

## **Policy Direction – Accessibility Standards**

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### **Rationale and Relationship to Mission, Principles and Values**

In fulfilling our mission, the MS Society of Canada (MS Society) 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 (July 2019), as well as provincial regulations, set out requirements for organizations to follow in order to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility, and will also put in place compliance and enforcement measures, as well as an accessibility complaints mechanism. The mandate is the realization of a Canada without barriers on or before January 1, 2040. The MS Society will adhere to all applicable regulations in the jurisdictions in which we operate.

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

### **Policy Objective**

The MS Society 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 the MS Society 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.

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<i>Frequency of review:</i>	Five years or less
<i>First approved:</i>	June 25, 2021
<i>Last reviewed:</i>	June 25, 2021
<i>Next scheduled review:</i>	June 2026

## Policy Application

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

## Policy Details

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

The MS Society 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 Society of 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 a similar 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.

The MS Society 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

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ensure that our staff are 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, the MS Society 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.

### **Training**

The MS Society will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with 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 Society of Canada will provide training as soon as practicable. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures, policies, or practices.

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## Feedback process

Individuals who wish to provide comments on the way the MS Society provides services to people with disabilities can do so via letter, telephone, or email ([accessibilitystandards@mssociety.ca](mailto:accessibilitystandards@mssociety.ca)) to the vice-president, People Innovation & Volunteers.

The MS Society 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 the MS Society extends the time, the individual sharing the comments will be notified within 30 days of the date on which the MS Society received the original communication.

Complaints will be addressed according to the MS Society'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 the MS Society will respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

## Authorization

This policy direction was approved by the MS Society board of directors, June 25, 2021.

## 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 (VP), People Innovation & Volunteers is the executive champion for the Accessibility Standards Policy Direction and related procedures.

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## Monitoring and Compliance

The VP, People Innovation & Volunteers 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 five years following June 25, 2021. The related procedures are to be reviewed on an annual basis by the Executive Team.

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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 the MS Society comprised of the president and chief executive officer; presidents; 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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