

Accessibility Policy and Plan – Providing Programs and Services to People with Disabilities

June 1, 2017

Hiatus House is a social service agency offering confidential intervention for families experiencing domestic violence. We provide crisis intervention, emergency shelter for abused women and their children, transitional and housing support, and long-term group therapy for women, men, and children.

Our Commitment

Hiatus House is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence and is consistent with the principles of integration and equality as set out in the Regulations of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. Persons with disabilities will be provided with the same opportunity to access agency programs and services that is available to other members of the public.

Providing Services to People with Disabilities

Hiatus House is committed to excellence in serving all clients including people with disabilities and we carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

Communication

We will communicate with people with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability. We will train our staff on how to communicate and interact with people with various types of disabilities.

Use of Assistive Devices

We will ensure our staff is familiar with the various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities while accessing our programs and services. We will also ensure our staff knows how to use assistive devices that are available on our premises including teletypewriters, email, automatic door openers, and elevators.

Use of Service Animals

We recognize that some people with disabilities may be accompanied by service animals when accessing our programs and services. People with disabilities who require the use of a service animal will be permitted to enter the agency in accordance with the agency's security policies and to keep the service animal with them in accordance with health and safety requirements.

Support Persons

We recognize that some people with disabilities rely upon a support person when accessing our programs and services. When a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, both persons will be permitted to enter the agency (in accordance with the agency's security policies) and both will have access to each other while on the premises, unless the support person is the perpetrator of

abuse, in which case we will work with the person with a disability to determine an alternate support person.

A person with a disability may be required to be accompanied by a support person while at the agency if the 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.

Support persons who accompany people with disabilities will be required to comply with agency confidentiality policies.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the programs and services provided by Hiatus House, the agency will notify existing clients who are affected by the disruption. Notice will be given to the public when such notice does not compromise the safety and security of Hiatus House clients, employees, and the public. Notice will include information on the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternate services that may be available. Notice will be provided in a manner that ensures continued safety and security of Hiatus House clients, employees, and the public.

Employee Training

Hiatus House will provide training to employees who deal with the public and those who are involved in the development of client service policies, practices and procedures. Training will include a review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and:

- How to communicate and interact with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, require the assistance of a service animal, or require the assistance of a support person.
- How to use equipment or devices on agency premises that may assist in the provision of services to people with disabilities.
- What to do when a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing Hiatus House services.

Training will be provided on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures. New employees will receive training as part of their orientation.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

When clients or members of the public request accessible formats or communication supports for our publicly available documents or forms, we will consult with the person making the request to identify a suitable format or communication support. We will address such requests in a timely manner that takes into account the person's disability. If the information cannot be converted or if the technology to do so is not currently available, we will provide an explanation as to why the information is not being provided in an accessible format.

The agency's accessibility policy is posted within the agency lobby and copies will be made available to people who request it.

Accessible Emergency Information

Hiatus House is committed to providing clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. We will also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

Feedback Process

The agency's goal is to make it easy for people with disabilities to contact Hiatus House. We welcome and appreciate comments and suggestions on the accessibility of our programs and services to people with disabilities. We may be contacted at: **519-252-1143 (Business Line), Toll free: 1-800-265-5142 (519 area), TTY 519-252-2768**, or from our website at **www.hiatushouse.com**.

Feedback will be addressed according to the agency's complaint management procedures. We will endeavour to provide our response in a format that is accessible to the person who provided the feedback.

Modifications to this or Other Policies

We are committed to developing client service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the effect on people with disabilities.

Any policy of Hiatus House that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Questions about this Policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to clients with disabilities. If anyone has a question about this policy, they may be referred to the executive director of Hiatus House.

Availability of Documents

The agency's accessibility policy is available on the agency's [website](#) and within the agency lobby. Copies will be made available to people who request it. When the content of the agency's accessibility policy is requested by a person with a disability, efforts will be made to provide the policy in a format that takes into account the person's disability or a suitable, agreed-upon alternative if the agency is unable to provide the requested format.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

This 2014 – 2021 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that Hiatus House will put in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities. This plan also identifies the agency's successes to date in removing barriers to accessibility.

Accessibility Successes to Date

Hiatus House is in compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation. We have continued to ensure that in our day to day activities we are fulfilling all the requirements of this regulation in keeping with the principles of dignity, independence, equality and integration. Hiatus House is also in compliance with the training requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

→ **Requirement:** Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation

Completion Date: January 1, 2010

Implementation: Our policy on accessible standards for customer service was developed in 2009 and has since been expanded to meet accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This document can also be accessed on the Hiatus House website at www.hiatushouse.com.

All Hiatus House employees, students and volunteers who are in positions that involve interaction with the public or other third parties have received training on this standard and on how to communicate with people who

have disabilities. All new employees receive this training during their orientation.

