Accessibility and Customer Service Policy

August 2026

The YMCA of Eastern Ontario is a charity that is passionate about creating opportunities and advancing the well-being of the communities we serve. We do this by developing healthy and successful people who in turn create a positive impact in their neighbourhoods. We strive to maintain a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment. Our policies and standards articulate these goals.

INTRODUCTION/OBJECTIVE

The YMCA of Eastern Ontario (YEO) is committed to diversity and social inclusion and to meeting its obligations under Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), by providing accessible environments that respect the rights of every individual.

The purpose of the Accessibility and Customer Service Policy is to foster inclusive YMCA environments, and to ensure that any accessibility-related feedback is dealt with promptly and effectively through consistently applied principles.

POLICY STATEMENT

The YMCA of Eastern Ontario recognizes the dignity and worth of every individual and seeks to create socially inclusive environments in which everyone, including persons with disabilities, is able to participate fully. Building on a culture that embraces diversity and supports inclusion, the YMCA is a shared experience for everyone to enjoy.

DEFINITIONS

Accommodation – a way, through reasonable efforts or measures, of preventing or minimizing barriers that impede a person with a disability from fully participating in the services we offer.

Assistive device – any device that helps a person with a disability do everyday tasks and activities. Assistive devices include digital audio players, hearing aids, teletypewriter (TTY) for people unable to speak or hear by phone, mobility devices (such as scooters, walkers, white canes, etc.) and speech generating devices.

Barrier – anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. This may include architectural or physical barriers, an information or communications barrier making it difficult for people to receive or send information, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Customer – any person who uses the services of YEO.

Disability means:

a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness;
b) A mental impairment or developmental disability;

c) A learning disability or a condition affecting one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using language or symbols;
d) A mental disorder; or
e) An injury or disability resulting from a workplace incident or occupational condition.

Service animal – any animal being used by a person for reasons related to their disability, and is readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a regulated health professional.

Support person – another person who accompanies a person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or with accessing programs and services offered by YEO.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)
The AODA details specific requirements and standards for accessibility in Ontario. Standards include Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11), as amended, which requires YEO to make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures relating to the delivery of services are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Roles and Responsibilities

All directors, managers and supervisors shall:

- Monitor and support staff in implementing the Accessibility and Customer Service Policy in their program or service area(s);
- Ensure that program and service area(s) are accessible to persons with disabilities and accommodate the use of personal assistive devices and service animals, and permit access for support persons, in accordance with this policy, when accessing programs and services and moving throughout our facilities.
- Ensure training is provided in accessibility standards for front-line staff and program volunteers interfacing with members and customers. Contact the People & Culture team if you have any questions regarding training requirements.
- Ensure notice of temporary disruption is provided as outlined by this policy;
- Respond to feedback including any accessibility-related issues or concerns as per this policy.

All staff, including program volunteers, shall:

- Participate in required training related to accessibility standards for customer service;
- Support the implementation of the Accessibility and Customer Service Policy by providing service in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, including permitting the use of assistive devices, service animals and support persons as per this policy.
- Forward any feedback from members or customers regarding accessibility to their immediate supervisor for review and response/action.

The Director, People & Culture shall;

- Identify training needs across YEO
- Ensure that mechanisms are put in place to support supervisors in the implementation of the Accessilibity and Customer Service Policy or responding to accessibility-related concerns;
- In conjunction with the Manager, Executive Office & Governance, ensure that AODA requirements on implementation of Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation are completed and forwarded to the Ontario government;
- Ensure that YEO's policies, practices and procedures related to AODA are available to any person upon request;
- Ensure that communications with persons with disabilities are done in a manner that takes into account their individual circumstances.

PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES, SERVICE ANIMALS AND SUPPORT PERSONS

Use of Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices while accessing or using YEO programs or services in any premise owned, leased or operated by YEO. Possible barriers to the use of assistive devices will be removed where possible.

Use of Service Animals

Service animals are permitted to accompany any person with a disability while accessing or using YEO programs or services in any premise owned, leased or operated by YEO, except where animals are excluded by law.

Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, or may affect the health and safety of other individuals (members, guests or staff) other measures will be explored to provide service to a person with a disability.

Where it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, YEO may request a letter from a physician or other medical professional confirming that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability. Please contact the People & Culture team for a letter you can provide to support the request for documentation.

Use of Support Persons

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by their support person will be permitted to access and use YEO programs or services with their support person. In most cases, program fees will be waived for the support person, provided that the support person remains with the person with a disability when accessing and using a program or service, and while moving through the building or on YEO property. However, where a program or registration fee includes or covers such costs as food or accommodation, the support person may be required to cover these costs. If any amount is payable by the support person, YEO shall ensure that notice is given in advance of the amount, if any, that is payable by the support person.

YEO may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTIONS

YEO is committed to informing stakeholders of any temporary disruption of service at any of its program sites. A temporary disruption means a short-term planned or unplanned disruption to facilities or services. Potential temporary disruption may include evacuations or relocation due to fire, flood or mechanical failures, power outage, elevator out of service or programs moved or cancelled. Onsite supervisors shall notify the public, including people with disabilities, of any temporary disruptions. Notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, how long it will likely last and information about other facilities or services (if any) that are available. Notice may be given by posting the information on the premises, on the YEO website, through social media or other reasonable method.

FEEDBACK PROCESS

Feedback mechanisms provide YEO with opportunities to learn and improve. A YEO member including participant, parent, donor, contractor or member of the public is encouraged to bring forward a complaint or concern, or a compliment, or to make suggestions on ways to improve programs and services and their YMCA experience, by contacting their local General Manager or other member of the leadership team.

YEO is committed to ensuring that the feedback process is accessible to all individuals. Upon request, information related to the feedback process will be provided in an accessible format or with communication supports that take into account the individual's disability.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

YEO's policies, practices and procedures related to the AODA are available to the public upon request. Where a request is made for a document by a person with a disability, YEO shall provide the information contained in the document in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

The following are sources for additional information about Accessibility Standards in Ontario:

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 | ontario.ca
Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: O. Reg. 429/07 ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE | ontario.ca