

2018-2023 MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Introduction

This is the first Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan was developed to comply with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005). It will be submitted to the Province of Ontario in accordance with the reporting requirements of the AODA. This accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will put in place to improve full access to and participation in all aspects of the Centre for people with disabilities.

Accessibility Vision

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre's vision is to be a community leader in providing inclusive and accessible services that meet the needs of community members and promote their community participation. To that end, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is one of the only non-disability oriented community non-profit organizations, and the only immigrant-serving organization in the Province of Ontario to have a full-time disability specialist on staff.

Statement of Organizational Commitment to Accessibility

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.



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Identifying and Eliminating Barriers to Accessibility and Inclusion

A barrier is anything that gets in the way of people with disabilities participating in day-to-day activities, or taking part in opportunities that are available to the public. There are many kinds of barriers:

1. Physical barriers found in buildings and spaces that stop people from using a service or going to an event. For example:
 - a. Stairs, rough pavement or narrow pathways
 - b. Poor lighting
2. Information and Communication barriers stop people from getting information. For example:
 - a. Small print
 - b. Complicated websites
3. Attitudinal barriers are when people think and make decisions about disability based on incorrect information. For example:
 - a. Thinking that people with disabilities can't work
 - b. Thinking that it is too expensive to make places accessible
4. Systemic barriers are policies, practices, or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities. For example:
 - a. A hiring process that does not provide accommodations for people with disabilities

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken active steps to identify barriers and remove them to be as accessible and inclusive as possible. We have taken the following steps to make our facilities, programs and services as accessible as possible.

- An annual physical accessibility audit of all agency sites
- Making all program material available in accessible formats upon request
- Alerting our community via the internet that such services are available
- Continuous accessibility enhancement of our agency website
- Accessible customer service training
- Periodic reviews of our policies and practices to assess inclusiveness and accessibility

In addition to these regular activities, we recognize that we may not be aware of some barriers people face when accessing our premises, programs and services. We have, therefore, appointed a specialized staff person to receive and address any concerns regarding accessibility and inclusion.

Please contact

accessibility@dixiebloor.ca

(905) 629 – 1873 Ext. 257

<http://dixiebloor.ca/programs/newcomers/disability-support-services>

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Reflecting Past Accomplishments

Since the year 2008, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken active steps toward accomplishing our accessibility vision.

In 2009, our Disability Settlement Counsellor conducted an informal accessibility audit of the agency premises and practices. At that time, it was noted that our main location at 1420 Burnhamthorpe Road East, Mississauga was an accessible building with a well-maintained and functioning elevator. It was noted, however, that our offices did not have automatic door openers, the reception desk was too high for people using wheelchairs and those of short stature to reach, and the turning radius in the halls and many of the offices was insufficient to accommodate a standard wheelchair. Furthermore, there was no information about the agency's programs and services available in accessible formats. Additionally, there were no formal written policies related to accessibility. It was also noted that some of our programs were offered in premises that are not accessible to people with disabilities. In the subsequent years, there has been much progress in many of these areas.

In 2010, Dixie Bloor entered into a contract with the City of Mississauga to house our main office in a new building at 3650 Dixie Road, Mississauga. At that time, requests were made to ensure that the new space had automatic door openers on all public doors, raised and Braille signage, and an auditory system to alert elevator users of their arrival between floors. At the same time, the agency began implementing procedures to enable staff to identify disability-related needs, our IT department began plans to make changes to the agency website which include accessibility features, and arrangements began for the purchase of a new front desk that would enable reception staff and clients to visibly see each other from a seated position.

In 2011, the agency addressed many of the issues identified in the 2010 report. Improvements were made to the accessibility of the agency website, with the implementation of adjustable font sizing functionality. The Main Office, the Employment Centre, the Fieldgate St. English Language Classes and the Childcare classes all had automatic doors installed. High visibility signage was installed in both the exterior and interior spaces of the building. Ergonomic equipment was purchase to alleviate work-related pains and protect the health of staff and volunteers. The height of the reception desk remained a barrier, which was being accommodated by staff who would physically move to the side of the desk to serve clients who were unable to be seen. Also, with the impending enactment of the Customer Services mandate under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, to be in force January 1st 2012, staff, volunteers, students, and agents of Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre received Accessible Customer Service training and certification. Over 200 staff were trained in December 2011 in adherence with the legislation.



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In 2012, the Disability Settlement Counsellor continued to train and certify staff on the regulations under the Accessible Customer Service mandate. The agency also contacted a community partner who translated all agency flyers into Braille while internally these same documents were translated into Plain Language and Large Print. Written procedures were developed to ensure that all community events are accessible to all members of the community and that special needs can be identified and accommodated as seamlessly as possible. Members of each department of the agency also engaged in a communication café session during which we discussed areas of strength as well as need in terms of the agency's ability to serve people with disabilities. It was acknowledged that the agency has taken great strides toward greater accessibility and inclusion. The suggestions from this meeting focused mainly on enhancing the agency profile in the community with regards to accessibility, and working with community partners to ensure their services (particularly immigrant oriented services) are responsive to disability needs and vice versa. At the end of 2012, the accessibility of the website is improving in stages while the front desk remains an issue.

