MULTI-YEAR ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2024-2029

Developed August 2024

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Introduction

SurexCARE is a community-based non-profit organization providing housing, support and assistance for adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. SurexCARE is a Registered Charity and is a *provincially* incorporated non-profit. We promote social inclusion, provide choice, and facilitate independence in directing supports and assistance. We respect the rights of all adults in service. Our Mission is to empower people with differing abilities to achieve what is important to them by:

- Enriching the quality of their lives by providing the highest standard of *care.*
- Developing innovative person-centric *programs* and services.
- Embracing continuous improvement to drive *change.*
- Engaging and attracting champions who believe and contribute *funding* to our cause.

We strive for **a world that recognizes and embraces the strength of differing abilities,** and our values are – Dedication, Inclusion, and Dignity for ALL. As such, we direct our energies to support the individuals we serve in our core areas of housing and community inclusion while also working to influence policy and advocate for system change.

SurexCARE has completed its first formal Accessibility Plan in August 2024. The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis thereafter for needed revisions. SurexCARE's Accessibility Plan addresses accessibility issues at our Housing and Community Support program locations and in the community at large. SurexCARE is committed to identifying and removing barriers that reduce the ability of our clients to fully access both our programs and the community. SurexCARE's current Accessibility Plan is designed to summarize the following:

- Those items that the agency intends to address
- Those items that were identified, but that the agency does not feel can be addressed at this time for one reason or another

Future revisions of the Accessibility Plan will address new items that have been brought to the agency's attention.

Some of the items contained in the current and future Accessibility Plans will have firm deadlines for completion, while others will not.

Statement of Commitment

SurexCARE is committed to providing excellent housing and support services that are, to the extent possible, equally accessible. Our workers reflect, in their everyday performance, our commitment to creating a more accessible Ontario, and preventing and eliminating barriers experienced by persons with disabilities. We have experience accommodating and adapting the services we provide to meet the needs of our tenants and clients with disabilities. We strive to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner and in a way that meets their individual needs. We ensure that our service delivery supports the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA): independence, dignity, integration and participation, and equal opportunity.

SurexCARE respects and upholds the goals and requirements set forth under the AODA and its associated regulations. SurexCARE will ensure that its policies, procedures and best practices are consistent with the accessibility standards established under the AODA and will work to identify and remove physical, attitudinal and systemic barriers.

General Requirements

i. **Accessibility Policies**

SurexCARE has developed, implemented and maintains a Statement of Policy and Procedure (SPP) on *Accessibility* (5.07) and a Statement of Accessibility Practices. Other SurexCARE policies and procedures related to the AODA requirements include:

5.01   Employee Relations Principles SPP
5.02   Employment Principles SPP
5.05   Diversity and Human Rights SPP
5.06   Workplace Harassment SPP
5.11   Accommodation on the Basis of Family Status SPP
5.12   Accommodation on the Basis of Gender Expression – Identity SPP
5.13   Accommodation on the Basis of Religion – Creed SPP
6.02   Recruitment Selection SPP
6.11   Employee Personnel Files SPP
13.1   Client Rights SPP
13.2   Client Intake and Admission SPP

Our Statement of Accessibility Practices is posted on our organization website at www.surexcare.com and the other policies and procedures listed above are publicly available on request and provided in an accessible format as needed. These policies and procedures are always accessible to personnel (employees, volunteers and students) on SurexCARE's internal server. Changes to policies and procedures are communicated to personnel on an ongoing and annual basis. Personnel are required to confirm in writing that they have read and understood the policies and procedures.

ii. **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

SurexCARE has developed a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2024-2029) which is posted on SurexCARE's website. The plan will be provided in an accessible format, when requested. SurexCARE will prepare annual status updates on what has been done to achieve the Accessibility Plan. Updates will be posted on SurexCARE's website and will be provided in an accessible format, when requested.
The Plan will be reviewed and updated at least every five years based on changing accessibility requirements and feedback from internal and external stakeholders.

Training

SurexCARE is committed to providing training to all personnel (employees, volunteers and students) on the purpose of the Act, the requirements, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations* (IASR) and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it relates to people with disabilities. Mandatory training is provided as a key component of SurexCARE's onboarding/orientation process.

Changes to policies are communicated to staff and training is provided on an ongoing basis and whenever there are changes. Training records indicating the names of staff, and the dates of completion are maintained.

Training includes:

- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disability.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.
- How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods, services or facilities to a person with a disability.
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the
- provider's goods, services or facilities.

