

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Statement of Commitment

HVE Healthcare Assessments is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for all stakeholders including our clients, persons served, employees, job applicants, suppliers, and any visitors who may enter our premises, access our information, or use our services. As an organization, we respect and uphold the requirements set forth under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, and its associated standards and regulations.

HVE Healthcare Assessments understands that we have a responsibility for ensuring a safe, dignified, and welcoming environment for everyone. We are committed to ensuring our organization's compliance by incorporating accessibility legislation into our policies, procedures, equipment requirements, training, and best practices. We will review these policies and practices annually, as organizational changes occur, or in anticipation of compliance deadlines. In addition, we will strive to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner.

Guiding Principles

As a responsible and caring provider of independent medical assessments, HVE Healthcare Assessments (HVE) continuously strives to meet or exceed or client expectations including the provision of services to clients who may have permanent or temporary disabilities. According to the Government of Ontario, a disability is defined as:

- (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 on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,*
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,*
- (c) a learning disability, or a 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;*

In order to ensure compliancy with this regulation, HVE has utilized the above-mentioned principles, along with our mission statement to define our policies, practices and procedures in regards to serving clients with visible and non-visible impairments.

General Requirements

General requirements that apply across all of the five (5) standards (information and communication, employment, transportation, design of public spaces, and customer service) are outlined as follows.

Establishment of Accessibility Policies and Plans

HVE Healthcare Assessments will develop, implement and maintain policies governing how it will achieve accessibility through these requirements.

HVE Healthcare Assessments will include a statement of its commitment to meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner in its policies. These documents will be made publicly available in an accessible format, upon request.

HVE Healthcare Assessments will establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan outlining its strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the IASR. Accessibility plans will be made available in an accessible format, upon request.

HVE Healthcare Assessments will review and update its accessibility plan once every five (5) years and will establish, review and update our accessibility plans in consultation with persons with disabilities or an advisory committee. Annual status reports will be prepared that will report on the progress of the steps taken to implement HVE Healthcare Assessments' accessibility plan. If requested, the report shall be created in an accessible format.

Procuring or Acquiring Goods and Services, or Facilities

HVE Healthcare Assessments will incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities. The only exception is in cases where it is impracticable to do so.

Training Requirements

HVE Healthcare Assessments will provide training for its employees and volunteers regarding the IASR and the Ontario Human Rights Code as they pertain to individuals with disabilities. Training will also be provided to individuals who are responsible for developing HVE Healthcare Assessments' policies, and all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of HVE Healthcare Assessments.

Training will be provided as soon as is reasonably practicable. Training will be provided on an ongoing basis to new employees and as changes to HVE Healthcare Assessments' accessibility policies occur.

HVE's AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) Policy is to be followed by all resources whether they are management, administrative or contracted consultative professionals. In regards to locations, the policy is to be followed by any resource or resources providing services anywhere on behalf of HVE.

Records

HVE Healthcare Assessments will maintain records on the training provided, when it was provided and the employees that were trained.

Accommodations Policy

Due to the nature of our business, most client accommodation requirements will be known prior to their arrival on HVE premises. Information regarding the customer's needs is to be shared on a 'need to know' basis only utilizing our Privacy Policy as a guideline. Where required, the consultative professional is permitted to privately advise reception staff of any specific requirements that may or may not be evident in order to properly greet, serve or assist the client upon arrival. Please note that the information/details imparted to any staff member are to remain private. Understanding a client's needs will allow us to set the proper tone from the moment they arrive for their assessment until their departure preserving their dignity and independence. HVE staff should always be mindful that the client is a person; their disability does not define who they are.

