

Accessibility Plan

[Home](#) / [Accessibility Plan](#)

About MCSS

- ▶ **Minister of Community and Social Services**
- ▶ **Minister of Children and Youth Services**
- ▶ **Organization Chart**
- ▶ **Regional Offices**
- ▶ **Legislation**
- ▶ **Boards, Commissions and Tribunals**

Ministry of Community and Social Services Ministry of Children's Services

2003-2004 Accessibility Plan

The printer-friendly version of the Accessibility Plan is available in MS WORD for your convenience.

- [Download the free MS WORD viewer](#)

Download the printer-friendly version of the Accessibility Plan		
	Standard Print	Large Print

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)
[Joint Accessibility Plan](#)
[Report on Achievements](#)
[Commitments and Strategies for 2003-2004](#)
[Methods to be Taken to Prevent New Barriers](#)
[Business Areas to be Reviewed](#)
[Actions to be Taken](#)
[For More Information](#)

Introduction

In 2001, there were an estimated 1.5 million people in Ontario with self-disclosed disabilities. This number is expected to increase as the population ages.

In December 2001, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) was passed into law. Its purpose is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

One of the requirements under the ODA is that Ontario government ministries, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, colleges, universities, and public transportation organizations develop annual accessibility plans to make programs, services and buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. The plans must be made available to the public.

In the Speech from the Throne, delivered on November 20, 2003, the Ontario government confirmed its commitment to working with Ontarians with disabilities on meaningful legislation that will allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province.

This document is the first annual accessibility plan for the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children's Services. The plan describes improvements to accessibility that the ministries have made to date and their commitments for the balance of the 2003-2004 fiscal year.

Joint Accessibility Plan

This is a joint accessibility plan for the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the new Ministry of Children's Services.

When this plan was prepared, there was one ministry known as the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services. It had the responsibility to provide income and employment supports for people with disabilities, many services for children with disabilities and their families, as well as services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Shortly before the release of this plan, the new Ministry of Children's Services was created. This new ministry now has responsibility for programs and services for children that had been a part of the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, including early years, child care and services for children with special needs. The remaining components of the former Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services currently comprise the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

These two ministries will continue to share administrative services such as human resources, financial planning, and communications. In addition, many of the programs of the Ministry of Children's Services will be delivered through the existing network of province-wide regional offices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. As these two ministries continue to work together closely, their accessibility commitments will also be a shared effort.

In this plan, the term "ministry" will be used for points that are historical and refer to the former Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services. The term "ministry" will also refer to commitments that are jointly shared by both ministries. When we say the ministry is strongly committed to removing barriers to people with disabilities, it is both ministries that share this important commitment. For items that are unique to one ministry only, we will refer to the name of the ministry or the program area within that ministry.

Report on Achievements

As a ministry responsible for many programs and services for children and adults with disabilities and for their families, a large part of our everyday work includes identifying and removing barriers to people with disabilities. In this section, we are presenting some of our achievements.

While we are proud of these accomplishments, we also recognize that there is much more work to be done and the process of removing barriers will be ongoing. The ministry is strongly committed to improving accessibility for people with disabilities in all aspects of our work.

Accessibility Plan Initiatives

The ministry established an Accessibility Planning Committee with representatives from each of the ministry's six divisions, five key corporate branches, as well as from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario (AMAPCEO). This committee includes several employees with disabilities. A number of key activities were undertaken to assist with the development of this year's plan:

- A questionnaire was sent to branches throughout the ministry to seek help in identifying barriers and solutions. Responses were used to establish the priorities to be addressed in the coming year and to develop a strategy to prevent new barriers.
- A memo from the Deputy Minister was sent to all staff to inform them of the ministry's *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA) initiatives and to ask for their assistance in identifying barriers and solutions.
- A confidential electronic mailbox was created to allow employees to identify barriers. This mailbox will remain in place so that employees can continue to identify barriers to themselves, their colleagues, applicants, clients, or the public.
- Throughout the accessibility planning process, the ministry ODA lead met with colleagues from other ministries to share best practices in accessibility planning.
- The ministry consulted with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

Achievements Relating to Key Sections of the ODA

Government Buildings, Structures, and Premises

In 1996, the ministry developed a ministry design standard to help meet the needs of staff and clients with disabilities. The standard includes both ergonomic and accessibility requirements. As a result, most ministry offices designated to serve the public have building entrances, reception and waiting areas, client service counters, interview rooms and male/female washrooms that are accessible. In most cases, these features exceed the barrier-free requirements described for them in the Ontario Building Code.

