



**2024-2029**

**Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for**

**New Path Youth and Family Counselling Services of Simcoe County  
(New Path)**

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## **CEO MESSAGE**

New Path strongly believes in equal opportunity and is committed to ensuring that children and youth, their parents and guardians have coordinated, accessible, and inclusive mental health services when and where they need them in a manner that promotes and respects the dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. As an organization, we are committed to supporting an accessible Ontario for all individuals in the province. We have developed policies, practices, and procedures that provide accessible services to all our clients as we move towards our vision of healthy, thriving communities that support personal growth and wellbeing. The plan will be reviewed every five years, and updated, when necessary, by our Accessibility Working Group.

*Jim Harris, New Path CEO*

## **SUMMARY**

The Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is a law that was enacted by the Government of Ontario with the goal of creating a barrier-free Ontario by 2025. In order to reach this goal, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation was developed, which is a group of five standards that set out the actions that public, private and not for profit organizations must take to meet this goal.

New Path is committed to supporting an accessible Ontario for all individuals in the province. As an organization, we have worked hard to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. Legislative standards for accessibility will serve as minimum requirements for our policies and procedures, however, we strive to go above the minimum requirements wherever possible. This plan shows how New Path is and will continue to do its part in making Ontario an accessible province for everyone.

Your feedback is important to help us improve your experience. We would like to hear your comments, questions, and suggestions about the provision of our materials or services to persons with disabilities.

## **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

The overall vision, desired outcomes, and strategy that will enable us to continue to support Ontario's vision for an accessible Ontario by 2025 is seen through our statement of commitment.

New Path Youth and Family Services is committed to meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities through ensuring compliance with accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and Regulation (IASR).

We are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Our policies, practices and procedures ensure accessible services to all our clients and our services are provided to clients with disabilities in a manner that promotes and respects dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

The AODA and the IASR are the roadmap to creating an accessible Ontario by 2025. This multi year accessibility plan describes the actions that New Path has taken and will continue to take to be an accessible organization and support the goal of an accessible Ontario by 2025. Under the AODA and the IASR, the following accessibility standards set the requirements that are applicable to New Path:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Design of Public Spaces

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

New Path is committed to continuing to comply with all general requirements set out by the AODA and the IASR. This includes the requirement to develop, implement, and maintain written policies and procedures; and the requirement to train all employees, volunteers, and other members of the organization on the requirements of the accessibility standards set out in the IASR and in the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to persons with disabilities.

- New Path has developed, implemented, and maintained an Accessibility Policy and Procedure (HR-1.34 and HR-1.34.1 Accessible Customer Service). The Policy is reviewed and updated annually. The Policy is posted on our website and is available in an accessible format, upon request.
- New Path has developed, implemented, and maintained a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The Plan is reviewed and updated at least every five (5) years. The Plan is posted on our website and is available in an accessible format, upon request.
- New Path has trained and will continue to train all employees, volunteers, and other members of the organization on Ontario's accessibility laws, the Ontario *Human Rights Code* as it relates to people with disabilities, and the accessibility requirements that apply to New Path.
  - Training is provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees and/or volunteers, as soon as practicable upon an individual being assigned the applicable duties. All staff are required to complete the training on an annual basis and sign off on policies and procedures in the agency annual declaration. Employees and volunteers will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices, and procedures.
  - Records of training will be maintained containing names of employees and volunteers trained and dates of training.

### **Customer Service Standard**

New Path strives at all times to provide our services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services, and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients.

### **Actions:**

- New Path has met and continues to meet all requirements of the Customer Service Standard, including the establishment of policies related to the use of service animals and support persons; notice of temporary service disruptions; training employees; providing documents in an accessible format or with communication supports upon request; and establishing a feedback process.
- The detailed Customer Service Standard policy and procedure (HR 1.34 and HR 1.34.1) is available in an accessible format, upon request.

