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

Last Updated: September 11, 2026

Hiatus House is a social service agency offering confidential support and intervention for individuals and families experiencing domestic violence. We provide crisis intervention, emergency shelter for women and their children, transitional and housing support services, long-term group counselling for women, men, and children, as well as a variety of other programs and services.

Our Commitment

Hiatus House is committed to providing people with disabilities access to agency programs and services in a manner that respects their dignity and independence and is consistent with the agency's values of integration and equal opportunity, as set out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and its regulations. People with disabilities will be provided with the same opportunity to access agency programs and services as other members of the public.

Hiatus House is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination. We are also committed to ensuring that employees are educated on and comply with all accessibility policies, procedures, and plans.

Hiatus House understands that the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not replace or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or its obligations to people with disabilities under any other applicable legislation.

Definitions

Definitions are taken from the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, S.O. 2005, C. 11 or *Ontario Human Rights Code.*

- “Accessible formats” may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

- “Barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice; (“obstacle”).

- “Disability” is defined as:

1."any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any

degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

4. a mental disorder, or

5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997."

- “Assistive device” is any device that is used, designed, made or adapted to assist people in performing a particular task.

Please visit the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 or Ontario Human Rights Code for more definitions.

Providing Services for People with Disabilities

Information and Communication

Hiatus House is committed to providing information and communication in accessible formats for people with disabilities. Accessible formats and communication supports will be provided upon request and in a timely manner, in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

Hiatus House will communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes their individual needs into account. Where required, alternative methods of communication will be provided to ensure equitable access to programs and services.

The public will be informed of the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Use of Assistive Devices

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing Hiatus House programs, services, or facilities. Employees will be made familiar with assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities.

Assistive devices and accessibility feature available at our facilities include Bell Relay Service information, hearing assistance devices, automatic door openers, and elevators.

If an assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety risk, or cannot be used for another valid reason, Hiatus House will make reasonable efforts to provide alternative measures to ensure access to its programs, services, or facilities.

Service Animals

People with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal will be permitted to access Hiatus House programs, services, and facilities in accordance with the agency's safety and security procedures. Individuals accompanied by a service animal may keep the animal with them, subject to the following considerations:

- Service animals are not permitted in food preparation or food storage

areas. Where required, employees will assist the individual and ensure appropriate arrangements are made for the service animal.

- Where the presence of a service animal may significantly affect the health or safety of another client or employee, staff will work with the individuals involved and consult with management to determine appropriate accommodation.
- The owner is responsible for always maintaining control of the service animal.

If a service animal is excluded from an area as permitted by law or due to health and safety requirements, Hiatus House will make reasonable efforts to provide alternative accommodations to ensure the individual can access its programs, services, or facilities.

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

Support Persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be permitted to access Hiatus House programs, services, and facilities in accordance with agency safety and security procedures. A support person will not be prevented from being present unless doing so would compromise the safety of clients, staff, or visitors. In situations where a support person is the perpetrator of abuse, the client will be asked to identify an alternate support person.

The following conditions apply to support persons:

- Hiatus House may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the individual or others.
- Consent from the person with a disability will be obtained before discussing confidential information in the presence of a support person.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

In the event of a temporary disruption to Hiatus House programs, services, or facilities, the agency will notify existing clients and post notices through appropriate communication channels, including social media where applicable. For planned disruptions, notice will be provided in advance whenever possible.

Notices will include the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration, and information about any alternative services or arrangements that may be available.

Feedback Process

Hiatus House welcomes feedback on the accessibility of its programs and services. Feedback helps us identify barriers and improve accessibility for people with disabilities. All accessibility-related feedback will be documented and reviewed. Feedback may be provided in person, by telephone, through our website, or through social media.

Hiatus House can be contacted at:

- Business Line: 519-252-1143
- Toll-Free: 1-800-265-5142
- TTY: 519-252-2768
- Website: www.hiatushouse.com

- Facebook: Hiatus House
- LinkedIn: Hiatus House
- Instagram: hiatushousewindsor
- X (Twitter): HiatusHouse

Feedback will be addressed in accordance with the agency's complaint management procedures. Hiatus House will make reasonable efforts to provide responses in a format that is accessible to the individual who submitted the feedback. Clients and members of the public can expect a response within 10 business days. Accessible formats and communication support for providing feedback are available upon request.