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) offices, which primarily serve people with disabilities, must also meet a checklist of additional ministry accessibility requirements. As a result, most ODSP offices now comply with the 1997 edition of the Ontario Building Code requirements for building entrances, reception areas and washrooms, even though they are located in buildings that pre-date these requirements.

Building or office renovations required to accommodate individual employees with disabilities or to accommodate clients or the public with disabilities, are addressed on a priority basis by the ministry Accommodation Planning Unit.

Several ministry staff, including employees with disabilities, participated on an Ontario Public Service Technical Sub-committee to document the evacuation issues of people with disabilities. The work of this sub-committee was considered in the development of recently updated evacuation procedures for the Queen's Park complex.

New Leases

The ministry will only consider new lease locations that comply with the barrier-free requirements contained in the 1997 Ontario Building Code.

Government Goods and Services

The ministry included accessibility and ergonomic requirements in the project development and implementation contract for the Automating Social Assistance Project and for the subsequent Business Transformation Project. For example, an assistive technology consultant was retained to

test the software to make sure that it met accessibility and ergonomic requirements.

Internet Site

The ministry's public website (www.cfcs.gov.on.ca) was made accessible to people with disabilities in December 2002. The new website for the Ministry of Children's Services (www.children.gov.on.ca) is also accessible.

In response to client concerns, the ministry has reduced barriers to information on a number of ministry programs, services, and supports by providing information on the Internet. This allows easy access from local communities and makes the information accessible to those who use assistive devices to operate their computers. The following is a selection of key webpages now available on the Internet.

- The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) webpage includes the revised ODSP policy directives as well as access to the ODSP handbook, Employment Supports brochure, office listings, and other information. ([ODSP](#))
- The Early Years Challenge Fund webpage provides information on grants available to help communities develop successful early years projects, including projects designed to increase accessibility. Information about these services and supports include descriptions of the programs, eligibility criteria, and how to access and/or apply for the grant. ([EYCF](#))
- The Ontario Early Years webpage describes the centres and services available across the province to help parents and caregivers give children under the age of six the best start in life. ([OEYC](#))
- The Children with Special Needs webpage provides accessible, one-stop access to information on services and supports for children with complex special needs and their families delivered and/or funded by the Ministry of Children's Services, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and the Ministry of Education. Information about these services and supports include descriptions of the programs, eligibility criteria, and how to access and/or apply for the programs. ([Special Needs](#))

Publications

The ministry provides official publications in accessible formats on request. In addition, Employment Supports forms are available in Braille, audiocassette, and large print.

Accommodation of Employees and Applicants with Disabilities

All staff were issued a communication reminding them of their rights and responsibilities for employment accommodation under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA).

All ministry managers and supervisors were directed to take the ODA training on accommodating employees and applicants with disabilities offered by the Shared Services Bureau. In addition, the training was recommended to non-management staff working in the areas of human resources, employee relations and health and safety. On the recommendation of individual managers, other staff have also taken this training.

The ministry has a long history of special initiatives in the area of employment accommodation of employees with disabilities, including past pilot projects to:

- identify barriers to assistive devices created by a software development program;
- change the IBM ScreenReader to make it compatible with ministry software;
- research accommodation options for complex accessibility cases; and,
- develop evaluation processes to assist employees and managers in selecting computer

accommodations.

During these pilot projects, the ministry provided advice and assistance on complex accommodations to several other ministries, including working with an elevator company to design and install a more accessible elevator control panel for an employee.

The ministry follows the Management Board Secretariat policy on employment accommodation, which requires managers to accommodate employees and applicants for work-related barriers based on individual needs. Accommodations ranging from flexible schedules and sit/stand workstations, to assistive technology for computer access, have been provided. Services such as sign language interpreters, readers, attendants, and job coaches are also frequently used. Consultants are often hired for work site assessments, customizing assistive technology to ministry software, and for job coaching, when required.

Over the years, the ministry has also researched and undertaken a variety of unique accommodations. Customizing a desk to accommodate the insertion of a wheelchair control, training several staff on the use of an EpiPen for a colleague with a severe allergy, providing alternate work techniques for an employee with a learning disability, and constructing a safe storage area for an electric wheelchair in a ministry parking lot are some examples.

On a regular basis, accommodations are also provided to applicants for the recruitment process. Examples include providing interpreters, readers, note-takers, accessible format materials, assistive technology, and extra time for tests or interviews. In one case, research was undertaken to identify the specific barrier to an applicant with an anxiety disorder, which resulted in a change to the interview panel format as an accommodation.