Information and Communication Standards

Feedback

SurexCARE has processes for receiving and responding to feedback about the way it provides housing and services to people with disabilities. The processes are posted on SurexCARE's website. The feedback process specifies the actions that the organization will take if a complaint is received about the way it provides housing and services to people with disabilities.

- We value your input on our accessibility efforts and compliance with AODA and IASR.
- The feedback process can be initiated by contacting us via email at info@surexcare.com or by phone at 1-416-469-4109 x2100

Format of Documents

SurexCARE will provide accessible formats and communication support for their services and materials, upon request. This is provided in a timely manner, considering the person's accessibility needs due to disability. SurexCARE will consult with the person making the request to determine the accessible formats or communication support needed. This is done at a cost no more than the regular cost charged to other people. SurexCARE informs the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication support.

If for some reason SurexCARE is not able to provide material or services in accessible formats, we will provide the reasons why and provide a summary of the important points.

Billing

SurexCARE is committed to providing accessible invoices to all service users who access fee charging programs and services. Invoices shall be made available in a range of accessible formats including hard copy or secure e-mail. Upon request invoices shall be created in large print.
Personnel shall answer any questions service users may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone or via secure e-mail.

Accessible Websites and Web Content, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA

SurexCARE is committed to ensuring the accessibility of its web content to all stakeholders and visitors with disabilities. SurexCARE's website is currently being upgraded (August 2024) and designed to comply with WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards for web accessibility in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standards outlined in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA).

SurexCARE manages and maintains one website – www.surexcare.com

SurexCARE has two social media channels:

1. Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/SurexCAREToronto
2. LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/surexcare/

Customer Service Standards

Accessible Customer Service Policy

SurexCARE developed the *Statement of Accessibly Practices* which includes procedures regarding communication, telephone services, assistive devices, billing, use of service animals, use of support persons, as well as the procedure for feedback and complaints.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption, SurexCARE shall provide service users with as much advance notice as is reasonable. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The notice shall be placed on SurexCARE's website, at public entrances and at reception in SurexCARE premises. If clients/participants will not reasonably have access to notifications through these means, personnel shall make every effort to contact them by phone or e-mail to inform them of the disruption.

Use of Service Animals

SurexCARE welcomes visitors with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal in areas commonly accessed by the public. At no time shall a person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal be prevented from having access to their service animal.

Use of Support Persons

SurexCARE welcomes visitors with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. At no time shall a person with a disability, who is accompanied by a support person, be prevented from having access to their support person while on SurexCARE premises. Support persons who participate in a program or service for the purposes of supporting a person with a disability shall not be charged a fee.

Employment Standards

SurexCARE is committed to inclusive and accessible employment practices that attract and retain qualified employees with disabilities. By removing barriers across the employment life cycle, we create a workplace that is diverse and accessible.

Recruitment

All postings (internal and external) include notices about the availability of accommodations for disabilities, where needed to support the participation of persons with disabilities in recruitment processes. All postings include the statement:

"In accordance with Ontario Human Rights Code, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and SurexCARE's Accessibility policy, accommodation will be provided in all parts of the hiring process. Applicants need to make their needs known in advance."

Job applicants who are selected for an interview are notified that accommodations are available, upon request in relation to the materials or processes to be used.

If a selected applicant requests accommodation, we will consult with the applicant and provide suitable accommodation that considers the applicant's accessibility needs due to disability. When making an offer of employment we notify the successful applicant of SurexCARE policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

Informing employees of supports

SurexCARE informs its employees of its policies used to support its employees with disabilities, including, but not limited to, policies on the provision of job accommodation that considers an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

SurexCARE provides the information to new employees as part of the orientation and on-boarding process

SurexCARE provides updated information to its employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodation that consider an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

Accessible formats and communication support for employees

Where an employee with a disability requests it, SurexCARE will consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for:

(a) information that is needed to perform the employee's job; and
(b) information that is generally available to employees in the workplace.

SurexCARE will consult with the employee making the request to determine their needs for an accessible format or communication support.

Workplace emergency response information

SurexCARE will provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary, and the employer is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.
If an employee who receives individualized workplace emergency response information requires assistance and with the employee's consent, the employer shall provide the workplace emergency response information to the person designated by the employer to provide help to the employee during an emergency.

SurexCARE will provide the information required under this section as soon as possible after the employer becomes aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.
SurexCARE will review the individualized workplace emergency response information when:

a. the employee moves to a different location in the organization;
b. the employee's overall accommodations needs have changed; and
c. when SurexCARE reviews its general emergency response policies.