Hiatus House welcomes people with disabilities who use assistive devices, support people or service animals. Employees, students and volunteers are trained on how to interact with people who use assistive devices, support people or service animals. We welcome feedback to ensure that our employees, students and volunteers are providing appropriate service to people with accommodation needs.

If there is a disruption to the facilities or services usually accessed by people with disabilities, Hiatus House posts a notice at the public entrances of our premises. Depending on the nature of the disruption, notice is also provided on our website.

→ **Requirement:** Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Training

Completion Date: May 31, 2013

Implementation: Hiatus House employees, students and volunteers have received training on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. New employees, students and volunteers receive this training during their orientation and it is provided in a way that best suits their duties. Accessibility standards training will be provided in respect of changes to legislation and/or agency policies as they occur on an ongoing basis.

→ **Requirement:** Information and Communication Standard - Make existing feedback processes accessible to people with disabilities.

Completion Date: December 31, 2014

Implementation: (1) Hiatus House provides or arranges for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for feedback processes upon request.

(2) All feedback is addressed by the executive director in accordance with normal complaints procedures and timelines. The agency endeavors to respond to feedback in a format that is accessible to the complainant.

(3) A process has been developed to collate feedback received so that it is considered in future planning around accessibility.

→ **Requirement:** Information and Communications - Make publicly available information accessible upon request.

Completion Date: December 31, 2015

Implementation: (1) Employees have been trained in creating accessible format documents so that all future agency publications are created in accessible formats.

(2) Accessibility standards for publications such as advertisements, promotional materials (flyers, posters) and client communications have been implemented. Guidelines for creating accessible documents with desktop applications in use such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint and for determining which materials are to be made into plain language have also been implemented.

(3) A process for responding to requests for information in alternate formats has been developed.

(4) Publicly available documents

(4) A practice has been instituted to create all documents in as accessible a format as possible without the need for alternate formats.

(5) A notice has been posted on the agency's website and on the premises that information is available in accessible formats upon request.

→ **Requirement:** Employment Standard – Notify the public and employees of the availability of accommodations, on request, during the recruitment and assessment process and when people are hired.

Completion Date: December 31, 2015

Implementation: (1) Hiatus House notifies employees and the public of the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities during the recruitment process. Advertisements for positions state that candidates who require accommodation during the application or interview process may contact the agency to discuss how they may best be accommodated.

(2) Hiatus House notifies successful applicants of the agency's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

(3) For people hired through employment agencies, Hiatus House relies on the temp agency who is the legal employer to determine accommodation

needs. We will ask such agencies to communicate accommodation needs to us.

(4) Hiatus House provides accessible formats and communication supports for information needed to perform the employee's job and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace.

→ **Requirement** : Employment Standard – Implement a process for developing written individual accommodation plans and return to work plans for employees with disabilities.

Completion Date: December 31, 2015

Implementation: (1) Hiatus House has implemented a process for written, individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. The process includes: how an employee requesting accommodation can participate in the development of their accommodation plan; how an employee is assessed on an individual basis; how Hiatus House can request an evaluation by an outside medical or other expert, at the agency's expense, to assist Hiatus House in determining if accommodation can be achieved and, if so, how it can be achieved; how an employee can request the participation of a representative from the workplace in the development of the accommodation plan; how privacy of the employee's personal information will be protected; how often an individual accommodation plan will be reviewed and updated and the manner in which it will be done; how the reasons for denial of an accommodation, should this occur, are provided to an employee; and how the accommodation plan will be

provided to the employee – in a format that takes into account the employee’s accessibility needs due to a disability.

(2) Hiatus House has developed a return to work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

(3) Hiatus House provides performance management and career development practices that take into consideration the accessibility and accommodation needs of employees with disabilities.

→ **Requirement:** Design of Public Spaces Standard – Meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces. Public spaces include outdoor play spaces; outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, curb ramps and stairs; accessible off street parking; and waiting areas.

Completion Date: January 1, 2017

Implementation: (1) Hiatus House consults with the public and people with disabilities to understand and incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when building or making major renovations to public spaces.

(2) In the event of a disruption to accessible parts of public spaces, Hiatus House notifies the public of the service disruption and alternatives available by posting a notice at the public entrances of our premises. Depending on the nature of the disruption, notice is also provided on our website.

Information and Communication Standard

Hiatus House will take the following steps to make all websites and content conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA by **January 1, 2021**.

Employees responsible for the development and maintenance of the agency's website will be provided training in the requirements of websites to conform with WCAG 2.0 at Level AA.

Monitoring

This accessibility plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every three years. All feedback related to accessibility received throughout the year will be considered in the amendment of this plan and in the development of new steps toward meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Past review and revision dates:

2013 08 15

2015 12 31

2017 05 24

For More Information

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact us at: 519-252-7781, Toll free: 1-800-265-5142 (519 area), TTY 519-252-2768, or from our website at www.hiatushouse.com.

Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request by contacting us at: 519-252-1143, Toll free: 1-800-265-5142 (519 area), TTY 519-252-2768, or from our website at www.hiatushouse.com.