The ministry also has a dedicated Workplace Discrimination and Harassment (WDHP) co-ordinator and 41 volunteer WDHP advisors across the ministry. The co-ordinator and advisors provide employees with information on the options available to them to address any unresolved issues regarding employment accommodation and disability-related discrimination or harassment. In the past year, the WDHP co-ordinator has delivered information sessions on the WDHP program, including information on employment accommodation, to over 700 managers and staff across the ministry. During a period of significant redeployment of staff, the ministry used a team approach to redeploy employees with disabilities and medical conditions. Employment accommodation consultants provided advice on barrier removal in the redeployment process and for potential job placements.

A Human Resources office in the ministry is informally participating in co-operative education outreach programs, to provide youth with disabilities with unpaid practical work experience within the ministry. Three youth were placed in positions to help them develop the skills necessary for their successful transition from secondary school to the workplace or post-secondary education. Since their work placement experiences, all three have returned to the ministry through a competitive process and obtained paid positions under the Summer Experience Program.

Improving Accessibility for Clients and the Public with Disabilities

The Ontario Disability Support Program

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) has established a relationship with the ODSP Action Coalition, a coalition of organizations of and for people with disabilities, to identify and respond to barriers in the ODSP program. This consultation resulted in the creation of four working groups, which include ministry staff and coalition members. These working groups are focussing on removing barriers in the application process, the disability adjudication process, the Employment Supports Program, and local office service delivery.

The ODSP policy directives were changed to provide policy information in a simpler format and in plain language. As a result, staff have more flexibility in their decision-making, allowing them to

better accommodate the individual needs of people with disabilities.

In response to a concern raised by clients that information management problems were creating barriers, a new information management system and file room has been created in the Disability Adjudication Unit to help manage client correspondence more effectively. The unit has also changed internal procedures and conducted related staff training to fast-track disability determination packages.

The ODSP Health Status Report and the Activities of Daily Living Index were revised and combined into a single form after receiving extensive input from the Ontario Medical Association. The revised forms have been shared with staff from several legal clinics. The changes make the forms clearer and easier for medical professionals to understand, which should speed up the disability adjudication process.

To better respond to client service issues, ODSP staff have developed a draft of the model ODSP office which is a plan of future best practices for local and regional office design. It addresses issues related to physical and attitudinal barriers and promotes respect and dignity for ODSP clients.

Other Initiatives

In June 2003, the Ontario Works Branch held a forum with municipal delivery agents from across the province called "Beyond the Barriers". Participants shared best practices for meeting the needs of Ontario Works participants with multiple barriers to employment, including barriers faced by people with disabilities.

In developing the Ontario's Early Years Plan, some initiatives focussed on the service and support needs of children with special needs (e.g., mental illness, autism) and their families. Other initiatives are designed for children generally and benefit some children with special needs.

The Early Years Challenge Fund matches community contributions to support innovative community projects that meet the needs of children and families. Several projects have been funded that address accessibility. For example:

- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) established service delivery partnerships with the Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) in 18 areas within the province. This allows the CNIB to expand its current services to make OEYCs accessible for children who are blind or visually impaired.

A TTY line (Telephone Teletype or telephone device for the deaf) was established to complement the 1-800 toll-free number on the www.ontarioearlyyears.ca website so that parents with disabilities can access information about their local Ontario Early Years Centre.

Infant Development Programs are part of a continuum of early years prevention and early intervention programs in Ontario. One of their roles is to enhance the growth and development of infants and young children with developmental disabilities or at risk for developmental delay. These programs were expanded in 2001 to provide service to children aged 3 to 5 years.

In the fall of 2000, the ministry amended regulations under the *Day Nurseries Act* to permit the use of special needs resourcing and fee subsidies to improve access to approved recreation programs by school-age children (aged 6 to 12 years) with special needs. Special needs resourcing provides staff, equipment, supplies or services to support children with special needs in integrated child care settings, including approved school-age recreation programs.

In May 2001, a multi-year plan for developmental services was announced to enhance services and supports for adults with developmental disabilities and their families and to attract and retain more quality caregivers. The ministry has also made a commitment to build new places in the community for adults with developmental disabilities to live. In addition, the *Developmental Services Act* and its regulations were updated to remove outdated and insensitive language.

Commitments and Strategies for 2003-2004

The goal of this joint accessibility plan is to reduce barriers and improve accessibility for people with disabilities who are staff, clients, and members of the public.

