

# Casa El Norte Shelter Accessibility Plan

Implementing AODA Standards for Inclusion





# 01

## Appendix A:

Casa El Norte is committed to an effective accessibility plan that includes aligning with and exceeding Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards and embracing Universal Design principles to ensure equitable access and spaces that are usable for all residents.

The objectives of this plan include:

- Creating an inclusive and accessible environment for all residents, staff, volunteers, and visitors.
- Identifying and remove barriers to access within our shelter
- Designing facilities and services rooted in Universal Design principles, ensuring usability by all
- Compliance with all legal requirements under AODA and related standards.
- Fostering an inclusive environment where dignity and independence are prioritized.

### Access Plan

Casa El Norte shelter operates in a challenging landscape where accessibility is paramount. Following AODA legislation and the principles of Universal Design, the shelter commits to continuous improvement in accessibility through a phased approach, ensuring services and facilities meet the diverse needs of clients with disabilities.





# 02

## Communication & Employment Access Improvements

### Accessible Comm

Ensuring accessible communication involves providing information in formats such as large print and screen reader compatibility, which aligns with AODA standards to support all residents effectively.



**Accessible Formats:** Materials available in large print, Braille, and digital for diverse needs.



**Accommodation:** Staff trained to adapt workspaces for employees with disabilities.

### Inclusive Employment

Our shelter embraces inclusive hiring and accommodation processes following AODA Employment Standards to create a supportive workplace for people with disabilities.



**Feedback Channels:** Residents, staff and volunteers submit feedback via online forms and in-person options.



**Emergency Alerts:** Visual and audible alarms notify all employees and residents.



# 03

## Training for Accessibility

### Service Training for Staff and Volunteers

Implementing comprehensive service training for staff and volunteers is essential. Staff must be trained on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation to foster an inclusive environment, ensuring respectful and accessible service delivery to all individuals experiencing homelessness. Included in Appendix A is a training outline and handout template for staff and volunteers on providing accessible services that meets and exceeds AODA service standards.



Understanding AODA. Training for staff and volunteers on requirements of AODA and OHRC duty to accommodate



Service Excellence: Ensure staff and volunteers understand how to deliver respectful, inclusive and accessible services.



Communication & Assistive Devices: Equip staff and volunteers to effectively communicate with and support persons with various disabilities



Handling Emergencies & Evacuations: Conduct drills based on understanding of emergency evacuation plans and procedures.



# 04

## Improve Access to Built Environment

### Built Env Access

We are committed to ensuring the shelter is inclusive and accessible for all residents. Our approach is guided by AODA standards and the seven core principles of Universal Design(UD) that include: Equitable Use (design for diverse abilities without segregating or stigmatizing); Flexibility in Use (accommodate a wide range of preferences and abilities); Simple and Intuitive (easy to understand and operate); Perceptible Information (communicate necessary information effectively, regardless of sensory abilities); Tolerance for Error: (minimize hazards and errors); Low Physical Effort (use designs that require minimal effort0; and Size and Space for Approach and Use (provide ample space around fixtures and furniture for mobility and interaction).

01

Retrofitting for 2 barrier-free entrances including ramps, wide doorways, automatic doors and internal pathways (stair lift)

04

UD Features Enhancement: touchless/ lever faucets, counter height, clear pathways, non-slip flooring, rocker light switches at accessible height, smart and motion sensed technology

02

Accessible Washrooms: Ensure compliance with accessibility standards and space for mobility aids.

05

Outdoor Accessibility Enhancement: Accessible parking, inclusive playground and outdoor recreation space.

03

Enhance Wayfinding and Signage: braille signage; tactical directional indicators, high contrast/ large print maps, Use high-contrast, large-print signs to help clients navigate and understand services.

06

Safe Evacuation: emergency evacuation chairs, safety features in designated waiting areas, visual and audible alarms, and signage to support evacuation protocols





# 05

## Emergency Accessibility



Developing accessible emergency procedures is vital for homeless shelters in Ontario to ensure safety for all clients and staff. This includes creating clear plans that incorporate both visual and audible alarms, training personnel on emergency responses that accommodate diverse needs, and regularly reviewing protocols to meet AODA standards and promote inclusivity.

### Key Access

Effective emergency procedures must include accessible communication like visual alarms for the hearing impaired and audible alarms for the visually impaired. Staff training ensures safe evacuations. Casa will keep updated records to comply with Ontario's accessibility laws and improve safety.



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## Accessibility & Inclusive Service Training

Key takeaways from this training include: respect for personal dignity and choices; strategies for respectful, effective and inclusive communication; methods to proactively support accessibility; ensuring safety and accessibility for emergency evacuation for persons with disabilities; and accessible feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement.



### Module 1: Understanding Legislation

- Brief overview of accessibility legislation and standards.
- Our organization's policies on accessibility.
- Your role in providing accessible customer service.



### Module 2: Inclusive Communication

- Use of Inclusive language.
- Respectful communication.
- Ask how best to help and respect the person's choices.



### Module 3: Assistive Devices & Formats

- Recognize common assistive devices.
- Offer documents in accessible formats (large print, Braille, digital files).
- Use accessible communication methods (sign language interpreters, captioning).



### Module 4: Providing Effective Service to All

- Respect service animals and mobility aids.
- Ensure physical accessibility
- Be mindful of sensory sensitivities (lighting, noise).
- Respect diversity in language, culture, and abilities.



### Module 5: Emergency Preparedness

- Follow accessible evacuation procedures.
- Offer assistance safely when needed.
- Know exit routes and communicate clearly.



### Module 6: Feedback & Improvement

- Encourage clients to give feedback about accessibility.
- Be responsive to concerns.
- Use feedback to improve services.



# 07

## Phased Approach for Renovations for Physical Facility

This extensive renovation and retrofit project aims to enhance the safety and accessibility of a century-old residence. Funding for this initiative will be sourced from the organization's capital reserves, an Ontario Trillium Capital Grant, and additional grant opportunities.

### Phase One: Safety & Accessibility



Renovations are currently in progress to enhance safety and accessibility features throughout the property. These improvements include foundation repairs in the basement, removal of the chimney, reinforcement of structural beams and supports, and comprehensive fire safety upgrades such as the installation of a sprinkler system. The electrical system is being completely rewired to eliminate outdated knob-and-tube wiring. Additionally, new HVAC systems and an emergency generator are being installed. Modifications include reframing to widen doorways and reconfigure spaces, application of fire-rated drywall, installation of a security system, and incorporation of accessible, fire-rated doors. The project also encompasses the construction of a new kitchen, the addition of an accessible bedroom on the main floor, and installation of visual and audible fire alarms, among other enhancements.

### Phase 2: Safety and Accessibility

Renovations financed by the Ontario Trillium Foundation Capital Grant encompass the installation of an accessible outdoor walkway, an accessible outdoor patio, and an accessible bathroom equipped with a curbless shower, raised toilet, accessible sink, wave-motion hand dryer, and grab bars, as well as the addition of a stair lift on the main floor.

Additional accessibility improvements required include the provision of an accessible entrance to the shelter, an enclosed platform lift, the development of an inclusive playground, implementation of wayfinding systems, accessible signage, and designated accessible parking. Enhancements to emergency preparedness will involve the acquisition of emergency evacuation chairs, the integration of advanced safety features within the designated waiting area, and increased signage. Furthermore, the removal and replacement of asbestos siding will be undertaken to ensure safety and compliance.