

Accessibility for Patients with Disabilities Policy

The South East Toronto Family Health Team (SETFHT) is fully committed to ensuring our services are accessible for our patients, in alignment with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

All services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.

Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

Outlined below are the ways in which SETFHT will ensure accessibility for our patients with disabilities.

Assistive devices

Many of our patients use assistive devices, such as walkers, canes, or motorized scooters. Patients will never be denied service or discouraged from using our services on the basis of their use of an assistive device. We understand that the physical layout of our sites can sometimes make the use of these devices difficult.

- Recognizing that these devices are often essential to patient mobility, we will make every reasonable effort to accommodate patients who are using assistive devices. An example of such an accommodation would be to move the patient's appointment to a room that is more readily accessible.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Modifications to the way we present information to people with disabilities, whether in conversation or in written documents, are sometimes necessary in order for the patient to accurately comprehend the information. SETFHT will meet the information and communication needs of our patients with disabilities, by providing, upon request, information and communications materials in accessible

formats or with communications supports. The following sections provide specific information related to modifications of oral and written communication for patients with disabilities. In all cases – oral and written – the following applies:

- There will be no additional charge for information that SETFHT reproduces in an accessible format.
- SETFHT will consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

i) Oral communication

A wide range of disabilities are associated with difficulties in speaking, hearing, reading, and/or understanding communication. Broadly stated, when communicating with a person who has a disability, all staff should do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

- *In-person conversation:* Patients who have difficulty understanding face-to-face conversation due to a disability (e.g. hearing loss) may ask SETFHT staff to write-out the content of the conversation, either on paper or on a computer screen, for the client to read.
- *Phone conversation:* Patients who have difficulty understanding face-to-face conversation due to a disability (e.g. hearing loss) may ask SETFHT staff to write-out the content of the conversation in an email, so long as patient privacy is not breached. An example of this in practice would be sending confirmation of an appointment via email.

ii) Written communication

Not all written communication, such as brochures, is developed with accessibility for patients with disabilities in mind. SETFHT will work to ensure that any such materials, when feasible, are provided to the patient in an accessible format.

- If it is requested, a patient with a disability will be provided with written communication in a format that he/she finds to accessible. For example, a patient with a sight-related disability, this may entail converting a document to large print.
- It is understood that not all documentation can be converted to an accessible format immediately. However, whenever SETFHT converts written communication to a more accessible format it will do so in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability.

iii) If material is unconvertible

In cases where information or communications are unconvertible (i.e. if it is not technically feasible to put the information into the desired format), SETFHT shall provide the person requesting the information or communication with:

- an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and
- a summary of the unconvertible information or communications.

Website accessibility changes

The regulations associated with the AODA set forth requirements for organizations to make their websites more accessible to persons with disabilities. The timeline below reflects SETFHT's commitment to meeting those requirements.

- By January 1, 2013, the SETFHT website will feature the capability of enlarging print.
- By January 1, 2014, all *new* content on the SETFHT website will conform with WCAG (World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) 2.0 Level A.
- By January 1, 2021, all SETFHT website content will conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than:
 - i. success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live), and
 - ii. success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

Self-Service Kiosks

SETFHT has recently introduced tablets to assist with the check-in process for some patients, depending on their reason for visiting. These tablets are not mandatory and are only being used as a tool to increase efficiency. Patients are not required to use these tablets and staff members continue to check-in patients at our reception desks.

Use of service animals and support persons

Accompaniment by service animals and support persons is an important part of completing day-to-day tasks for many people with disabilities. SETFHT welcomes the proper involvement of support persons or service animals at all of its sites, in accordance with the guidelines in this section.

For the purposes of this section, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability: if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability *or* if the person provides a letter from a physician, nurse, psychologist, psychotherapist, audiologist, chiropractor or optometrist confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

- If a patient with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the patient must keep the animal with him or her.
- The requirements of the standard only apply to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access.

- We do not have to let anyone with a service animal into places or areas where the public does not have access.

Support persons

SETFHT welcomes support persons where necessary due to a patient's disability. At no point during a patient's visit will a patient with a disability be prevented access to his/her support person. SETFHT may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only for health and safety reasons and SETFHT will consult with the patient and take specific steps to provide access. Legislation notes that if a support person is required, any fee or fare for the support person must be waived; this would not be an issue regarding services at SETFHT, but the organization is aware of this requirement.

- SETFHT staff, while welcoming the use of support persons, are not to assume that patients with disabilities wish for their support person to be present at all times, particularly during medical exams or when confidential information is being shared.
- When in doubt as to whether a patient with a disability wishes for his/her support person to be present, staff should always ask the patient what their preference is, unless the presence of the support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.

Notice of temporary disruptions

The regular maintenance of facilities and equipment can result in the temporary disruption of some services. There are certain times at which such interruptions are not only inconvenient, but that they make our facilities and services inaccessible.

- In the event that SETFHT is aware of a service disruption (for example, scheduled elevator maintenance during clinic hours) we will advertise this disruption in advance whenever possible. Acceptable advertising of a disruption includes posting notification at the front desk, in patient waiting areas and/or on the SETFHT website. This should be done reasonably far in advance, whenever possible.
- Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.

Training of staff

All staff members and volunteers (including board members) have been trained on SETFHT's accessibility policy. All new staff members are also provided with accessibility training.

Process for patient feedback related to accessibility

Providing patients with disabilities an opportunity to give feedback on how SETFHT is meeting their needs is important, particularly in light of the diversity of special circumstances that SETFHT aims to accommodate. SETFHT will provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication support upon request. Feedback can be given in the following ways:

- An email through a link on the website.
- Written on a feedback form, available at the front desk check-ins.
- A phone call to 416-423-8800 x229, Stephanie Houghton, Human Resources Manager
- By submitting a digital storage device (such as a USB, diskette or CD) to the Human Resources Manager with the feedback