HVE assessment locations have been selected based on specific criteria to ensure convenience and accessibility. This includes but is not limited to:

- Office locations which are on major or primary streets/roads
- Availability of free surface parking including designated handicapped spaces.
- Ramp access and dependent on the incline of the ramp, appropriate railing supports.
- Automated doors with switches within wheelchair reach
- Visible signage clearing denoting the address
- Accessible washrooms with appropriate amenities (i.e., stalls, handrails, sinks and related amenities).
- Proximity to major transit routes (in urban locations)
- Where the assessment office is not located on the ground floor, elevator access via the main lobby.

- Reception/lobby areas and assessment rooms, free from obstructions to assist visually and physically impaired clients. Flooring surfaces that are in good repair, even without slant/slope and no carpet snags/unravelling, missing tiles etc. Minimal or flat transition channels between flooring tiles and/or carpeting.
- Doorways which are wide enough to accommodate a walker or wheelchair. Door handles which can be easily reached from a client who relies on a wheelchair.
- HVE's mandate will be posted on signage at regional assessment centres. All satellite locations will be advised that signage must be posted and adherence to the legislation is a requirement as part of our affiliation with each location. Additionally, compliance with the policy will be added to HVE's website (www.hvehealth.com).
- In the event that accommodation cannot be provided globally or at any HVE location or satellite site, the abovementioned website will be updated stating such and where possible/appropriate a date when services will be reinstated along with signage denoting the same at the affected location(s).

Assisted Devices Policy

Any person attending an HVE location or calling our office should be accommodated courteously and without fail in a manner which allows them to communicate, be mobile or assists them in any method to maintain their quality of life. Assistance devices are permitted as the client's comfort and requirement for accommodation takes precedence.

- **Service Animals:** This is normally a dog but can be any animal which provides assistance to an individual (i.e., Seeing Eye, mobility assistance, Hearing Ear). As well, an animal may be a 'predictor companion' where a client may suffer from seizures or episodes and the animal provides 'notification' that an incident is approaching.
- **Remedial, Mechanical or Electronic Devices:** These items are but are not limited to: canes, walkers, wheelchairs, scooters, text to speech translators and vice versa, magnifiers, and hearing aids.
- **Companions:** Clients may also have companions in attendance that may act as their interpreter (i.e., ASL – American Sign Language), facilitate mobility or generally attend their needs. Please be aware that communication should be directed to the client and not the companion unless specifically requested to do so.

Communications Policy

- During the intake/referral process, accommodation requirements will most likely be received by the referring party or organization. Every effort will be made to communicate with the individual in the manner which they prefer which may include:

- E-mail, text or TTY (telephone for the hearing impaired)
- Via a third party/relative designated by the client.
- Where the customer indicates/requests or it is noted in the referral, a qualified ASL (American Sign Language) will be engaged using our standard practice to attend the assessment and follow-up appointment.
- For visually impaired clients who utilize a text to speech device or a magnifier, notes/reports should be provided to them utilizing a legible font (versus handwriting). Standard fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial or Verdana are suggested choices if the client has no specific preference.
- Hearing impaired clients who utilize lip-reading can be easily accommodated by ensuring that you speak to them ‘full face’ towards them, annunciate clearly (while avoiding raising your voice). Be sure to only begin speaking to the client when you are confident, they are ‘listening’. If communication is challenging or perhaps the statement needs clarification, proposing to write the statement out may assist. Clients with partial hearing may be accommodated by ensuring that you speak to their ‘good ear’.
- Visually impaired clients who do not utilize text to speech technology (via Microsoft Word or handheld) should be offered their portion of the assessment report in Braille.
- As mentioned in the accommodations section of this document, where an interpreter or companion is present, please address your questions/comments/conversation to the client and not the party providing assistance.

Fees

There are no fees associated with providing requirements for accommodation in regards to alternate media.

Customer Feedback

As part of HVE’s Performance Management System and the continuous improvement lifecycle, the customer feedback survey includes questions regarding AODA. Feedback received will be utilized to improve our service offerings and accommodations to better service our customers.

Summary

This policy does not address every possible scenario that may arise however it should provide guidance on how best to serve our clients with special requirements.