



## Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2023 – 2028)

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## **CEO Message**

**Canadian Mental Health Association, Thames Valley Addiction & Mental Health Services** (CMHA TVAMHS) is committed to promoting accessibility and the removal of barriers for its clients, employees, and other stakeholders to foster an inclusive and culturally-safe environment. CMHA TVAMHS will continue to implement measures that attract, accommodate, develop, and retain highly-talented employees from diverse backgrounds. As an organization, CMHA TVAMHS will continue to respect and uphold the requirements as outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and its associated Regulations and will strive to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner. CMHA TVAMHS will ensure that it seeks input from clients, their families, employees, and other stakeholders, to assist in the identification of barriers that may hinder full and effective participation on an equal basis with others.

## **Introduction**

CMHA TVAMHS's Vision is resilience for all through positive mental health and freedom from addiction. With services available across Thames Valley, CMHA TVAMHS strives to support the needs of individuals with disabilities, as well as its employees, peer supports, student placements, and volunteers. The organization has worked tirelessly to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility and to integrate policies, procedures, standards and practises into every aspect of its work. CMHA TVAMHS follows the legislative obligations for accessibility. This plan demonstrates how CMHA TVAMHS shares the responsibility of making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians.

## **Section One: Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers**

### ***Customer Service***

CMHA TVAMHS remains in compliance with the Customer Service Standard. All employees are required to annually participate in accessibility training that provides them with the skills to identify, remove, and prevent customer service barriers for individuals with disabilities. As well, accessibility policies are available and easily accessed for employees who seek further guidance or clarification in order to promote accessibility and remove barriers.

CMHA TVAMHS makes available its "[First Contact](#)" form, which can be accessed through the CMHA TVAMHS website without the need to attend at a physical location. Individuals can simply complete and submit the form electronically to begin the process of engaging in services. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated that organizations offer alternative formats to provide services to individuals. CMHA TVAMHS created and has maintained services in alternative formats so that individuals have the ability to be provided with services virtually or in person. There is also the ability to attend groups virtually or in person.

CMHA TVAMHS provides services that are free of charge for individuals. CMHA TVAMHS prioritizes rent subsidy programs to remove financial barriers its clients in housing.

CMHA TVAMHS works closely with the JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion) Committee and its working groups to build stronger processes that address health equity and social inclusion (HESI) within its services. These collaborative efforts help to ensure a barrier-free environment for the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and stronger support to those within its workforce who require an accommodation because of their disability.

### ***Information and Communications***

CMHA TVAMHS has implemented a variety of measures addressing accessibility to ensure information is gathered or distributed to its stakeholders. These include:

- Ensuring its website is equipped accessibility tools that allow someone to increase or decrease the text size, apply grayscale, underline links, and provide readable forms
- Ensuring that information on matters affecting accessibility to a site (i.e. elevator being serviced) is disseminated in a timely manner and through a variety of communication channels (signage, website updates, social media updates, calls to clients)
- Ensuring that candidates for employment are offered the opportunity to request an accommodation during the recruitment process
- Providing potential candidates with appropriate accommodation(s) for their disability during the recruitment process
- Providing employees with the opportunity to provide feedback through its virtual comment box

- Ensuring that comments provided by employees are reviewed and addressed on a continual basis
- Developing succinct policies and procedures on workplace accommodations for employees
- Ensuring that those who assist in implementing workplace accommodations are supported to develop appropriate solutions that will allow an employee to continue to work and be successful in the workplace
- Ensuring that employees are aware that the organization will provide individualized workplace emergency response information for employees with disabilities, as necessary
- Offering clients, the opportunity to provide feedback (both virtually, verbally, and through suggestion boxes at various CMHA TVAMHS sites)
- Ensuring that feedback received is reviewed and addressed on a continual basis
- Implementation of the Ontario Perception of Care (OPOC) tool
- Working collaboratively with the JEDI Committee and its working groups to understand and address priority accessibility concerns.

CMHA TVAMHS continually strives to find alternative communication methods that will prompt accessibility and remove barriers (ie: the supportive listening texting feature has assisted an individual with mutism).

### ***Employment***

CMHA TVAMHS welcomes an employment candidate to request an accommodation for an interview and the hiring team is trained to address their request such that the candidate can fully participate in the interview. CMHA TVAMHS has detailed policies and processes in place to guide the accommodation process should an employee require this for their disability.

### ***Built Environment***

CMHA TVAMHS adheres to the accessibility standards for any physical space where:

1. The design supports the accessibility plan as developed by CMHA TVAMHS, as required by AODA legislation.
2. The design meets the requirements of the 2012 Ontario Building Code with regards to barrier free design.

3. In addition to the Ontario Building Code requirements, the design meets the ministry's design guideline for accessibility by having a participant washroom that accommodates a 1500mm wheelchair turning radius.
4. All spaces where participants will encounter staff have been reviewed for accessibility, and I confirm that the design supports accessible counter heights, seating, and lighting around the reception and waiting areas, where registration would typically occur.

## **Section Two: Strategies and Actions**

### ***Customer Service***

CMHA TVAMHS is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities. CMHA TVAMHS is committed to ensuring that clients with disabilities will be provided with high quality services in a timely manner within a barrier-free environment.

