

September 14, 2016

## Fact Sheet: Ontario Region

### How changes to AODA affect Ontario's housing co-ops

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Amendments to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) took effect on July 1, 2016. These amendments consolidate two standards (*Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* and *Integrated Accessibility Standards*) into a single customer service accessibility standard.

This fact sheet is a guide for updating your housing co-op's policies and practices to be in compliance with the AODA amendments.

#### Background

AODA came into effect in 2012. The [AODA section](#) on our website has resources to help housing co-ops be in compliance with the Act. With the recent amendments, co-ops may need to further update their policies or practices.

#### What does it mean for our co-op?

Under the new consolidated regulations, housing co-operatives are affected by changes in the following areas:

- **Training**
- **Service animals**
- **Support persons**
- **Accessible documents**

## Training

The most significant regulatory change affecting housing co-ops is organizational training requirements.

Prior legislation required only persons who dealt with the public or someone involved in creating customer service policies and procedures to be trained in providing accessible customer service.

New regulations now require every employee, volunteer, policy developer and any other person who provides goods, services and facilities on behalf of the organization to be trained on how to provide accessible customer service.

After seeking legal counsel, CHF Canada recommends that accessible customer service training be provided to directors, staff, committee members and members. In most cases, co-ops can provide training using free resources.

*Example:* a co-op chooses a level of training adjusted to the duties of the person.

<b>General membership</b>	presentation on the co-op's AODA policy
<b>Committee members</b>	interactive online training that gives volunteers the tools they need to interact with people with disabilities: <a href="http://findmyspark.ca/resources">findmyspark.ca/resources</a>
<b>Staff and directors</b>	more comprehensive training sessions: <a href="http://AccessForward.ca">AccessForward.ca</a>

## Service animals

An expanded list of regulated health professionals may now authorize a service animal.

*Example:* In order to accept the designation of a service animal, a co-op may have previously asked for a letter from a doctor. Now members can provide a letter from a variety of health professionals, including:

nurses	optometrists
audiologists	mental health therapists
chiropractors	physicians
occupational therapists	psychotherapists

## Support persons

Prior to requiring the presence of a support person, an organization must first

- consult with the person with a disability, *and*
- consider the health and safety implications based on available evidence.

The presence of a support person may then only be required if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health and safety of the person or of others on the premises. Where the presence of a support person is required, any applicable admission fee or fare must be waived for that person.

*Example:* A co-op may have previously required a support person for a member with a disability to volunteer on a certain committee. Now the co-op must first consult with the individual member before deciding if it's necessary.

## Accessible documents

An organization is still required to provide certain documents or information in a format that takes into account a person's disability. Now the organization must make these documents accessible, upon request, by arranging for accessible formats or communication supports.

*Example:* A co-op may provide a member with a visual impairment with a digital version of a report compatible with that member's accessibility software. If the member has no computer, they may request access to one or for a volunteer to read the report aloud.

General information and requirements on AODA can be found on the [Government of Ontario website under "accessibility laws"](#).

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For more information on the AODA amendments, please contact Peter Gesiarz, Keith Moyer or Dawn Richardson at the Ontario Region office by phone at 1-800-268-2537 or email [pgesiarz@chfcanada.coop](mailto:pgesiarz@chfcanada.coop), [kmoyer@chfcanada.coop](mailto:kmoyer@chfcanada.coop) or [drichardson@chfcanada.coop](mailto:drichardson@chfcanada.coop). In southwestern Ontario, call Denise McGahan at 1-800-644-3949, or email [dmcgahan@chfcanada.coop](mailto:dmcgahan@chfcanada.coop).

**Warning:** The co-op should not use this information instead of legal advice. Co-ops and situations are different from each other and people understand things differently. This document assumes things that may not be true of your co-op or your situation.