

Introduction

Since 1982, Your Support Services Network (YSSN) has connected people who live with serious mental illness and/or a developmental disability, and children with complex service needs, with the services and supports they need to live their best life.

Grounded firmly by our Mission: “*Communicate. Connect. Collaborate.*”; our Vision: “*A Meaningful Life for all: Relationships, Community, Well-being.*”; and our Values: “*Compassion, Accountability, Resilience, Initiative, and Collaboration*”, we draw upon these foundational positioning statements and principles at every level of the agency to guide the work that we do.

This 2024-2029 accessibility plan outlines the actions that YSSN has taken and will continue to take to support equitable opportunities for people with disabilities. This renewed plan is guided by consumer and staff feedback, goals and activities established in YSSN’s Strategic Plan with a clear commitment to creating environments that foster thriving and empowered people, delivering culturally responsive services, and implementing recommendations from our equity action plan.

YSSN’s Commitment to Accessibility

YSSN is committed to services, supports and employment that are strength based, customer service that is respectful and helpful, human resources policies which accommodate employees’ needs, technology which supports different abilities and work from a variety of locations, education which enhances our cultural capacity, within barrier free sites that are located within easy to reach neighborhoods.

YSSN is committed to full inclusion and fostering belonging. We will ensure that policies, procedures, service delivery and best practices are consistent with accessibility standards and will work to identify and remove physical, attitudinal, and systemic barriers in support of the core principles of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA): independence, dignity, integration, and equal opportunity.

YSSN’s 2024-2029 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and any affiliated reports will be posted on our website and will be provided in an accessible format, upon request. YSSN will share the plan and annual progress reports with the Board of Directors, Peer and Family Advisory Committee and employees through internal communication methods.

YSSN's Summary of Actions to date

Architecture/Building Design

- The main office in Aurora is a single level building with considerations for accessibility taken into the design (e.g., sidewalk ramp, accessible washroom with no door barriers, wider hallways)
- Workstations designed to accommodate appropriate height for wheelchair accessibility
- Locations, including satellite sites and bed programs, are physically accessible

Information and Communication

- All communication materials are screened for plain language
- Many information resources and the YSSN website are available in both French and English
- Programs provide an active offer of French language services
- Extensive use of language capacity with YSSN staff group and colleague agencies as needed
- The YSSN website, and any website maintained by YSSN, conforms to the WCAG 2.1 Level AA requirements, meaning that we utilize a customizable user interface that can be designed to meet a variety of accessibility needs
- Access/use of interpretation services for all programs, including ASL
- TTY line available for those connecting with the DSO CER
- Services offered virtually as an ongoing mode of delivery, incorporating tools such as captions, as needed

Customer Service

- We have committed to accessible customer service by developing an Accessibility Policy, which includes the following elements:
 - ~ Assistive devices
 - ~ Service animals
 - ~ Support persons
 - ~ Notice of temporary disruption in services
 - ~ Training
 - ~ Feedback process
- All staff review accessibility-related materials in Policies & Procedures, upon hire and on a regular basis ongoing.

- All employees and students must complete online AODA Customer Service training as part of their agency orientation. Agency decision makers complete additional training to support customer services expectations and the implementation of YSSN policies and procedures.
- All employees complete a cultural assessment (CQ) to create further individual awareness in how to work more effectively with ethno-cultural communities
- Ongoing consumer satisfaction surveys to collect feedback/suggestions

Employment

- Business Interruption Plan minimizes service interruptions and outline contingency strategies
- HR policies include Individual Accommodation and Return to Work policies
- Agency committed to diversity in hiring (incorporated into recruitment activities) and making service more accessible to multicultural communities
- Alternative work arrangements allow staff to organize their work time in balance with their family needs
- Use of adaptive technology as needed (magnifiers, larger monitors, software on desktop computers)

YSSN submitted the 2023 AODA compliance report to the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility on October 9, 2023.

Ongoing Communication of the Plan

- The plan will be posted as a PDF document on the agency website
- Large-print versions will be made available on request
- The plan will be posted on in a central location accessible to all staff
- Full-print versions of the plan will be made available on request

2024 -2029 Accessibility Goals

Barriers to accessibility are identified by consumers, local teams to their supervisors, by the Leadership Group, by the Health and Safety Committee through regular inspections, by the Facilities Coordinator, by the Peer and Family Advisory Committee and by the Senior Leadership Team.