Documented individual accommodation plans

SurexCARE has a statement of policy and procedure for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. The process includes the following components:

1. The way an employee requesting accommodation can participate in the development of the individual accommodation plan.
2. The means by which the employee is assessed on an individual basis.
3. The way the employer can request an evaluation by an outside medical or other expert, at the employer's expense, to assist the employer in determining if accommodation can be provided and, if so, how accommodation can be provided.
4. The way the employee can request the participation of a representative from their bargaining agent, where the employee is represented by a bargaining agent, or other representative from the workplace, where the employee is not represented by a bargaining agent, in the development of the accommodation plan.
5. The steps taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information.
6. The frequency with which the individual accommodation plan will be reviewed and updated and the way it will be done.
7. If an individual accommodation plan is denied, the reason for the denial will be provided to the employee.
8. The means of providing the individual accommodation plan in a format that takes into account the employee's accessibility needs due to disability.
9. Individual accommodation plans will:
   a. if requested by the employee, include any information regarding accessible formats and communications supports provided,
   b. if required, include individualized workplace emergency response information, and
   c. identify any other accommodation that is to be provided.

Return to work process.

SurexCARE has a return-to-work process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability-related accommodation to return to work. The process includes the steps that SurexCARE will take to facilitate the return to work and includes documented individual accommodation plans. The return-to-work process referenced in this does not replace or override any other return-to-work process created by or under any other statute.

Performance management

SurexCARE's performance management process will consider the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans.

Career development and advancement

SurexCARE's career development and advancement process will consider the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities as well as any individual accommodation plans.

Design of public spaces standard

SurexCARE does not have any designated public spaces. All our supportive housing locations are only accessible to those individuals who live there, their families who may visit, and our staff. Although we strive to ensure our housing is as accessible as possible, some of our locations are older homes that do have areas accessible only by stairs. It may not be possible to make some of these older homes fully accessible. Our Multi Year Accessibility Plan seeks to address these areas when funding is available to retrofit our locations (where possible) to make them more accessible to those with physical disabilities and mobility issues. (see our Accessibility Plan 2024-2029 below)

Measuring Results and Seeking Feedback

Accessibility Status Reports
- We will create yearly reports outlining how we've achieved our goals and legislative requirements.
- These reports will be accessible on our website and can be provided in different formats upon request.

Reviewing Feedback
- We will assess and learn from feedback received throughout the year to enhance our processes.
- This information may be incorporated into our accessibility reports and long-term plans.

Revisions to Accessibility Plan
- If feedback, public input, or our internal processes suggest the need, we will update our multi-year plan.
- Revised plans will be accessible on our website and can be provided in alternative formats upon request.

Identification of SurexCARE Barriers

Identification of Barriers

In preparing this Accessibility Plan, SurexCARE worked to identify accessibility barriers by:

● Consulting with Individuals supported and staff where possible and these concerns were used and contributed to the identification of issues and potential ideas on how to rectify them. Some issues were anecdotally identified and were also useful in the development of this plan.

● The agency's leadership routinely identifies maintenance and property issues throughout the agency. This information was used to identify property issues that negatively impact the accessibility needs of the people supported by the agency.

● The agency's incident and hazard reporting policies and procedures also expose accessibility issues on an ongoing basis. The information collected from these reports was also useful in the development of this plan.

Standing Items of Concern

"Standing Items of Concern" are items that tend to be broad in nature, and it is unlikely that there is a single strategy that will eliminate the barrier. However, they are items of importance for SurexCARE to try to resolve over time and as funding permits. Note that most of our locations are not open to the public and we continue to work towards more accessible spaces to support our clients and staff with changing needs.

SurexCARE Accessibility Plan 2025-2029

Area(s) of Concern	**Architectural**. An architectural barrier is any physical factor that makes accessibility difficult for an individual. This may include narrow doorways, bathrooms that might need to be made more accessible, alarms that are not able to be heard by individuals with hearing impairments, or even something as simple as the location of furniture.
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	As the people we support age, they have increasing needs related to equipment and modification to their environment to keep them, and the staff who support them, safe. Many clients now have mobility issues that make it unsafe to move about in their housing environment. We have transferred some clients to alternative, internal SurexCARE housing to accommodate their need to be in homes with one floor. However, several of our locations have stairs that clients have to traverse. In those locations, we are exploring the cost of installing stair lifts and/or elevators and the feasibility of obtaining funding for these renovations.

