



Accessibility Annual Report 2021

An accessible place for persons with disabilities to work,
volunteer and experience compassionate care.



Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance
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A message from the Executive Vice-President and Chief Human Resources Officer of The Ottawa Hospital

While the pandemic has stretched the resources of the health-care sector, we at The Ottawa Hospital have never forgotten the importance of accessibility, particularly in times of great challenge.

Throughout the year, staff and volunteers ardently stepped up to identify, remove and prevent barriers from interfering with the delivery of much-needed care that our patients so deserved. We welcomed questions, comments, and suggestions throughout the year, resulting in new approaches to eliminate the barriers.

This year we put in place new practices in order to live by our vision of providing each patient with the world-class care, exceptional service and compassion we would want for our loved ones, including those with disabilities. I am pleased to present the report for this year which summarizes our achievements.

I encourage you to join us as we reflect on this year and acknowledge the resiliency we built during the pandemic, how it made us stronger and how it will help us to overcome new challenges we may face in the future. Together, we will continue to strive for accessibility in health care so that everyone has access to exceptional care at The Ottawa Hospital.



Renée Légaré, Ph.D., M.Sc., ICD.D

Executive Vice-President and Chief Human Resources Officer
The Ottawa Hospital

COVID-19

As the year progressed, The Ottawa Hospital continuously responded to challenges presented by the pandemic within the hospital and in the community. At the request of the provincial government, the hospital continued to manage two COVID-19 assessment centres as well as provided support to local long-term care facilities.

The Ottawa Hospital took over two vaccinations clinics located at the Nepean Sportsplex and the Horticultural Centre which were then assessed to identify and remove accessibility barriers. Feedback from the public about potential barriers was welcomed and accessible solutions were quickly put in place.

New Civic development

As the New Civic Development (NCD) group has completed phase two of five of this exciting project, we are pleased to announce that a new Accessibility Consultative Committee has been established for phase three to begin in early 2022. This committee will work very closely with the NCD project team in identifying and reviewing accessible features of the new campus that will be built near Dow’s Lake. See the cover photo of this annual report for a conceptual rendering of the design.

Members of this committee include the Coordinator of Accessibility, a manager, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a communication specialist, a patient advocate, rehab centre staff, a physician and two Carleton University students with disabilities. Each member brings with them a wealth of knowledge and lived experience that will assist the NCD project team in the design of the new campus, thus resulting in an accessible health care for all.

Marianne Keyes (Accessibility Committee member)

I was diagnosed with hearing loss as a child and wore a hearing aid for many years. Three years ago, I had cochlear implant surgery at The Ottawa Hospital. That surgery allowed me to hear again, and I will always be indebted to the hospital team.

Being a patient allowed me to experience the exceptional care that the hospital is known for and to see the efforts to make our hospital accessible to all. When I had my surgery, I was completely deaf until my implant was activated, and I was stressed as to how I would communicate with nursing staff. There was no need – they arrived at my bedside with a whiteboard so that I could read and acknowledge care instructions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges, and I am amazed at the effort of everyone to make accessibility a priority at the hospital while visitor restrictions are in place. Examples such as improving the screening stations and using clear facemasks have made big differences to those with hearing loss.

I am grateful to be part of the Accessibility Committee. This opportunity has given me an insight to see how things work at The Ottawa Hospital – so many departments, great leadership, and talented, dedicated staff.



Interpretation services

Connecting our patients with in-person interpreters continued to be a challenge for much of the year. During full visitor restrictions, our clinics continued to provide interpretation services using virtual options such as via telephone and secure video. As the year progressed and visitor restrictions eased, in-person interpretation resumed at all campuses.

Our Mobile Interpreter Unit (Mob-i), consisting of an iPad attached to a mobile stand and a Jabra speaker provided immediate access to audio and video interpretation services in both spoken and sign language. This was especially useful in emergency or urgent situations but was also used when scheduling an in-person interpreter was either not possible or not necessary.

There are seven Mob-is supporting medical units within The Ottawa Hospital. Those units are located at:

- The emergency departments at the Civic and General campuses (2 units)
- The birthing units at the Civic and General campuses (2 units)
- The Maternal Fetal Medicine Unit at the Civic Campus (1 unit)
- The Irving Greenberg Family Cancer Centre - Queensway Carleton Hospital (1 TOH unit)
- The cancer clinics at the General Campus (1 unit)

For more information about Mob-i, please reach out to interpretation@toh.ca.

Community partnerships

To address the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities, the hospital partnered with two community organizations to help create an outreach program and evaluate a training module for employers.