The ministry is committed to three important areas for action this year:

- We will look at ways to prevent new barriers.
- Certain business areas will be reviewed to see if any barriers exist.
- The ministry will implement specific projects or activities in the areas of barrier identification and prevention, communications, facilities, and technology.

Methods to be Taken to Prevent New Barriers

During the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the ministry will undertake the following activities to prevent new barriers from being created:

- The Accessibility Planning Committee will continue to meet to implement the ministry's accessibility plan. This Committee will provide a focal point for questions about accessibility planning.
- The web master will conduct accessibility reviews of all new webpages for the Internet websites to ensure they meet accessibility standards.
- The Human Services Information and Information Technology Cluster, which is responsible for information technology systems, will research accessibility standards for software purchase development, design, and upgrade.
- The Cluster will also develop a procedure for ministry information systems staff to identify and report barriers in information systems.
- The business planning process outlines the ministry's overall direction and key strategies for the upcoming fiscal year. In order to ensure that future proposed programs and services stemming from this process do not create barriers, the Human Resources Branch (HRB) will develop a checklist on ODA compliance for staff to use during the business planning process. For example, this checklist will help to integrate accessibility planning considerations into procurement, communications and building and accommodation decisions.
- The Human Resources Branch will also develop materials on ODA requirements to include in the training session for ministry staff involved in the business planning process.
- The ministry's Human Resources Branch is also currently developing a training framework and curriculum for new managers that will include an ODA module.
- A handout on ODA rights and responsibilities will be developed and included in the participant's handout package for the orientation session for new employees. Similar content will be included in the on-line orientation website. In addition, new managers and supervisors will be directed to undertake the on-line ODA training.
- The ministry's Communications and Marketing and Human Resources branches will work together to develop a communications plan to increase awareness among all staff of the ministry's ODA responsibilities and awareness of disability issues.

Business Areas to be Reviewed

The following ministry business areas have been identified as priority areas for review in 2003-2004. This section is divided into three parts: acts and regulations; policies and programs; and practices and services.

Acts and Regulations

Through our ministry-wide consultation process, no act or regulation was identified for a barrier review analysis in the current year. In future years, the ministry will identify relevant acts or regulations for a barrier review analysis as part of our regular business planning cycle.

Policies and Programs

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The contract requirements for the vendors who provide employee assistance programs to ministry staff will be reviewed to determine if a TTY line is available and if their website is accessible.

Disability Awareness Training

The ODSP disability awareness training session will be reviewed and upgraded. The new content will be incorporated directly into the current ODSP program training module. This will make disability awareness an integral component of program training for ODSP staff and is designed to improve customer service to ODSP clients. In addition, the ministry will try to get organizations involved in helping to improve disability awareness training for staff.

Disability Adjudication Operational Review

The Disability Adjudication Unit's processes will be reviewed to identify and remove barriers to ODSP program applicants.

Practices and Services

Recruitment Practices

Recruitment procedures and practices will be reviewed to determine if any barriers exist. This initiative will include research on best practices in other jurisdictions.

TTY Services

The Human Resources Branch will review TTY line access to ministry offices that serve the public.

Evacuation Procedures

Research into the practices of other jurisdictions will be conducted to identify a variety of strategies for effective evacuation of people with disabilities. This review will be made available to managers to assist them in updating or creating site-specific evacuation plans to meet the individual needs of people with disabilities in their buildings.

ODSP Service Delivery

A review of the current approach to service delivery will be conducted for the ODSP program. This will include a review of the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to expand it and include program information. The IVR allows social assistance recipients to obtain details about their cases and benefits through a touch-tone phone, seven days a week.

ODSP Information Management Processes

The ODSP program management network will develop a strategy to review business processes related to information management in an effort to remove barriers that have been identified.

ODSP System Generated Letters

The purpose, content and format of ODSP system generated letters to clients will be reviewed to identify and remove barriers such as the extensive use of legal terminology, repetitiveness of

information and complex language. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide input.

ODSP Office Assessment

The ministry will conduct a review of all ODSP offices to determine which aspects of the proposed model office will be implemented and how.

Actions to be Taken

In addition to the above commitments, the ministry is planning to complete the following activities. The Accessibility Planning Committee will monitor the implementation of these initiatives, provide regular reports to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and update staff. The committee will continue to consult with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario on the implementation of this plan, and on preparations for the 2004-2005 plan.