Future Goals	**Barrier #1:** Stairs to bedrooms in the Dentonia, Hampton, Hurndale and Manorwood group home locations.
	Strategies to Remove Barrier: Installation of Stair lifts in these locations to support clients with mobility issues to reach the upper floor of their home.
	Potential Obstacles: Cost and space for lift, lack of experienced staff at proposal writing, lack of available funding.
	Persons Responsible: Manager of Group Living for estimates, Senior management for budgeting and Grant request.
	Target Date: Unknown, depends on obtaining funding
	Barrier #2: Most locations (Hampton, Dentonia, Manorwood, Military Trail, Corinne, Community Supports Program, Grace Hartman and Head Office) do not have fully accessible washrooms as there needs to be a 60-inch diameter turning radius to be considered fully accessible.
	Strategies to Remove Barrier: Add a second bathroom to the space that is fully accessible or renovate the existing washroom if possible.
	Potential Obstacles: Cost and location for plumbing, and space/square footage, lack of experienced staff at proposal writing, lack of available funding.
	Persons Responsible: Senior Manager of Operations for estimates, Senior management for budgeting and Grant request.
	Target Date: Unknown depends on obtaining funding
	Barrier #3: The building where SurexCARE's head office is located does not have accessible washrooms. The actual head office is small, and it could be challenging for a person using a wheelchair to maneuver through the office space and access filing cabinets drawers at higher levels.
	Strategies to Remove Barrier: Widening doors, purchasing different filing cabinets, moving to a more accessible office space.
	Potential Obstacles: Cost and availability of suitable commercial rental space, cost of moving head office location, cost of renovations to existing space, existing space is not owned by the agency.
	Persons Responsible: Owner of building for possible renovations to building, Senior management for search for new rental space and to obtain funding for renovations and/or move.
	Target Date: Unknown

Area(s) of Concern	**Attitudinal**. An attitudinal barrier is a preconceived (usually negative) attitude that people have towards people we support. Examples of this may include attitudes of neighbours or other community members, or the lack of "person first" language used by employees.
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	The rights of the people we support are sometimes not respected or recognized. They are sometimes disregarded without due process in the name of safety, liability or perceived liability. It is often thought that people with developmental disabilities can't make decisions for themselves. Negative attitudes of community members can sometimes stigmatize the people we support. This is addressed on an ongoing basis through follow-up where such concerns are expressed. Raising the profile of the agency and its mission is also one way to address this. We are also members of several Provincial Associations whose role is to highlight the needs of our client population and advocate for increased funding to improve services.
Future Goals	**Barrier:** The rights and needs of the people we support are sometimes neglected or dismissed. The right to equally participate and be included in our communities is sometimes restricted. **Strategies to Remove Barrier:** More advocacy on the impact of discrimination and stigma on our client population, providing more education to the public on the experience of individuals with development and intellectual experiences. Facilitate and enable individuals with developmental disabilities to be able to speak for themselves. **Potential Obstacles:** Time and resources needed to advocate with various groups and develop and deliver education. **Persons Responsible:** Senior Management **Target Date:** December 2025

Area(s) of Concern	**Financial**. A financial barrier is anything that may mean that a service is restricted because of a lack of sufficient financial resources. Financial barriers may exist at the agency level or may be specific to funds possessed by persons supported.
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	Funding and finances for people we support are generally insufficient, limiting community participation and quality of life. SurexCARE is active in provincial associations that advocate for additional funding. We also work with our funder, MCCSS, to apply for additional funds as needed. We also work to support our clients to apply for ODSP and Passport Funding to be able to access additional personal funds to facilitate inclusion to community supports/activities.

Future Goals	**Barrier:** Funding is often not available to fund special projects/events/activities **Strategies to Remove Barrier:** Continue to boost our fundraising efforts, continue to look for opportunities for apply for grants, continue to lobby our funders for increased funding **Potential Obstacles:** Ability to designate time to do grant applications, fundraising, and drafting funding proposals. Lack of experienced staff at proposal writing. Time and resources to develop the process. **Person(s) Responsible:** Senior Leadership **Target Date:** Ongoing

Area(s) of Concern	**Communication.** A _communication_ barrier looks at anything that inhibits information being accessible and understandable to all. Examples may include the possible absence of devices available to persons supported or staff to be able to be understood by others, or promotional materials that are not present in formats that are easily understandable.
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	Program information assumes a relatively high level of literacy. The agency attempts to address this via the use of plain language in many documents, especially those for clients and their families (rights, complaints procedure), however this is an issue for our staff as well, many of whom English is not their first language.

