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.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the actions Hiatus House will take between 2026 and 2031 to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. The plan also highlights the agency's ongoing efforts and achievements in improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

Hiatus House is committed to meeting the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and to creating an inclusive environment that supports dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers

Hiatus House has taken ongoing steps to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. Through our programs, services, facilities, and daily operations, we continue to promote accessibility in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its standards.

The following achievements highlight our efforts to create a more accessible and inclusive environment for people with disabilities.

Requirement: Accessible Customer Service Standards Regulation

Completion Date: January 1, 2010 (Updated 2025)

Implementation

Hiatus House developed its Accessible Customer Service Policy in 2009 and has continued to review and update it to meet the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The policy is available on the Hiatus House website.

All employees, students, and volunteers receive accessibility training, including training on communicating and interacting with people with disabilities. Hiatus House welcomes people with disabilities who use assistive devices, support persons, or service animals. Employees, students, and volunteers are trained on how to support and interact with individuals using these accommodations.

Feedback regarding accessibility is welcomed and reviewed to help improve programs and services. A feedback form is available on our website and reviewed during regular business days. In the event of a disruption to facilities or services commonly used by people with disabilities, notice is provided at public entrances and, where appropriate, on the Hiatus House website and on all social media platforms.

Requirement: Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation Training

Completion Date: May 31, 2013 (updated September 2026)

Implementation

Hiatus House employees, students, and volunteers receive training on Ontario's accessibility laws and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities during onboarding.

Hiatus House subscribes to a third-party training resource to ensure up to date and relevant materials are being used.

Additional accessibility training resources, including government-provided training and guidance materials, are available to support ongoing learning and awareness.

Requirement: Information and Communication Standard - Make existing feedback processes accessible to people with disabilities.
Completion Date: December 31, 2014 (updated August 2026)

Implementation

- Hiatus House provides or arranges for accessible formats and communication supports for its feedback processes upon request.
- An accessible feedback form is available on the Hiatus House website and is monitored regularly.
- Accessibility-related feedback and complaints are reviewed and reported to the agency's Leadership Team, including the Executive Director, Director of Operations, and Managers.
- Hiatus House strives to respond to feedback within 10 business days and in a format that is accessible to the individual providing the feedback.

- A process has been established to collect, review, and consider feedback when planning accessibility improvements and future accessibility initiatives.

Requirement: Information and Communications - Make publicly available information accessible upon request.
Completion Date: December 31, 2015 (updated September 2026)

Implementation

- Employees receive training on creating accessible documents and responding to requests for accessible formats and communication supports.
- Hiatus House follows accessibility standards when developing publications and strives to create documents in accessible formats whenever possible.
- Procedures are in place to respond to requests for accessible formats and communication supports in a timely manner.
- Notices are posted on the Hiatus House website and at agency locations informing the public that accessible formats and communication supports are available upon request.
- Hiatus House regularly reviews its website and digital communications to improve accessibility. This includes ongoing efforts to enhance website accessibility features and make online information easier to access.

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

- Job postings include information about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities throughout the recruitment and hiring process.
- Applicants selected for interviews or assessments are informed that accommodations are available upon request.
- When requested, Hiatus House works with applicants to provide suitable accommodations that take their individual accessibility needs into account.
- Successful candidates are informed of Hiatus House's policies and supports for accommodating employees with disabilities.

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

- Hiatus House has written policies and procedures for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work plans for employees with

disabilities.

- These policies, procedures, and related forms are included in the employee policy and procedure manual.
- Hiatus House provides performance management, career development, and workplace support practices that consider 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 (updated June 2025)

Implementation

Hiatus House consults with experts to understand and incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when building or making major renovations to public spaces. 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, and or on social media and websites.

Hiatus House has also redesigned the outside entrance ramp, vestibule, and lobby to improve accessibility in 2025. Additionally, shelter rooms on each floor

were improved for accessibility i.e. doorframes were widened, panic button installed in accessible washroom on first floor.

Requirement: Information and Communications – Accessible Websites and Web Content

Completion Date: January 1, 2021 (Updated September 2026)

Implementation

- Employees responsible for the development and maintenance of the Hiatus House website receive training in website accessibility requirements and best practices.
- Hiatus House strives to ensure that its website and web content conform to WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements.
- Website accessibility is reviewed on an ongoing basis, and improvements are made where possible to reduce barriers and improve access to online information and services.
- The Social Media Coordinator regularly reviews website content and digital communications to identify opportunities to improve accessibility and enhance the user experience for people with disabilities.

Monitoring

This Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every three years. Accessibility-related feedback received throughout the review period will be considered when updating this plan and identifying new

opportunities to improve accessibility and remove barriers.

Previous Review and Revision Dates

- August 15, 2013
- December 31, 2015
- May 24, 2017
- March 20, 2019
- July 2, 2024
- September 11, 2026

For More Information

For more information about this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, please contact Hiatus House:

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

Accessible formats of this document and communication support are available free of charge upon request. Requests may be made by:

- Phone: 519-252-1143
- Toll-Free: 1-800-265-5142

- TTY: 519-252-2768
- Email: admin@hiatushouse.com
- Website: www.hiatushouse.com