The United Way Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN) program asked The Ottawa Hospital to evaluate their four-part training module for employers and participate in four mock training sessions. The aim of these modules is to encourage employers to focus on the abilities of persons with various types of disabilities, identify ableism and reject age-old myths around persons with disabilities in the workplace.

A member of hospital staff living with vision and hearing loss was asked to share their experience as part of a four-part video series in the Research Education Accessibility and Design (READ) initiative by Carleton University.

The Ottawa Hospital is always looking for opportunities to promote accessibility, accommodation, and awareness. Partnerships like the ones above are great ways for The Ottawa Hospital to make a difference as a member of this community.

Training

The required AODA / accessibility training to all staff and new volunteers was provided through recorded sessions and live virtual training. Again, this year, the 2nd year medical students at the University of Ottawa received their training titled Concepts of functioning, disability and health: Accessibility, awareness and advocacy. In total, 3,388 people are now aware of their role in making health care more accessible for patients with disabilities.

Some of the trainees attentively participated in a session in self-discovery. 'A Moment of Reflection' is a journey that uses images and storytelling to help participants identify any signs of ableism within them, acknowledge them, and address them before their first day at the hospital. In doing so, their level of compassion and service to our patients is heightened as if they were meeting a family member of their own.

Valerie Fournier (volunteer)

On January 3, 2013, I was admitted to The Ottawa Hospital for a right leg amputation after my diagnosis of cancer. My healing from the surgery was punctuated with complications and several severe infections. After physically recovering, I was admitted to The Rehabilitation Centre in June of 2013, to be fitted with a prosthesis and begin my rehabilitation. Two months later, after the completion of my inpatient treatment and rehabilitation program, I was discharged with a plan to continue weekly outpatient treatments, gradually tapering off to monthly and then annual assessments.



I was then ready to redefine my life's journey. It was incumbent for me to find a new meaning and purpose for my life.

Grateful to and inspired by the many wonderful professionals at The Ottawa Hospital and The Rehabilitation Centre, I made the decision to share my time and talents as a volunteer. The obvious location to volunteer was at The Rehabilitation Centre, where I felt most comfortable and at home.

As my confidence increased, so did my abilities and performance as a volunteer, I had discovered a new and meaningful purpose for my life and a place to fulfill my need to contribute and give back. As an amputee and a disabled person, The Rehabilitation Centre was the perfect place for me to land. I understand the journey of trauma, rehabilitation, and permanent disability. I can relate to the patients on site. They can immediately relate to me. It is truly my home away from home.

The Ottawa Hospital has made every effort to support my needs as a disabled outpatient and as a volunteer, and I am deeply grateful. Thank you!

Position statement on physicians with disabilities

Physicians with disabilities can offer unique insight to their hospital institutions. Their lived experiences can enrich the learning and clinical environment, increase empathy for patients, and improve care for patients with disabilities. Unfortunately, these physicians can experience barriers to full inclusion if there are inadequate systems in place to meet their needs.

The Ottawa Hospital recently identified a void in policy for physicians with disabilities. The Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) at The Ottawa Hospital has since unanimously voted in favour of a position statement created for physicians with disabilities.

The statement provides principles that value these physicians and promote inclusion, with recommendations to eliminate barriers by providing accommodations and giving them equitable opportunities. The Ottawa Hospital's MAC Position Statement was published by Drs. C. Munro, M. Quon, and K. Gartke, ***Fostering Inclusion of Physicians with Disabilities at The Ottawa Hospital***, in the October 2021 issue of the Canadian Journal for Physician Leadership. To our knowledge, this is the first position statement designed specifically for physicians with disabilities at any Canadian hospital institution.

Our work also serves as an important call to action for all departments at the hospital to create inclusive policies and practices for physicians with disabilities to reduce structural barriers, improve their culture toward disability, and provide training for reasonable accommodations.

The Department of Medicine, for example, is developing an *Accessibility and Accommodation Policy* for its members and will be presenting and sharing it with other departments. Further education on the accommodations process will follow as well as qualitative evaluation of the policies from the perspective of the physicians with disabilities.

- As submitted by Drs. Camille Munro, Kathleen Gartke and Michael Quon

New AODA Health Care Standards

The process of developing new *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) standards for the health care sector resumed in late Spring of 2021. Representatives from The Ottawa Hospital were directly involved. On May 7, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility launched the public consultation phase of the 22 recommendations put together by the Health Care – Standard Development Committee (SDC). The SDC updated the recommendations based on public feedback. At year's end, this process is still ongoing. Meetings and discussions are scheduled for early 2022.

In order to participate in this unique process, TOH leadership as well as members of the TOH Accessibility Committee reviewed the recommendations, provided feedback, and identified potential challenges on some of the new proposed standards.