Future Goals	**Barrier:** Person Centered Plans (PCP) assume a relatively high level of literacy. **Strategies to Remove Barrier:** Develop pictorial versions of PCP where appropriate. **Potential Obstacles:** Time and resources to develop the process **Persons Responsible:** Group Living Managers, Managers of Compliance and Quality Assurance **Target Date:** Ongoing as PCP are reviewed and accessible formats are needed **Barrier:** Consistent direct messaging is difficult to achieve **Strategies to Remove Barrier:** Continue to promote the use of email with all staff as a form of communication; Train staff on the use of email and our internal shared drives where documents are saved; increase communication with our stakeholders and staff using our new website; adapt a new Client Software System (ShareVision) so that all staff have up to date, easily accessible information about the people we support; use of plain language in all communications. **Potential Obstacles:** Time and staff resources to implement and train staff. Cost of new equipment and software **Persons Responsible:** Senior Leadership and administrative team **Target Date:** August 2025 **Barrier:** Written material is not accessible in multiple languages – the cost of translation services is prohibitive. **Strategies to Remove Barrier:** Determine which languages would be priority for translation; Translation of materials into multiple languages based on our client population, apply for funding or grants for translation services. **Potential Obstacles:** Cost of translation services **Persons Responsible:** Senior Leadership **Target Date:** Unknown

Area(s) of Concern	**Transportation.** A *transportation* barrier speaks to situations in which service recipients are unable to reach or participate fully in services because of the lack of suitable and available transportation
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	Lack of accessible and reliable public transportation is an issue. The agency has a fleet of accessible vehicles however we still rely on public transportation to facilitate inclusion in community support programs and outings/events in the community. The people supported rely greatly on transportation provided by SurexCARE through agency vehicles and there are times where needs cannot be accommodated by internal agency resources.

Future Goals	**Barrier:** Funds available for the replacement of accessible vehicles.
	Strategies to Remove Barrier: Complete an assessment of current accessible vehicles and estimate the remaining useful life. Develop a vehicle replacement plan for agency vehicles. This will be used to proactively apply for new funding and grant applications.
	Potential Obstacles: Time and expertise to reasonably estimate remaining useful life; time and expertise to develop funding and grant proposals; availability of funding sources.
	Persons Responsible: Senior Leadership, Senior Manager of Operations, Finance Team.
	Target Date: December 2025

Area(s) of Concern	**Community Integration**. A _community integration_ barrier is anything that may limit an individual's ability to fully access their community in a way of their choosing
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	Items listed under "Attitudinal", "Transportation" and "Financial" are related to Community Integration barriers – see those sections.
Future Goals	As above under "Attitudinal", "Transportation" and "Financial" are related future goals – see those sections.

Area(s) of Concern	**Technology.** A technology barrier is related to a need of a stakeholder to access technology to ensure communication or inclusion into services.
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	SurexCARE as well as the people we support have limited access to technology which supports the provision of quality services and greater participation and inclusion in the community.

Future Goals	**Barrier:** People we support do not have appropriate access to technology. They could participate more in services and supports with the help of technology. **Strategies to Remove Barrier:** Invest time in researching appropriate technology that could address this issue. **Potential Obstacles:** Time and cost of software and equipment, lack of available funding **Persons Responsible:** Group Living Managers **Target Date:**

Area(s) of Concern	**Other.** A barrier that is not easily categorized **Lack of affordable accessible housing/Lack of housing**
Standing Items of Concern/Areas needing improvement	There is a lack of housing accessible and affordable housing in Toronto. This makes it difficult for agencies to expand services or obtain alternative housing settings as our clients' needs change. This also makes it difficult for our agency to recruit personnel as this issue also impacts our staff and potential staff.
Future Goals	**Barrier:** No housing for prospective people supported or our staff. **Strategies to Remove Barrier:** Work in partnership funders, the City of Toronto, property developers and other housing providers to increase housing stock in Toronto; advocacy for affordable housing. **Potential Obstacles:** Available funding, Challenges in obtaining City Building Permits, Lack of interest in this work, lack of expertise in property development **Persons Responsible:** Executive Director, Senior Leadership Team, Board of Directors **Target Date:** August 2029

Future Requests for Reasonable Accommodations

SurexCARE will document the number of requests for reasonable accommodations by employees or prospective employees, clients or prospective clients. A summary of these requests will be developed and reported in future Accessibility Plans.