Strategies and Actions

Standard	Actions/Strategy	Timeline
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore how technology can support service delivery for people with varying abilities, such as through captioning, interpretation and videos. ▪ Maintain training for staff on AODA customer service standards, Human Rights code and other diversity-related trainings as per the equity action plan. 	<p>March 31, 2025 and ongoing</p> <p>April 1, 2024 and ongoing</p>
Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure updated website is easy to navigate, mobile friendly, is in plain language as much as possible, conforms to the latest accessibility requirements, and remains in compliance with any revised AODA standards. ▪ All rebranded YSSN informational material is in plain language and available in other formats, upon request. 	<p>June 30, 2024 and ongoing</p> <p>July 31, 2024 and ongoing</p>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review and revise agency policies to reinforce YSSN’s commitment to support an inclusive workplace. ▪ Update recruitment and onboarding materials to reinforce commitment to employee accommodation and ensure Health and Safety orientation tours highlight accessibility features within YSSN locations. 	<p>July 31, 2024 and ongoing</p>
Design of Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YSSN will lease spaces that are accessible from a design perspective. 	<p>April 1, 2024 and ongoing</p>

Accessibility Plan Addendum - Outcomes

Prioritized actions addressed in 2024-25

Standard	Description/Strategy	Outcomes
Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website is AODA compliant, in plain language and easy to navigate ▪ Increase the use of videos or visuals to share information in different formats with people seeking services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website in final stages of design with planned launch in Q1 next fiscal year ▪ Priority for videos identified, in production
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore technological approaches that reduce barriers to meaningful engagement for people with vision and hearing impairments or different language capacities, and embed these into agency practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working with a consultant to identify industry practices using embedded features within Microsoft apps
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update job postings to reinforce commitment to employee accommodation and ensure Health and Safety orientation tours highlight accessibility features within YSSN locations ▪ Review language within policies to ensure commitment to an inclusive workforce is evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job postings revised, inclusion of Human Rights training as part of onboarding for new staff and Health and Safety tours highlight accessibility options within YSSN locations ▪ Accessibility Policy updated, Religious Accommodation Policy update in progress
Design of Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parking at the Aurora office will include short term parking for guests with varying abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two parking spots designated for visitors/short term parking

Accessibility Plan Addendum

Prioritized actions to be addressed in 2025-26

Standard	Description/Strategy	Timeline	Lead
Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website is AODA compliant, in plain language and easy to navigate 	May 15, 2025	YSSN Communications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to increase the use of videos or visuals to share information in different formats with people seeking services 	Ongoing	Program Managers and Supervisors
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to explore technological approaches that reduce barriers to meaningful engagement for people with vision and hearing impairments or different language capacities, and embed these into agency practices 	December 31, 2025	IT Committee, Management and DEI Steering Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move iLobby registration at our main office location to reception to support the visitor registration process 	July 31, 2025	Facilities lead and administrative staff
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to review language within policies to ensure commitment to an inclusive workforce is evident 	December 31, 2025	Policies and Advocacy Working Group-DEI Steering Committee and Senior Leadership
Design of Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace flooring in main office lobby and hallway to vinyl from carpet to create a brighter, accommodating space without transitions in flooring 	March 31, 2026	Facilities Lead

Accessibility Plan Addendum - Outcomes

Prioritized actions addressed in 2025-26

Standard	Description/Strategy	Outcomes
Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website is AODA compliant, in plain language and easy to navigate ▪ Increase the use of videos or visuals to share information in different formats with people seeking services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed and ongoing ▪ In Progress – Four videos about YSSN Services developed to provide a first-person account with captioning
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to explore technological approaches that reduce barriers to meaningful engagement for people with vision and hearing impairments or different language capacities and embed these into agency practices ▪ Move iLobby registration at our main office location to reception to support the visitor registration process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In Progress - Options explored and a pilot of MS Teams Premium will occur which includes embedded translation and the use of captioning along with note taking. Pilot to launch in Spring 2026 ▪ Completed - Reception staff support the visitor registration process
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to review language within policies to ensure commitment to an inclusive workforce is evident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing - Three policies were revised for language and practice updates
Design of Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Replace flooring in main office lobby and hallway to vinyl from carpet to create a brighter, accommodating space without transitions in flooring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No progress – funding to complete the renovation was not approved in this year

Accessibility Plan Addendum - Priorities

Prioritized actions to be addressed in 2026-27

Standard	Description/Strategy	Timeline	Lead
Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit the website for AODA compliance, plain language and easy navigation. Ensure documents are screen reader friendly 	December 31, 2026	YSSN Communications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the use of videos or visuals and translated materials to share information with people seeking services 	March 31, 2027	Program Managers and Supervisors
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch the use of technology to support live translation, captioning and note taking in virtual meetings through a pilot and then determine use more broadly 	May 31, 2026	Senior Leadership Team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure training and refreshers are available to staff on neurodiversity, trauma informed approaches and effective communication 	July 31, 2026	YSSN Management and DEI Coordinator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit to ensure a barrier free virtual service pathway for people seeking and receiving services 	December 31, 2026	YSSN Leadership Team
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and share a clear workplace accommodation framework, that includes management training 	October 31, 2026	Human Resources
Design of Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit building entrances, hallways, and meeting rooms for clear wayfinding, tactile surfaces, and non-glare flooring. Explore the capacity for a sensory-friendly space 	March 31, 2027	Senior Leadership and Health & Safety Committee