



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Policy & Procedures

Within the Archdiocese of Toronto, you will find a family of faith that is alive and at work in our community. Comprised of nearly 1.8 million Catholics, 226 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.

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.

Definition of a Disability

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement.
- Any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of coordination, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impediment, muteness/speech impediment, reliance on assistive devices, appliances, service animal.
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- A learning disability.
- A mental disorder.
- An injury or disability that can be temporary.

Training

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.
- 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.

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:

- **Physical assistive devices** - cane, walker, wheelchair, electric scooters
- **Communicative Devices** - hearing devices, laptop computers, personal data assistant (PDA)
- **Visual Aids** - magnification devices, Braille devices, white canes, glasses
- **Medical Assistive Devices** - personal oxygen tanks

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 may be charged to support persons for admission to an event hosted in a parish for which a fee is charged.

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.

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 or directly to a parish office. Parishioners or visitors may expect to hear back within **15** business days upon receipt of their feedback.

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. For further questions about this policy, please contact: **The Human Resources Department at 416-934-0606 or email at 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].**