

Accessibility Policy

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Statement of Commitment

Toronto Wildlife Centre is dedicated to ensuring equal access and participation for all individuals, including those with disabilities. We firmly believe that inclusivity is essential to our mission and values. Our commitment is rooted in treating people with disabilities in a manner that upholds their dignity, respects their independence, and provides them with the same opportunities as others.

We aim to create an environment where individuals of all abilities can fully engage in our programs, services, and activities. We are dedicated to fostering an organizational culture that promotes accessibility and values diversity. By working towards removing barriers and meeting the requirements set forth by Ontario's accessibility laws, we aim to continually improve our practices and create a more inclusive society.

Inclusivity and Equal Access

We strive to maintain an environment that not only acknowledges but also celebrates the unique abilities of each individual. Our pledge to inclusivity is central to our mission, guiding us to create a space that embraces individuals of all abilities.

Dignity and Independence

We place a strong emphasis on treating people with disabilities in a manner that upholds their dignity and promotes their independence. In doing so, we reaffirm our dedication to maintaining a culture that respects and values the distinct contributions and perspectives of each person. By fostering an environment that champions dignity and independence, we aim to create a workplace where everyone can thrive.

Reasonable Accommodation

We commit to providing reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities, ensuring they have an equal opportunity to participate in our programs, services, and employment opportunities.

Removal of Barriers

Our commitment extends to the identification, prevention, and removal of barriers that hinder accessibility within our organization when reasonable to do so. We are proactive in our approach, taking deliberate steps to ensure that our physical spaces, digital platforms, and communication channels are accessible to all. Through these actions, we actively work towards eliminating obstacles that might otherwise impede equal participation.

Compliance with AODA

Recognizing our responsibility, we acknowledge the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its associated standards. We are committed to upholding these regulations as a means of ensuring that our accessibility efforts align with legal requirements. By adhering to the AODA, we reaffirm our commitment to providing an accessible environment for all.

Accessible Workplace

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to making its recruitment and selection practices accessible to meet the needs of personnel and job applicants with disabilities, and is working hard to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility when reasonable to do so. TWC personnel includes employees, volunteers, and interns.

Recruitment and Selection

Toronto Wildlife Centre will notify personnel and the public that we will accommodate the needs of people with disabilities in the recruitment and selection process. We will do so by:

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- Posting the information on our website
 - Including it in job postings
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Toronto Wildlife Centre welcomes and encourages applications from people with disabilities. Accommodations are available on request for candidates taking part in all aspects of the selection process. During the recruitment process, Toronto Wildlife Centre will tell applicants when they are selected for an interview that accommodation can be provided. If an applicant or successful candidate requests an accommodation, Toronto Wildlife Centre will discuss their needs with them and make adjustments to support them.

Communicate accessibility policies

Toronto Wildlife Centre will communicate its accessibility policies with new and existing personnel, including any modifications to these policies by listing this information in a centralized location.

Workplace Information

Toronto Wildlife Centre will provide workplace information in an accessible format if requested. This includes:

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- Any information an individual needs to perform their job
 - General information that is available to all personnel at work
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Toronto Wildlife Centre will also provide accessible emergency information to an individual once aware they may need accommodation in an emergency. If Toronto Wildlife Centre becomes aware that an individual might need help in an emergency due to a permanent or temporary disability, we will:

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- Provide individualized emergency response information
 - Receive consent, then share this information with the people designated to help that individual in an emergency
 - Review the emergency response information when that individual changes work locations, discussing overall accommodation needs, and general emergency response policy changes.
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Talent and performance management

During performance management or career development processes, Toronto Wildlife Centre will consider the needs of personnel with disabilities when holding formal or informal performance reviews and/or promote or move them to a new job. Examples include:

- Making documents available in accessible formats
- Providing feedback and coaching in a way that is accessible to them
- Providing the accommodations they need to successfully learn new skills or take on more responsibilities

Accommodation plan and process

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to accommodating personnel with disabilities. We will use the following process to identify and meet an individual's accommodation needs.

