



## **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**

### **Accessible Customer Service Policy**

#### **Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities**

Revised and restated April 2021

Within the Archdiocese of Toronto, you will find a family of faith that is alive and at work in our community. Comprised of nearly 1.9 million Catholics, 225 parishes, along with diverse agencies and offices to serve the entire community, we celebrate Mass each week in more than 30 languages, making us among the most diverse faith communities in the world.

Our diversity extends to welcoming those with disabilities as important members of our family of faith. They make precious contributions to our Archdiocese and we are called to embrace their gifts and talents as we grow together in God's love.

Our welcome mirrors that of Jesus Christ, teacher and friend, who reminds us of our ongoing invitation to "Love one another as I have loved you". In our parishes, offices and ministries, we embrace this invitation and walk together as companions on the journey.

#### **Our Commitment**

The Archdiocese of Toronto and its associated parishes are committed to providing a welcoming, accessible and inclusive environment for all of its parishioners, visitors, volunteers and employees. We work to ensure that the standards of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA,) 2005 are conscientiously observed and all of our parishes provide a welcoming and equal opportunity for worship.

The Archdiocese of Toronto is committed to complying with both the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Our family of faith works to assure that all persons within our community are aware of their responsibilities to foster an accessible and inclusive environment for persons with disabilities. Our belief, that encouraging an atmosphere that respects the worth, dignity and independence of all people as children of God, creates an accessible, inclusive and welcoming environment for worship. To ensure greater awareness and responsiveness to the needs of a person with disabilities, the

Archdiocese will provide training for clergy, staff and volunteers who provide pastoral care or service to parishioners or members of the parish.

Our accessible customer service policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

### **Definition of a Disability**

- 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.
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- A mental disorder.
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

### **Multi-year Accessibility Plan**

The Archdiocese established a Multi-year Accessibility Plan which outlines the specific steps we are taking to prevent and remove barriers and comply with current and future requirements of the AODA. The plan will be provided in an accessible format upon request and the Archdiocese will review the plan on a yearly basis to highlight our progress. The plan is available on the Archdiocese of Toronto website at: <https://www.archtoronto.org/en/our-community/accessibility/>.

### **Communication**

The Archdiocese will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will work with the person with a disability to determine what method of communication works for them.

We will also meet internationally-recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario's accessibility laws.

### **Training**

The Archdiocese will provide accessible customer service training to all employees, volunteers, contractors and other third parties; persons involved in the creation of policies; and all others who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Archdiocese. This includes management and senior leaders of our organization, even though they may not be directly involved in providing

goods or services to people with disabilities. It is important that the policy makers understand areas that must be covered in the training.

Each person will receive training as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties and will be trained on an ongoing basis, in connection with changes to the policies, practices and procedures governing the provisions of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Training will include the following:

- The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.
- The Archdiocese' policies, practices and procedures specifically relating to the Customer Service Standard.
- 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 who may be accompanied by a support person or require the assistance of a service animal.
- How to use equipment or devices (this includes Bell Relay/TTY services for telephone communications) available on the parish/location's premises or otherwise provided by the parish/location that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the goods and services from the Archdiocese or within a parish and how to provide feedback on such an issue.
- All aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

### **Assistive Devices**

People with disabilities have the right to use their own assistive devices to participate in the sacraments and diverse ministries within the parish, contributing to full and active involvement in our faith community. The Archdiocese will make every effort to ensure that all people dealing with our parishioners and guests including clergy, lay leaders, volunteers and staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by persons who have disabilities.

Examples of assistive devices include:

- For mobility disabilities – wheelchair, walker, cane, scooter, personal oxygen tank
- For the deaf or hard of hearing – FM transmitter system or amplification devices, hearing aid, teletypewriter (TTY), Bell IP Relay, voice carry-over
- For vision loss – digital audio player, magnifier, GPS, white cane, guide dog or other service animals
- For intellectual/developmental disabilities – communication boards, speech generating devices
- For learning disabilities – electronic notebook/laptop computer, personal data managers, mini pocket readers

## **Telephone Services**

The Archdiocese and its parishes will make every reasonable effort to provide accessible telephone service to our parishioners and other community members engaged in the activities of the church. We will train clergy, lay leaders, staff and volunteers to communicate over the telephone in clear and plain language and become familiar with telephone technologies used by people with disabilities. We will offer to communicate with people by alternate means such as hard copy mail, email or in person if use of the telephone is not a suitable communication vehicle.

## **Support Persons**

Our parishes are committed to welcoming people with disabilities accompanied by a support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented to having access to that support person. Fees will be waived for support persons for admission to an archdiocesan/parish event for which a fee is charged.

In certain cases, the Archdiocese and/or its parishes might require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for the health or safety reasons of:

- the person with a disability
- others on the premises

Before making a decision, the following will occur:

- Consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs.
- Consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence.
- Determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises.

## **Use of Service Animals**

Our parishes are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. We will train our clergy, lay leaders, staff and volunteers in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by service animals.

Service animals are animals specifically trained to assist people with disabilities in their activities of independent living. They are not considered pets but rather an auxiliary aid similar to the use of a cane, crutch, or wheelchair.

Examples of service animals include:

- A guide animal, trained by authorized vendors to service for mobility, individuals who are visually impaired and/or blind.
- A hearing animal, trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound occurs, such as a knock on the door or fire alarm.

- Special skills animals, trained to assist a person who has a mobility or health disability. Duties may include carrying, fetching, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, steadying a person while walking, helping a person up after a fall, emotional support, etc. Service animals sometimes are called assistance animals.
- A seizure response animal, trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. The animal's service depends on the person's needs. The animal may go for help or may stand guard over the person during a seizure. Some animals have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person.
- A companion animal or emotional support animal that assists persons with psychological disabilities. Emotional support animals can help alleviate symptoms such as depression, anxiety, stress and difficulties regarding social interactions, allowing individuals to live independently and fully use and enjoy their living environment.

A person accompanied by a service animal is not required to disclose the nature of their disability. When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, a letter can be requested from the following health professionals: speech-language pathologists, chiropractors, nurses, occupational therapists, optometrists, physicians and surgeons, physiotherapists, psychologists, registered psychotherapists and registered mental health therapists.

### **Notification of Service Disruption**

The Archdiocese and its parishes will provide a public notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or 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 services, if available.

The notice will be placed in a suitable location.

### **Feedback**

The Archdiocese and our parishes welcome feedback about our accessibility policy and services. Comments can be made in person, over the telephone, in writing and by email to [accessibility@archtoronto.org](mailto:accessibility@archtoronto.org) or directly to a parish office. Parishioners or visitors may expect to hear back within **15** business days upon receipt of their feedback. Our feedback processes can be provided in accessible formats and/or communication support can be provided, upon request.

### **Modifications to this Policy**

The Archdiocese and our parishes are committed to developing accessibility service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The Archdiocese will make reasonable efforts to modify or amend any policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

### **Questions about this Policy**

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to those members of our community with disabilities. Documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service are available upon request.

When a request is received, we will consult with the person to determine their accessibility needs. Accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost.

For further questions about this policy, please contact the **Human Resources Department** at:

- Phone: 416-934-0606
- Email: [accessibility@archtoronto.org](mailto:accessibility@archtoronto.org)

**“Man’s earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by love, contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family”**  
**[*Caritas in Veritate*, 71]**