Employee Training

Hiatus House will provide accessibility training to all employees, volunteers, students, and other individuals who provide services on behalf of the organization, as required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). Training will include a review of the purposes of the AODA, the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities, and Hiatus House policies and procedures regarding accessibility.

Training will include:

- Interacting and communicating with people with various types of disabilities.
- Assisting individuals who use assistive devices, service animals, or support persons.

- Using accessibility-related equipment or devices available on agency premises.
- Supporting people with disabilities in accessing agency programs and services.

Training will be provided during orientation and whenever changes are made to accessibility policies, procedures, or practices. Training will be delivered in a manner that is appropriate to an individual's role and responsibilities.

Employees, volunteers, and students are encouraged to further their knowledge through AccessForward, a Government of Ontario resource that provides information and training on accessibility standards. These resources are intended to complement Hiatus House's accessibility training program and provide additional guidance and support.

Additional training resources include:

- Human Rights Code Training
- Accessible Customer Service and AODA Standards Training

Hiatus House will maintain records of accessibility training, including the dates training was completed and the names of individuals who received the training.

Employment

Hiatus House is committed to providing accessible employment practices and will consider the accessibility needs of current, prospective, and future employees. Accommodation will be provided throughout the recruitment, hiring, and employment process in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Hiatus House employees are reminded that accommodations may be requested at any time during their employment. For more information about the internal accommodation process, please refer to Policy 5-20: Accommodation and Return-to-Work Process in the Policy and Procedure Manual.

Hiatus House will:

- Notify employees, job applicants, and the public that accommodation is available during recruitment, hiring, and employment.
- Notify applicants selected for an interview that accommodation are available upon request. When requested, we will consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for appropriate accommodation.
- Notify successful applicants of policies supporting employees with disabilities when making offers of employment.
- Inform employees of available support and accommodations for disabilities as soon as practicable after employment begins and whenever there are changes to those policies.
- Consult with employees when providing workplace accommodation, accessible formats, or communication supports.

- Provide accessible formats and communication support for information needed to perform an employee's job and for information generally available to employees in the workplace.
- Maintain a written return-to-work process for employees who have been absent due to a disability and require disability-related accommodation to return to work.

Service Counters

Hiatus House is committed to providing accessible service to individuals with disabilities, including those who use mobility aids. Where a service counter does not meet applicable accessibility requirements or cannot accommodate an individual’s needs, employees will aid through alternative arrangements. These may include coming around the counter to assist the individual, where appropriate, and providing service in an accessible location.

Employees will work with individuals to identify a suitable arrangement that respects their dignity, independence, and accessibility needs.

When planning and constructing new service counters, Hiatus House will ensure that they meet the applicable requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Hiatus House will make reasonable efforts to provide agency information and documents in accessible formats or with communication supports upon request.

Requests will be addressed in a timely manner and will take the individual's accessibility needs into account.

Examples of accessible formats and communication supports may include:

- Reading a document or form aloud.
- Providing documents in large print.
- Providing other accessible formats or communication support, as appropriate.

Availability of Documents

The Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan are available upon request.

The Accessibility Policy and Multi-Year Accessibility Plan are available:

- On the Hiatus House website.
- In the agency lobby.
- Upon request in an accessible format.
- By appointment with an employee for review and discussion.

Questions regarding the Accessibility Policy or Multi-Year Accessibility Plan may be directed to a manager at admin@hiatushouse.com.

Hiatus House will consult with the individual making the request to determine a suitable format or communication support and will provide it in a timely manner at no additional cost.

Modifications to Policies

Hiatus House is committed to developing and maintaining policies that respect and promote dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity of people with disabilities.

Before making changes to this or any other policy, Hiatus House will consider the impact on people with disabilities. Any policy that does not support accessibility or that creates barriers for people with disabilities will be reviewed and revised or removed.

Questions about this Policy

This policy is intended to support accessible, equitable, and respectful services for people with disabilities.

Questions about this policy may be directed to the Executive Director of Hiatus House or their designate at admin@hiatushouse.com.