1. Recognize the need for accommodation

Accommodation can be requested by the individual and/or identified by their manager or hiring manager.

2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs

The individual is an active participant in this step.

- Information will be collected on the individual's functional abilities, not the nature of their disability.
- The individual's personal information, including medical information, is kept secure and dealt with in a confidential manner. It will only be disclosed to those who need it to perform the accommodation process.
- The individual and their manager will work together to find the most appropriate accommodation.
- A medical or other expert may be engaged to help determine if/how the individual's needs can be accommodated.
- The individual may ask a bargaining agent or other workplace representative to participate in the process.

3. Write an individual accommodation plan

After identifying the most appropriate accommodation(s), the details will be documented in a written plan, including:

- What accommodation(s) will be provided
- How to make information accessible to the individual, including accessible formats and communication supports
- Individual emergency information and/or emergency response plan (if applicable)
- When the plan will be reviewed and updated

The manager will give the individual in an accessible format (if required), a copy of the accommodation plan, or written reasons for denying accommodation.

4. Implement, monitor and update the plan

After implementing the accommodation plan, the individual and their manager will monitor and review the plan to ensure that it is effective at least once every 6 months. Formal reviews and updates will take place on the mutually agreed upon, predetermined schedule in the individual's accommodation plan. If the accommodation is no longer appropriate, the individual and their manager will reassess the situation (step 2) and update the plan. The accommodation plan will also be reviewed and updated if:

- Work location or position changes
 - The nature of the individual's disability changes
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Return to work process

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to supporting employees who have been absent from work due to a disability. We will use the following process to help employees who require accommodation to return to work.

1. Initiate the leave and stay in contact with the employee.

If an employee needs to take a disability leave, they will inform their manager and human resources. The employee and manager will maintain regular contact at least once a month with the employee's consent, to address any problems that may arise and facilitate the return to work process.

2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs.

The employee and manager will work together to share information and find the most appropriate accommodation, for example:

Manager

- Provides the employee with return to work information
- Helps resolve any problems with treatment if requested to do so by the employee
- Maintains regular contact with the employee
- Ensures work practices are safe for returning employee
- Assists with identifying accommodations
- Assists with analyzing the demands of each job task

Employee

- Follows the appropriate medical treatment
- Provides their employer with health care documentation including updates about their progress and information about their functional ability to perform the job
- Provides their health care provider with the return to work information

Health care provider(s), workplace representative(s) and health and safety professional(s) may also participate in the process, if needed.

3. Develop a return to work plan

After identifying the most appropriate accommodation, safety considerations and any transitional measures, capture the details in a written plan. Depending on circumstances, the employee may:

- Return to the original position
- Return to the original position with accommodation(s) on a temporary or permanent basis
- Return to an alternate position if available on a temporary or permanent basis

The return to work plan should be attached to the employee's individual accommodation plan.

4. Implement, monitor and update the plan

After implementing the return to work plan, the employee and manager will monitor and review the plan regularly to ensure that it remains effective. If the accommodation is no longer appropriate, they will reassess the situation (step 2) and update the plan.

Accessible Customer Service

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

Toronto Wildlife Centre understands that obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to complying with both the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *AODA*.

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

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

Assistive devices

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our goods, services or facilities.

In cases where the assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern or may not be permitted for other reasons, other measures will be used to ensure the person with a disability can access our goods, services or facilities.

We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices we have on site or that we provide assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods, services or facilities.

Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. This may include the following:

- Offering to use a pen and paper for written communication
- Reduce background noise for persons with hearing aids or trouble hearing
- Move to a quiet area
- Move to a well-lit area
- Be patient and confirm what the individual has said before assuming
- Offer to rewrite, rephrase or explain something in a different way
- Provide equal opportunity to services or facilities that is given to others

We will work with the person with a disability to determine what method of communication works for them.

Service animals

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask a person to provide documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

If service animals are prohibited by another law, we will do the following to ensure people with disabilities can access our goods, services or facilities:

- Explain why the animal is excluded
- Discuss with the customer another way of providing goods, services or facilities

Support persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

If a fee is charged to a customer for accessing our goods, services or facilities, Toronto Wildlife Centre will waive the fee for support persons.