Barrier Identification and Prevention

This year the ministry will:

- Maintain and monitor the confidential electronic mailbox account Access.MCFCS@css.gov.on.ca to allow all employees to continue to identify barriers to people with disabilities in any aspect of their work.
- Inform all staff of their responsibility for complying with the "Guidelines for Implementing the Procurement Provisions of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*" when they are distributed by Management Board Secretariat.
- Support managers and employees in effectively locating consultants to assist in accommodating employees and applicants with disabilities or health issues by developing a Request for Qualification for ergonomic consultants.
- Develop a checklist for providing accessible meetings and make it available to staff.
- Research best practices on managing fragrance sensitivity in the workplace.
- Build and strengthen linkages between regional ODSP offices and local advocacy groups (e.g., CMHA, CNIB), service providers and community agencies.
- Develop a strategy to review the current service delivery model of ODSP.
- Revise the ODSP program training curriculum to include the revised ODSP policy directives and methods for using staff discretion to accommodate the individual needs of clients.
- Research and develop a tool (e.g., checklist) on accessibility for an interministerial policy development process for children with complex special needs.

Improved Accessibility in Communications

This year the ministry will:

- Purchase TTYs for the Communications and Marketing Branch and for the Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT) Help Desk that offers technical support for the SDMT software.
- Create an on-line toolkit on the appropriate use of TTYs and make it available to all staff.
- Inform staff of the procedures for responding to requests for accessible formats of official

documents.

- Research options for more efficiently providing accessible format versions of official ministry documents.
- Explore options for providing ODSP forms, letters, and other written information in accessible formats.

Improved Accessibility of Facilities

This year the ministry will:

- Implement new Government of Ontario barrier-free design guidelines when they are released by the Ontario Realty Corporation.
- Revise the Manager's Guide to Accommodations Services (a guide on building and office design) to include sections on the accommodation of employees with disabilities and the requirements of the ODA.
- Review and verify potential barriers that were identified during the ministry barrier-identification exercise. Areas to be reviewed include physical barriers relating to limited accessible parking, office and washroom doors, layout of work areas, meetings areas and an elevator. The ministry will create a list of priorities for action.

Improved Accessibility in Technology

This year the ministry will:

- Make the intranet site (an internal ministry website available to all staff) accessible. An intranet strategy will be developed by March 2004.
- Identify and promote the Business Consulting/Quality Assurance (BC/QA) group as the focal point for information systems staff to identify and report barriers in information systems and software.
- Research accessibility standards for information hardware and software.
- Conduct an ergonomic assessment of the Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT) software to identify potential barriers or health and safety issues for staff. SDMT is a state-of-the-art database for social assistance programs.

For More Information

Questions or comments about the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children's Services accessibility plan are always welcome. Please contact:

For general inquiries:

In Toronto call: 416-325-5666.

Toll-free from across Ontario: 1-888-789-4199.

TTY number: 1-800-387-5559.

E-mail: mcssinfo@gov.on.ca

Ministry website addresses:

Ministry of Community and Social Services: www.cfcs.gov.on.ca

Ministry of Children's Services: www.children.gov.on.ca

The Human Resources Branch is co-ordinating the accessibility planning process for both ministries. You may also direct questions or comments to:

Colette Kent
Director, Human Resources Branch
Phone: (416) 327-4755
TTY: (416) 327-4817
E-mail: colette.kent@css.gov.on.ca

Visit the Ministry of Citizenship's Accessibility Ontario web portal at: www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/accessibility. The site promotes accessibility and provides information and resources on how to make Ontario a barrier-free province.

Alternate formats of this document are available free upon request from:

Publications Ontario
880 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M7A 1N8. Tel: (416) 326-5300
Out of town customers except Ottawa call: 1-800-668-9938
In Ottawa, call (613) 238-3630 or toll-free 1-800-268-8758
TTY Service 1-800-268-7095

Queens Printer for Ontario

ISSN 1708-3222 (Online)

Ce document est disponible en français.

The printer-friendly version of the Accessibility Plan is available in MS WORD for your convenience.

- [Download the free MS WORD viewer](#)

Download the printer-friendly version of the Accessibility Plan		
	Standard Print	Large Print

| [central site](#) | [feedback](#) | [search](#) | [site map](#) | [français](#) |
| [MCSS Home](#) | [What's New](#) | [Programs](#) | [Publications](#) | [Forms](#) | [News Room](#) |



This site is maintained by the Government of Ontario, Canada.

[External Links Disclaimer/Privacy](#)

Ministry of Community and Social Services
Copyright information: © [Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2003](#)
Last Modified: 3/16/2004 1:59:12 PM