As of 2016, all new hires, staff and volunteers of Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre undergo Accessible Customer Service Training in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. An Evacuation Notice has been posted on all exit doors for the convenience of staff and clients. Requests for reasonable accommodations from staff have been accepted and fulfilled. Documentation pertaining to this has been included in the respective staff member's personnel file. Documents and notices are available in accessible formats. For example, in large print, or with images. The Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood website is available in accessible formats in accordance to WCAG 2.0 level A requirements. Level AA is in the process of being tested and will be available by January 1, 2020. The agency is compliant with the Employment Standards Act in regards to recruitment, employee accommodation, employee return to work, and performance management. Two accessible/automatic doors were installed to accommodate people with disabilities. Scent-free zone notices have been posted.

Current Accessibility Status and Action Plan

Accessible Emergency Information

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to providing the customers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. We also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

As of January 1, 2014, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken the following steps to make all emergency Information is available in accessible format, and promoted as:

- Compile emergency information in accessible formats upon request
- Provide emergency information such as evacuation plans in an accessible format in public areas

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Training

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre continues to provide training to employees, volunteers and other staff members on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training is provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other staff members.

To ensure employees are provided with the training needed to meet Ontario's accessible laws, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has created a training presentation that each staff member, volunteer and agent reviews. The presentation also contains a knowledge and application test which each person is required to complete and submit to the Disability Settlement Counsellor for approval prior to certification.

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to document the ongoing accessibility training conducted by **December 1st of each year**:

- Maintain an ongoing active list of all staff, volunteers and agents
- Maintain the list of certified members and provide continuous training as needed

Information and Communications

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We will consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

As of January 1, 2014, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken the following steps to make all new websites and content on those sites conform with WCAG 2.0, Level A:

- IT staff has reviewed the WCAG 2.0 Level A standards and develop a plan for site changes
- IT staff has implemented changes, engage in site testing, and apply for WCAG recognition

As of January 1, 2015, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken the following steps to make ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request:

- Develop various electronic means for people to provide feedback such as a specific section on the website and a voicemail option on the central phone line, as well as a suggestion box
- Implement other means as suggested by community members

As of January 1, 2016, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken the following steps to make sure all publicly available information is made accessible upon request:

- Post information on the website once it is accessible
- Implement other steps as suggested by community members



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Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to make all websites and content conform with WCAG 2.0, Level AA by **January 1, 2020**:

- IT staff will review the WCAG 2.0 Level A standards and develop a plan for site changes
- IT staff will implement changes, engage in site testing, and apply for WCAG recognition

Our IT staff will continue making improvements to Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre's websites and content conform to WCAG 2.0, Level A and all future amendments.

Employment

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

As of January 1, 2014, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired:

- Include a statement on all recruitment advertising that Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre encourages all qualified applicants to apply and is committed to providing reasonable accommodations upon request at any stage of the hiring process, and that disclosure of such need will not impact a candidate's opportunity to be hired.
- Retain a staff file for accommodations requests, provided and denied, and engage in active annual review of accommodation needs of existing staff

As of January 1, 2014, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken the following steps to develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability:

- HR to document the accommodation needs and requested accommodations, subsequent steps or resolutions
- Meeting with the staff member as needed in order to assess emerging accessibility and accommodation concerns and needs

As of January 1, 2014, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has taken the following steps to ensure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account in performance management and career development processes:

- Job performance will be evaluated with reference to the accessibility needs of the employee with disabilities, including whether requested or other agreed upon accommodations and supports were implemented
- Career development plans will reflect the skills and capabilities of the individual employees without reference to the employee's disability needs insofar as these are accommodated to be negotiated subsequent to job placement.

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Accessibility of Public Spaces

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will take the following steps to prevent and remove identified accessibility barriers **ongoing**:

- Audit the public spaces of the agency to ensure that: interior doors and hallways have a minimum turning radius of 60" x 60"; all doors are equipped with lever handles rather than knob handles; all light switches are flat panel rather than small toggle switches; all signage is both word and pictorial with bold colour applications; all images are captioned on the website
- In addition, all light switches are flat panel rather than small toggle switches; all signage is both word and pictorial with bold colour applications; that all images posted on the website are captioned.
- Actively seek feedback from all community members as to their accessibility requirements and document emerging identified barriers
- On a priority basis, develop plans and measures for the timely removal of barriers

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre will put the following procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to its accessible parts of its public spaces **ongoing**.

- Engage in ongoing monitoring of public spaces such as the elevator, entrances, hallways and stairs to ensure their accessibility
- Address disruptions to accessibility as soon as they are identified (same day)
- Alert all community members of the nature and duration of the disruption via the website, telephone outgoing message, and postings around the premises
- Advise community members of alternate measures available to meet their needs during the disruption

Accessibility Compliance Report

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is required to report on the agency's adherence to the above mandates. The reports were submitted successfully in 2012, 2014, and in 2017. Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre is currently compliant with the legislation and is on track to be a leader in the community for accessible and inclusive service. The next compliance report will be complete in 2020.

Ongoing Efforts

Dixie Bloor continues to make efforts to create an accessible organization. The organization strives to accomplish the following goals **before December 2023**:

- Translate all publicly available information into accessible formats
- Update AODA training as required
- Continue to accommodate clients at the reception desk