### General Information on Accessible Services

In 2014, our organization created a multi-year accessibility plan which outlined our approach and commitment to being an accessible organization. Today, to ensure we continue to meet the requirements under the Customer Service Standard, New Path's internal policies, procedures and practices support our staff in understanding the importance of our commitment to accessibility.

New Path values are incorporated into our hiring process, and our Strategic Plan. Our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging is prominent on our website. This allows us to cultivate a culture of inclusion and displays our commitment to providing exceptional customer service to persons with disabilities.

New Path is committed to prioritizing and integrating principles of equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) and belonging in its service delivery and community presence. Our strategic plan has four pillars: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Partners; Programs; and People. These pillars set the foundation for our efforts to move towards our vision of healthy, thriving communities that support personal growth and wellbeing and achieve our mission: Through leadership and partnerships, we ensure that children and youth have integrated, accessible, and inclusive mental health services when and where they need them.

New Path expanded our ability to engage with persons with disabilities by providing a range of options for obtaining services. To ensure that all children and youth, their families and caregivers have timely access to mental health support, our services are free of charge and available in-person, online, and by phone. Children, youth, their families and caregivers have the opportunity to book our services online. If they do not have online access, booking can be completed by phone on a day and time that is convenient for them. Our first point of contact for accessing services is the Quick Access Counselling Clinic. This service has an online form that includes questions related to requests for accessibility and availability of accommodation for persons with disabilities.

Internally, our EDI team works to broaden our knowledge and perspectives through initiatives and activities such as an EDI calendar, an inclusive language guide and a virtual EDI library.

### **Information and Communications Standard**

New Path is committed to meeting the communication needs of persons with disabilities. We will consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

### Accessible Websites and Web Content

To comply with accessibility standards related to the website and web content, updated by the Ministry with a compliance requirement by January 1, 2021, New Path redesigned its website in 2017 incorporating World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA requirements into its web design at that time.

To ensure continuous compliance with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, a web development firm was hired in 2022 to analyze the website and create an accessibility report for our organization to provide solutions for any issues. When re-designing the website in 2023, WCAG 2.0 Level AA criteria was incorporated. Areas of the website such as alt text, text sizing, colour contrast, spacing between objects, etc., were considered throughout the re-design and revision process prior to the new updated website being released.

Internally, members of the Leadership Team at New Path that are responsible for website updates underwent training on creating accessible PDF documents to support our commitment to accessibility.

### Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

We provide publicly available information and communication materials in accessible formats and communication supports when requested. Where a request for an accessible format or communication support is received, we will consult with the individual making the request to determine their accessibility needs and what would be a suitable format or support; and provide the requested information in a timely manner. This includes publicly available information about our programs and services.

### Accessible Emergency Information

New Path is committed to providing contractors, third parties, and any members of the public with publicly available emergency information in an accessible format, upon request.

### Feedback Process

- We apply a variety of methods to gather insights related to experiences on barriers to accessibility. These include an accessibility statement on the New Path website with an easily accessible feedback form in both online or email format, as well as a hard copy version that submitted by fax or in person at our head office location in Barrie.

- New Path’s Resolution of Complaints Procedure is available in our Client Booklet and the implementation of the Ontario Perception of Care (OPOC) tool enables us to receive feedback from clients in a timely manner allowing us to make any necessary changes.
- Please refer to HR 1.34 Accessible Customer Service and HR 1.34.1 Accessible Customer Service Procedures for additional details.

### **Employment Standard**

The Employment Standard under the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation sets out accessibility standards for organizations to follow to support the recruitment and accommodation of employees. New Path is committed to fair and accessible employment practices for new and existing employees.

### Recruitment and Selection

Steps have been taken to ensure that candidates for employment are made aware of the organization’s commitment to accommodating applicants with disabilities through the recruitment and selection process. This includes having information readily available on the New Path website, on job postings, and during the interview and offer process. Through our HR policies, employees are informed of the process that New Path has to identify and meet any of their accommodation needs.

### Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

We also provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports when:

- Requested by an employee with a disability
- The information is needed to perform the employees duties
- The information is generally available to employees in the workplace

### Documented Individual Accommodation Plans

New Path continues to develop and maintain written policies for individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.



### Return to Work Process

Return to work processes are also developed for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodations to return to work.

### Performance Management, Career Development, and Advancement

New Path will consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities when reviewing performance management, career development and redeployment processes.

We will consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans when:

- Using the performance management process in respect of employees with disabilities
- Providing career development and advancement opportunities to employees with disabilities
- Reassigning employees with disabilities

### Workplace Emergency Response Information

Employees of New Path are informed through policies that the organization will provide individualized workplace emergency response information for employees with disabilities, in an accessible format, upon request. Upon hire, all employees are required to complete new hire paperwork, and when necessary, New Path will develop an individualized emergency response plan, if requested.

We will:

- Review, assess and as necessary, modify existing policies, procedures, practices, and templates to ensure compliance with the AODA and the IASR

### **Design of Public Spaces Standard**

New Path will continue to comply with the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to publicly accessible areas. These areas include accessible off-street parking and service-related features like service counters and waiting areas. New Path has not built or made major modifications to the public spaces of any of our facilities, however, will meet these standards in the future, if required.

## **KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR THE FUTURE**

New Path is committed to being an accessible organization and complying with the AODA and IASR with the ultimate goal of creating an accessible Ontario. Below are the ongoing areas that we will continue to monitor and complete to meet this goal. This plan, along with agency policies, procedures and practices will be reviewed and updated at minimum every 5 years.

New Path will add accessible customer service as a regular leadership meeting agenda item, effective January 2024.

Senior management has established an Accessibility Working Group to present and/or revise as required practices and procedures.

### **Customer Service**

- Encourage ongoing requests for public feedback
- Review and refine our public forms in our website redevelopment project
- Continue to identify, remove, and prevent barriers
- Incorporate accessibility design, criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities, except where it is not practicable to do so
- Review feedback procedures to ensure that our services are provided in accessible formats for all individuals

### **Information and Communications**

- Monitor any Ministry required changes to the policy or multi-year plan
- Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request and on the New Path website
- Any feedback received regarding accessibility will be reviewed and appropriate actions taken to address any concerns

- Create an accessibility folder on the New Path ShareDrive for ease of access and add the multi-year accessibility plan there for staff to view
- Monitor any Ministry required updates to external communication standards
- Investigate methods of providing accessible formats and communication supports
- Ensure all forms are available in accessible formats
- Post a notice on the website and on premises that information is available in a variety of accessible formats
- Establish a plan/familiarize with sources and timeframes for formatting that is not feasible to do in-house. i.e., captioning, video-description and conversion to Braille or audio and any other formatting

## **Employment**

- Continue to include accessibility training in New Hire Orientation
- Resource policies to prevent or remove systemic employment barriers, ensure they are compliant with legislation and reflect best practices
- Review employee and recruitment accommodation process
- Continue to develop individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities
- Share internally the location and details of the accessibility plan with employees
- Provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary
- Monitor any Ministry required enhancement requirement to accessibility in recruitment and accommodation processes

## **Accessible Public Spaces**

- Continue to consider Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces
- Communicate with the landlords of our leased premises regarding AODA and IASR requirements and ensure New Path's reception areas continue to meet all AODA and IASR requirements

## **CONCLUSION**

- This plan will be available on the New Path website ([www.newpath.ca](http://www.newpath.ca)), uploaded onto our ShareDrive, and shared internally via email. New Path is committed to creating a barrier-free Ontario by 2025 and will work diligently to ensure we meet our goals. This plan will be reviewed at a minimum every 5 years and will be available online in an accessible format.
- Standard and accessible formats of this document are available free upon request.
- For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact the Manager of Human Resources at [tpowers@newpath.ca](mailto:tpowers@newpath.ca) or 705-795-8950