CMHA TVAMHS, through the Employee Experience (EE) team, assigns AODA Refresher online training to all employees on an annual basis. CMHA TVAMHS also requires its employees to complete additional training annually on the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

CMHA TVAMHS needs to be aware of the diversity of the population served. CMHA TVAMHS should strive to have its workforce reflect the population they are serving. It is important that CMHA TVAMHS develops policy, processes and resources for employees to utilize interpretation services to its clients. Once completed, this needs to be communicated to all employees so that they know how to access the appropriate interpretations services for their clients in a timely manner. Not only must CMHA TVAMHS must address communication barriers, it must also consider how different cultures view health and disability to understand and address potential attitudinal barriers to accessing services. This may be accomplished by strategically building trust with specific cultural leaders to understand how to better support individuals to attend programs and services at CMHA TVAMHS.

A Client and Family Advisory Committee is in the process of being developed post-amalgamation. This is an important component of ensuring that the programs and services provided by CMHA TVAMHS continue to improve in terms of removing barriers to accessibility.

Individuals are made aware of the options available to them to provide feedback on their accessibility to obtain services. The growth of the organization through amalgamation, the vast geographical expanse of the organization, the number of sites, and the variety of services provided could be a barrier. It is important to ensure that processes are in place to review client accessibility concerns. This would include sites where feedback can be provided through physical boxes as well as processes for electronic feedback. Currently the Communications Team monitors feedback provided electronically. The Communications Team is committed to forwarding concerns in a timely manner to the appropriate leaders for attention, and they should be commended for their diligence. All sites should find ways to document their processes for addressing concerns that are provided directly to workers at a site.

It is recommended that the XLT (Manager and Director Team) uses its monthly meetings to provide an ongoing process that identifies and removes accessibility barriers for its clients. These barriers may be financial in nature (high cost), barriers to employment, transportation and community integration. By having a regular agenda item on the XLT meeting, there will be a regular opportunity to identify and remove these barriers.

### ***Psychologically safe workplace***

CMHA TVAMHS must ensure that it is committed to providing a psychologically safe workplace to allow employees to feel confident in communicating accessibility concerns when discovered in their day-to-day work.

Leaders should have a working knowledge of what should be done to promote accessibility and remove barriers. Leaders should be provided with opportunities for continuous learning and growth so that they can lead their teams to find accessibility solutions. Team meetings should offer an opportunity to allow employees to bring forward accessibility concerns and time should be allowed for teams to discuss solutions.

### ***Information and Communications***

Using a variety of communication methods to share emergency procedures, emergency plans, and public safety information is reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at CMHA TVAMHS. The growth of the organization and the number of sites could be a barrier. In this regard, the SLT should

continue to ensure that the posting of required documents and information at all sites is done with equal importance.

An accessible website and web content is an important accessibility requirement. Any changes made to the website by contracted vendors is reviewed to ensure compliance. The Communications Department should ensure that there is at least one Communications employee who is knowledgeable of the accessibility requirements for information and communication, and that that employee will be responsible for ensuring compliance when changes are made to the website, web content, and any other social media platforms used by CMHA TVAMHS to provide information to the public.

CMHA TVAMHS needs to be cognisant of barriers that may arise due to evolving technology, upkeep of personal devices, or issues more specific to the population served. Through awareness of the needs of its clients, CMHA TVAMHS must commit to providing resources (ie. Community Wellness guides in paper copy, Reach Out bookmarks, appointment business cards) in formats that do not require technology and are available in public spaces and at no charge.

CMHA TVAMHS will continue to use the OPOC results specifically around the environment (*the program accommodated my needs related to mobility, hearing, vision and learning, etc.*) to identify areas for improvement and to create action plans to address these areas.

### ***New or Redevelopment of Public Spaces, including Spaces for Obtaining Services***

CMHA TVAMHS is committed to engaging accessibility consultants to ensure that any future new or redeveloped public spaces will meet or exceed accessibility requirements. This will include the redevelopment / new build of any outdoor paths of travel to and from CMHA TVAMHS public sites, as well as accessible on and off-street parking, any service counters and waiting areas. The SLT will ensure that at least one Manager is assigned to gather feedback from individuals with disabilities and to oversee accessibility requirements for future new or redevelopment public spaces that are not covered by the Ontario Building Code.

When seeking out new locations CMHA TVAMHS leadership needs to ensure the elimination of transportation barriers so that individuals with disabilities are able to participate in the full range of services and other activities.

### ***Maintenance of Accessible Elements***

CMHA TVAMHS uses maintenance contracts to ensure that the accessible elements for all sites remain in good working order and that procedures are in place for handling temporary disruptions if an accessible element is not in working order. The growth of the organization, and staffing changes could be a barrier for ensuring that appropriate and timely notice is provided for temporary disruptions to accessible elements. The SLT must continue to ensure that employees at all sites are familiar with the procedure for communicating a temporary disruption to an accessible element at a site.

## **Section Three: Timelines & Updates**

### ***XLT Meetings***

CMHA TVAMHS should develop a check-list that reviews accessibility barriers for new and redeveloped programs. It should also use its monthly XLT meeting to review accessibility barriers and outline timelines in which to address the barriers that have been indicated. By having “Accessibility Concerns” as a standing agenda item on its XLT meetings, progress made in the removal of identified barriers and areas needing improvement can be monitored and updated as needed.

### ***Revising Multi-Year Plan***

While this plan is a multi-year plan, CMHA TVAMHS needs to commit to reviewing and revising the plan, on an annual basis. The Director of Enterprise Risk Management should be involved in the annual review of this plan, together with the relevant VPs. This review could take place each September, as schedules permit