on our services and about how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated. DASO will make available "Service User Accessibility Feedback Forms". All completed feedback forms or questions concerning accessibility are to be directed to the Health & Safety Committee. Service Users can expect any required response(s) within 10 business days

5. Modifications to this Policy

- DASO is committed to conducting a regular self-assessment on accessibility.
- We are committed to developing service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of women and children with disabilities.
- All DASO policies and procedures will be developed or updated keeping this commitment in mind.