In certain cases, Toronto Wildlife Centre 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, Toronto Wildlife Centre will:

- 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

Notice of temporary disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities, Toronto Wildlife Centre will notify customers promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Services/Facilities include:

- Wildlife Hotline
- TWC Website
- Education Events

The notice will be made publicly available in the front lobby near reception and/or on our social media channels.

Training

Toronto Wildlife Centre will provide accessible customer service training to:

- All employees and volunteers
- Anyone involved in developing our policies
- Anyone who provides goods, services or facilities to customers on our behalf.

Staff will be trained on accessible customer service within 3 months after being hired.

Training will include:

- Purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard

- Toronto Wildlife Centre's policies related 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 require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use the equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Toronto Wildlife Centre's goods, services or facilities

Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service policies.

Feedback process

Toronto Wildlife Centre welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns.

Customers who wish to provide feedback on the way Toronto Wildlife Centre provides goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities can provide feedback in the following way(s):

- Through our website on the 'Contact' page
- Email at access@torontowildlifecentre.com
- Verbally (in-person)

All feedback, including questions, concerns, and complaints, are directed to the Operations Manager and the Human Resources Generalist. Customers can expect to hear back within 7 business days.

Toronto Wildlife Centre will make sure our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports on request.

Notice of availability of documents

Toronto Wildlife Centre will notify the public that documents related to accessible customer service, are available upon request by posting a notice in the following location(s)/way(s):

- TWC website, www.torontowildlifecentre.com
- Paper copy, available in large print
- Paper copy, to be read aloud by a TWC staff member
- Vestibule by front door

Toronto Wildlife Centre will provide this document in an accessible format or with communication support on request. We will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. We will provide the accessible format in a timely manner and, at no additional cost.

Modifications to this or other policies

Any policies of Toronto Wildlife Centre that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Multi-year Accessibility Plan

Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Customer Service

Toronto Wildlife Centre developed an Accessible Customer Service Policy based on the *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. This policy states our commitment and compliance to providing goods, services, or facilities to people with disabilities.

Employment

Toronto Wildlife Centre developed an Accessible Workplace Policy based on the *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. This policy states our commitment and compliance to making our employment practices accessible to meet the needs of employees, volunteers, and job applicants with disabilities.

Training

Toronto Wildlife Centre has been providing Accessibility training for every person after being hired and provides training in respect of any changes to the policies. We maintain records of the training provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Strategies and Actions

Customer Service

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. This means that we will provide goods, services and facilities to people with disabilities with the same high quality and timeliness as others. We will continue to comply with the Customer Service Standard by training new and existing frontline staff and volunteers on the most up-to-date AODA requirements.

Employment

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

Training

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to providing training in the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it applies to people with disabilities.

Design of Public Spaces

Toronto Wildlife Centre is in the process of moving to a property in the Rouge National Urban Park. During this transition, TWC will first move into an interim facility and will do our best to fulfil the requirements of AODA. Within the next 5 years, we will move into a new permanent centre that will meet accessibility laws. This will include, but is not limited to the following initiatives:

- Accessible on-site parking
- Accessible service related elements, i.e. service counters, education displays
- Accessible washrooms

Information and Communications

Toronto Wildlife Centre is committed to making our information and communications accessible to people with disabilities. This will include, but is not limited to the following initiatives:

- Pamphlets/brochures available in larger print (when requested)
- Captions/Subtitles available for video on TWC's website (when requested)

Toronto Wildlife Centre's accessibility policy is posted publicly in the vestibule at our front door, available to request on our website, as well as internally on our Health & Safety board. This plan is reviewed and updated at least once every 5 years. For more information on this accessibility plan, or to request standard and accessible formats of this document, please contact:

Department:	Human Resources
Telephone Number:	416-631-0662, ext. 3420
Email Address:	<u>access@torontowildlifecentre.com</u>