

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



**Diocese of Thunder Bay
Catholic Pastoral Centre
P.O Box 10400
Thunder Bay, ON
P7B 6T8**

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

Within the Diocese of Thunder Bay, you will find a family of faith that is alive and at work in our community.

Our diversity extends to welcoming those with disabilities as important members of our family of faith. They make precious contributions to our Diocese 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 Diocese of Thunder Bay 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 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 Diocese will provide informational brochures 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.

Informational Brochure

Included in the Informational Brochure:

- The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (2005) and the requirements of the Customer Services Standard.
- The Diocese 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 Diocese or within a parish.

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 Diocese 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

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.

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 animal 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 Diocese 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 durations, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

This notice will be placed in a suitable location.

Feedback

The Diocese and our parishes welcome feedback about our accessibility policy and services. Comments can be made in person, over the telephone, in writing, and by e-mail to chancery@dotb.ca or directly to the parish office.

Modification to this Policy

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