Stephanie Spooner (employee)

In my early twenties, while away pursuing a Kinesiology Pre-Med degree, I suffered a hemorrhagic stroke, caused by an Arteriovenous Malformation (AVM), which essentially means a tangle of thin-walled blood vessels in my brain had ruptured that day. The AVM required emergency brain surgery at a different hospital, followed by an airlift back to The Ottawa Hospital for a nine-hour surgery to repair the damage to my brain and skull.



I underwent many months of rehabilitation and years...and years of physiotherapy. The stroke left me hemiplegic, meaning I have paralysis on my left side. I have no fine motor control in my left hand, limited range of movement in my left arm and I walk with the assistance of either an orthosis or a more high-tech Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) device, which triggers the nerves in my affected leg to fire and lift my foot to correct foot drop.

I drive a modified car, with all steering wheel controls accessible by a multi-function knob that I can operate with my right (unaffected) hand. I will be on anti-seizure meds, likely for the rest of my life.

While I wasn't able to continue my studies to become a doctor, I did complete my Masters of Health Administration (MHA), and I look forward to making a difference in health care. I am also lucky to work with a team of friendly co-workers who are more than willing to take my arm or carry my bag and computer.

So, thank you TOH, for being an amazing employer and providing seemingly small but important accommodations that have allowed me to leverage my abilities, manage my disabilities and pursue my career and life goals.

AODA multi-year accessibility plan

This year, CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) identified the hospital's accessibility multi-year plan as best practice and forward thinking. Additionally, The Ottawa Hospital was honoured to grant the organization's request to share our plan with other health care providers.

Our current five-year plan will be coming to an end in 2022, and the next multi-year plan has already begun. That plan will likely span two years (2023-2024) to accommodate several external factors, such as an unclear timeline for the passing of new AODA standards for hospitals.

If the new standards become law during 2022, the hospital will develop a new five-year plan with the assistance of its Accessibility Committee members, leaders, and persons with disabilities.

Diversity and inclusion council

The Ottawa Hospital's Diversity and Inclusion Council was created this year. The objectives below were quickly endorsed:

- 1) Advance culture and inclusion efforts that are visible, actionable, sustainable and measurable.
- 2) Create a clear sense of accountability and awareness for culture and inclusion efforts hospital wide.
- 3) Recognize and reward inclusive behaviour.
- 4) Provide direction and support to Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), Patient Family Advisory Committees (PFACs) and other hospital groups.
- 5) Facilitate the sharing and adoption of culture and inclusion wise practices across the hospital and collaboratively within our community.
- 6) Identify the tools needed to advance the hospital's culture and inclusion objectives and be an advocate for resources.
- 7) Recognize and celebrate the diversity of the hospital.

This council has already undertaken many important initiatives including an environmental scan and an upcoming design jam. These initiatives will help identify opportunities for support from the committee to maximize impact and promote inclusive and diverse health care.

Ontario Health Care Network of Accessibility Professionals Updates (OHCNAP)



With more than 90 members representing both hospitals and long-term care facilities, OHCNAP continued to address new topics related to improving accessibility within the health care sector in Ontario. Some of the shared information was related to the pandemic and vaccination, the provincial public consultation, physicians with disabilities and more.

A word from the coordinator

The journey towards accessible health care is sparked by a vision of an inclusive environment for all. Be it by developing or adapting policies, through training or even via a simple conversation, accessibility is growing in importance, with so many opportunities to make a difference.

Accessible health care supports persons with disabilities. It also plays an important role in staff's personal journey towards positive lived experiences, continuing education, and successful career paths. The Ottawa Hospital acknowledges them by making itself an accessible place for persons with disabilities to work, volunteer and experience compassionate care.

Already, we are expecting exciting new events this coming year. In particular:

- New clear view facemasks will promote better communication between staff and patients with hearing loss or deafness.
- The Accessibility Consultative Committee, including members with disabilities, will provide the hospital with expertise and lived experiences to inform the design of the new Civic development.
- With an approved budget, the Accessibility – Built Environment Committee will make necessary accessibility-related renovations.

All of these initiatives, plus potentially new AODA standards, on top of the day-to-day delivery of accessible care will make 2022 a busy year. The Ottawa Hospital is proud to lead the way on accessibility locally and provincially, and we are engaged in our quest of making the health care sector equitable and inclusive for all our staff, volunteers, physicians, patients, and family members living with disabilities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Serge Falardeau". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "S" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Serge Falardeau
Coordinator, Accessibility Services and AODA Compliance
The Ottawa Hospital