Policy Direction – Accessibility Standards

Rationale and Relationship to Vision, Mission, and Values

In fulfilling our mission, MS Canada strives at all times to provide services in a way that respects the inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons. To do so, we use reasonable efforts to ensure that our policies and procedures are in alignment with federal and provincial legislation and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that sets out principles of independence, dignity, non- discrimination, inclusion, integration and equality of opportunity.

The *Accessible Canada Act*, as well as provincial regulations, set out requirements for organizations to follow to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities, to achieve the realization of a Canada without barriers through the identification, removal, and prevention of accessibility barriers. The mandate is the realization of a Canada without barriers on or before January 1, 2040. MS Canada will adhere to all applicable regulations in the jurisdictions in which we operate.

Although this policy direction addresses the work of MS Canada that is outward facing, MS Canada also adheres to these principles (independence, dignity, non-discrimination, inclusion, integration and equality of opportunity) in its internal work. This is evident in MS Canada's various internal policies, practices, and procedures in areas such as volunteer experience and human resources, as well in its provision of programs and services supporting persons living with multiple sclerosis.

MS Canada will support the vision of a work environment that is accessible, inclusive, barrier-free, and discrimination-free for all workers, including persons with disabilities. MS Canada will strive for disability confidence by becoming competent in managing a workforce that includes workers with disabilities including both new hires and existing employees. We will focus on removing barriers and providing accommodations or adjustments, without requiring our employees to explicitly identify their disabilities.

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Frequency of review:	Three years or less
First approved:	June 25, 2021
Last reviewed:	October 15, 2026
Next scheduled review:	October 2029

Policy Objective

MS Canada is committed to establishing policies, practices, and procedures on providing programs and services to people with disabilities. The objective of this policy direction is to ensure MS Canada aligns with the Accessible Canada Act and meets the requirements of all applicable provincial/territorial legislation in providing programs and services to persons with disabilities.

Policy Application

The policy direction applies to all staff, volunteers and organizations or individuals with whom MS Canada has contracted to interact with the public or provide programs and services to the public on MS Canada's behalf.

Policy Details

The policy sets accessibility requirements for the way in which programs and services are provided.

MS Canada is committed to establishing policies, practices and procedures on providing programs and services to people with disabilities.

The Provision of Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

MS Canada will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices, and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, non-discrimination, inclusion, integration and equality of opportunity by:

- Ensuring that all people receive the same value and quality of service;
- Allowing people with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing programs and services, as long as this does not present a health and safety risk;
- Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in an accessible manner;
- Taking into account individual accommodation needs when providing programs and services; and
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the individual's disability.

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MS Canada is committed to excellence in supporting all individuals including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

1. **Assistive devices-** we are committed to supporting people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use, or benefit from our services. We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities while accessing our services.

2. **Communication** - we will communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability. We will train staff who communicate with individuals in our MS community on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

3. **Service animals -** we are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers, and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

4. **Support persons -** a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be welcomed to have that person accompany them on our premises. As a general principle, fees will not be charged for support persons who accompany a person with a disability to access our services. In cases where fees are required, confirmation will be provided ahead of time on what fee would be charged.

Notice of temporary disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities used by people with disabilities, MS Canada will notify individuals promptly. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be placed at public entrances and on our website, as appropriate.

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Training

MS Canada will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who take care of the public or other third parties on our behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

MS Canada will provide training as soon as practicable. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures, policies, or practices.

Feedback process

Individuals who wish to provide comments on the way MS Canada provides services to people with disabilities can do so via letter, telephone, or email (accessibilitystandards@mscanada.ca) to the Vice-President, People and Community.

MS Canada will respond to the comments within a reasonable time. Normally the response time will be within 30 days after receipt of the feedback. If additional time is needed to receive further clarification or details, the response time can be extended to an additional 30 days. If MS Canada extends the time, the individual sharing the comments will be notified within 30 days of the date on which MS Canada received the original communication.

Complaints will be addressed according to MS Canada's regular complaint management procedures.

Modifications to this or other policies

We are committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, any changes made to this policy will consider the impact on people with disabilities.

All policies of MS Canada will respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Authorization

This policy direction was approved by the MS Society of Canada Board of Directors, June 25, 2021.

- Reviewed and approved October 2026

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Policy Details

The Executive Team is authorized to develop detailed procedures and the training needed to accompany this policy direction.

Executive Champion

The Vice-President, People and Community is the executive champion for the Accessibility Standards Policy Direction and related procedures.

Monitoring and Compliance

The Vice-President, People and Community is responsible for leading the monitoring of the application and compliance of this policy direction and the related procedures in conjunction with other members of the Executive Team.

Policy Review

The policy direction is to be reviewed at a minimum every three years following June 25, 2021. The related procedures are to be reviewed on an annual basis by the Executive Team.

- October 15/16, 2026 – Reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors

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Definitions

Disability - Under the Accessible Canada Act, "disability" means:

"…any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society."

Executive Team – The most senior level of staff leadership within MS Canada comprised of the president and chief executive officer; senior vice-president(s) and vice-president(s). One person may hold more than one position. The president and chief executive officer may alter the composition of the executive team as required from time-to-time.

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