

<p>Hester How Early Learning Centre</p> <p>Accessibility Policy</p>	
Revised: April 2025	Approved by Board of Directors: April 25, 2025

Background

Hester How Early Learning Centre (the "Centre") supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in its policies, programs and services. These obligations are spelled out clearly in the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001, Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Ontario Regulation 191/11 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

The Accessibility policy outlines the Centre's responsibilities and obligations for providing accessible service to persons with disabilities up to the point of undue hardship.

This policy is based on:

- Respect for the dignity and independence of staff, children, parents, guardians and regular visitors to the Centre with disabilities;
- Opportunity for staff, children and parents with disabilities to deliver, access and benefit from our services or programs with the same quality and timeliness that others receive.

Part 1 - Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- "The Centre" shall mean the Hester How Early Learning Centre.
- "AODA" shall mean the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- "IASR" shall mean the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.
- "The Director" shall mean the Director of Hester How Early Learning Centre or her/his designate.
- "Staff" shall mean the staff of the Hester How Early Learning Centre.
- "The Board" shall mean the Board of Directors of Hester How Early Learning Centre.
- "Barrier" shall mean anything that keeps someone with a disability from participating in all aspects of society, and shall include architectural or structural barriers, information or communications barriers, technological barriers, and attitudinal barriers.
- "Disability" shall have the same meaning as defined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Human Rights Code. (See attachment 1 to this policy)
- "Undue hardship" shall have the same meaning as defined in the Human Rights Code.

Part 2 - Accessible Service

Up to the point of undue hardship:

- The Centre shall provide services that are accessible for all children, parents, guardians and regular visitors.
- The Centre shall provide services and programs that people with disabilities can use and benefit from equally and in a manner that respects their dignity and independence.
- The Centre shall ensure that any staff with disabilities can discharge their duties in a manner that is acceptable and meets all requirements of the Centre and any applicable legislation.

Part 3 - Educator Training

- Training shall be provided as appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons employed by the Centre, and shall include:

A review of the:

- The purpose of the AODA;
- The Ontario Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities;
- The Centre's policies, practices and procedures on the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

Instruction on:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of service animals or support persons;
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Centre; and
- How to use assistive communication devices and other assistive devices that may be available on the provider's premises.
- New staff who take on new duties that involve interaction with staff, children, parents, guardians and regular visitors or other third parties shall, as soon as practicable, receive training as part of their orientation.
- New staff are required to complete and obtain a certificate of training on the four (4) modules under the IASR.
- Training shall also be provided on an ongoing basis when changes are made to the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.
- The Centre shall keep records of the accessibility training provided, including the dates on which training took place and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Part 4- Information and Communication

- "Information" shall mean data, facts, and knowledge that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital or images, and that conveys meaning.

- "Communication" shall mean the interaction between two or more persons or entities, or any combination of them, where information is provided, sent or received.
- When communicating or providing information or services to a person with a disability, staff of the Centre shall do so in a manner that takes the person's disability into account.

Part 5- Accessible Formats and Communications Supports

- "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.
- "Communication supports" may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communications.
- If staff, children, parents, guardians or regular visitors to the Centre with a disability require an accessible format or a communication support, the Centre shall strive to work with the person to provide the format or support that will meet their needs at no additional cost to the person with the disability.
- If the Centre is not able to meet the staff's, children's, parent's, guardian's or regular visitor's particular requirement in a reasonable timeframe or without undue hardship, the Director shall inform them and work with them to determine an alternate method of communication support(s) or accessible format(s).

Part 6 - Accessible Websites and Web Content

- The Centre's website shall, as required, conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, at Level AA according to the schedule set out in the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards available at: <http://www.aoda.ca/wcag/>, as revised.

Part 7- Feedback Process

- The Centre welcomes feedback from all staff, children, parents, guardians, regular visitors to the Centre and the general public.
- Feedback may be provided:
 - in person
 - by telephone/TTY
 - in writing
 - by email or
 - Facebook message
- If staff, children, parents, guardians, regular visitors and members of the general public with disabilities would prefer to give their feedback and receive a response to it using a method other than the one offered, they may request it and we will endeavor to respond.
- Feedback received in regards to customer service will be responded to promptly and documented in our Communication files.

- This information about the feedback process is shared via this policy posted on site on our main bulletin board, and for general public viewing, through a link on our website.

Part 8 - Service Disruption

- "Service Disruption" shall mean a short-term planned or unplanned disruption to facilities or services that the public usually uses to obtain goods and services.
- If there is service disruption due to a problem with facilities, equipment or services that people with disabilities rely on, we will provide notice to all staff as well as any children, parents, guardians and regular visitors to the Centre with disabilities.
- The Director shall determine the method of notice by the nature of the problem.
- The Centre shall attempt to make alternative arrangements to provide service where possible.

Part 9 - Assistive Devices

- "Assistive devices" shall mean: Technical aids, communication devices, or medical aids that are used to increase, maintain, or improve how a person with a disability can function. Examples may include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, note-taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, and assistive listening devices.
- Staff, children, parents, guardians, and regular visitors with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices.
- The Centre may provide any assistive device required by a staff member to discharge their duties.
- The Centre may compensate or reimburse any costs associated with an assistive device required by staff members with disabilities to discharge their duties. If the costs for such have a material impact on the Centre's budget, the Director shall advise and consult with the Board.
- Where assistive devices are provided by the Centre, staff shall be trained on how to use them.

Part 10 - Service Animals

- "Service Animal" shall include animals where:
 - It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
 - The person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.
- People with disabilities may use their service animal in all parts of the Centre that are open to the children, parents, guardians and regular visitors to the Centre, unless the animal is excluded by law or does not meet the Public Health Requirements for the Centre. In this case, the Director shall ensure that appropriate alternative arrangements are made to ensure that the person can access the service.

Part 11- Support Persons

- "Support Person" means, concerning a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.
- Staff, children, parents, guardians and regular visitors to the Centre with disabilities shall be able to access their disability-related support person while at the Centre.
- In situations where confidential matters may be discussed, the Director may require the support person to sign a confidentiality agreement in advance of the discussion.
- Where admission fees are charged for field trips and excursions, the Centre shall assist however possible in the payment of these fees for support persons.
- The Director or Board may direct that the Centre compensate or reimburse any costs associated with a support person for the duration of the excursion or extracurricular activity.

Part 12 – Availability

This policy shall be made available to any staff member of the Centre or member of the public upon request.

Attachment 1 – Definition of Disability

Disability: Is defined per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Human Rights Code as follows:

- 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;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.