



WRHN

Waterloo Regional
Health Network

Accessibility Multi-Year Plan 2025 - 2029

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Message from Waterloo Regional Health Network

On April 1, 2025, St. Mary's General Hospital and Grand River Hospital officially merged to become the Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN). WRHN is focused on ensuring that everyone in Waterloo Wellington receives the care they need, when they need it. Our goal is to help all patients get better access to healthcare, improve their treatment, and have a better experience when they receive care. We are dedicated to ensuring our care is sensitive to people's past experiences and to fixing any unfair systems that create barriers to health.

We are proud of our mission at WRHN to deliver an exceptional health care experience with compassion. We are driven by inspired people, an unwavering focus on quality, strong partnerships, and innovative solutions.

We are also proud of our commitment to improving accessibility and inclusion throughout our organization by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for people with disabilities. WRHN team members work to continuously improve access to hospital facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services. This access applies to patients and their family members, employees, volunteers, health care practitioners, and all guests.

With this merger comes the opportunity for us to renew our commitment to accessibility as an organization. We have prepared this Multi-year Accessibility Plan that will serve as a roadmap for employees to work towards becoming a more accessible and inclusive organization.

This Plan has been reviewed and approved by members of the WRHN Integrated Accessibility Committee and the WRHN leadership team. We commit to reviewing the Plan annually and to using it as a resource to help us comply with Ontario's accessibility laws and to meet our own ongoing accessibility commitments and goals.

Nicole Thomson
Vice President, Quality, Research & Patient Experience
Waterloo Regional Health Network

Statement of Commitment to Accessibility

Waterloo Regional Health Network ('WRHN') is dedicated to providing equitable access and treating every individual in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We are committed to fostering inclusion and ensuring equal opportunities for all. Our goal is to enhance accessibility across our hospital facilities, programs, and services for people with disabilities. We strive to meet accessibility needs promptly by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers. This aligns with our mission to deliver an exceptional health care experience with compassion.

About Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN)

On April 1, 2025, St. Mary's General Hospital and Grand River Hospital formally merged to become Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN, pronounced 'wren'). WRHN is the evolution of more than 90 years of partnership and collaboration. WRHN builds on the strengths and expertise of both legacy Hospitals, and reinforces our commitment to compassionate, patient-centred care in Waterloo Wellington and beyond.

WRHN is guided by its mission to deliver an exceptional health care experience with compassion. The following values guide our work:

- Care & Compassion
- Innovation & Courage
- Welcome, Inclusion & Collaboration
- Trust, Respect & Integrity

WRHN is developing its first Strategic Plan for 2026–2029. This plan, developed in partnership with our teams, system partners, patients, and communities, will define our vision, mission, and values and outline the strategic priorities to guide our efforts for the next decade and will be launched in early 2026.

Rooted in a tradition of partnership, excellence, and compassion, WRHN empowers patients and their loved ones through holistic care, meaningful connections, and unwavering support at every step of their healthcare journey.

WRHN Clinical Programs, Services, and Facilities

As an integrated hospital network, WRHN delivers a full range of acute care, rehabilitation, and complex continuing care services, including the following clinical programs and services:

- Cancer*
- Cardiac*
- Childbirth
- Children and Youth
- Complex Continuing Care
- Critical Care/Intensive Care
- Emergency
- Eye*
- General Medicine
- Lung and Chest*
- Medical Tests and Imaging*
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Neurology
- Palliative Care
- Rehabilitation
- Renal/Kidney*
- Reproductive Health
- Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence
- Stroke*
- Surgery

* Regional programs and services

Services are delivered at several locations, including the following hospital sites:

- WRHN @ Midtown (835 King St, Kitchener ON)
 - WRHN Regional Cancer Centre
- WRHN @ Queen's Blvd (911 Queen's Blvd, Kitchener ON)
- WRHN @ Chicopee (3750 King St E, Kitchener ON)

In addition to these three acute care facilities, we operate the following satellite sites:

- WRHN @ The Boardwalk (Airway Clinic, PREVENT Clinic, and Cardiac Rehabilitation)
- WRHN @ 850 King (Mount Hope Day Program)
- WRHN @ 52 Glasgow (Withdrawal & Addictions Management)
- WRHN @ 40 Green (Secondary Stroke Prevention, Adult Diabetes Education, and Child & Adolescent Outpatient Mental Health)

- WRHN @ 400 Queen St (Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Treatment Centre)
- Kitchener, Guelph, and Palmerston Renal Clinics

WRHN Accessibility Committee

The Accessibility Committee is established to foster an inclusive, accessible environment across all WRHN sites. The Committee ensures compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its associated standards and regulations by:

- Identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities, including patients, families, visitors, staff, physicians, and volunteers.
- Developing, maintaining, and monitoring a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that meets legislative requirements and reflects organizational priorities.
- Acting as a liaison between WRHN and community stakeholders to strengthen accessibility planning and accountability.

The Accessibility Committee has representation from multiple departments, community member(s), and individual(s) with lived experience of disability.

Definitions

Within this document, the following terms are used with the following meanings. The definitions have been adapted from the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

“Barrier” is defined as:

Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, or a policy or practice.

“Disability” is defined as:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the

generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impairment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability (both visible and non-visible in nature) for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

AODA Compliance Achievements

As of December 2023, both legacy organizations, St. Mary's General Hospital and Grand River Hospital, were compliant with the AODA. In December 2025, we will complete WRHN's inaugural Accessibility Compliance Report.

We are compliant in the following areas:

- Customer Service
- Information & Communications
- Employment
- Procurement
- Training
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces

Feedback

To ensure AODA compliance requirements are met or exceeded, WRHN is committed to responding to employee, patient, and community feedback and in identifying priorities to increase accessibility and inclusion. Information is shared and communicated to the public on the WRHN website; to patients, family members and support persons through Patient Experience; and to WRHN employees and volunteers during onboarding and orientation.

Feedback regarding the way WRHN provides access to services, goods, facilities, and employment opportunities to people with disabilities can be provided in several ways, including:

- By email: patient.experience@wrhn.ca
- By phone: 519-749-4730
- In person or by mail to: Patient Experience, WRHN @ 40 Green (40 Green St, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4K9)

Patient Experience reviews and follows up on all accessibility feedback. The Accessibility Committee also reviews this feedback monthly and collaborates with relevant departments to prioritize and recommend actions to senior management. Approved recommendations become goals for inclusion in departmental workplans and AODA accessibility plans and progress reports.

Accessibility Plan

Purpose

The Accessibility Plan is a roadmap and working document that has been prepared by our Integrated Accessibility Committee and endorsed by our Senior Leadership Team. The plan will be updated on an ongoing basis at meetings of the committee and posted on the website annually.

This Accessibility Plan highlights key accessibility initiatives that WRHN will work towards in the coming years as identified through feedback methods and our informal audit process.

Communication of the Plan

The 2026-2029 Multi-year Accessibility Plan will be shared with WRHN staff and be made publicly available on the WRHN website in an accessible format. Printed copies and alternate formats will be provided upon request by WRHN Patient Experience.

Identification of Barriers

The WRHN Integrated Accessibility Committee and leadership team use the following methods to help WRHN identify accessibility barriers.

Methodology	Description
Patient and visitor feedback	Feedback received by Patient Experience as well as feedback received by other service providers is communicated to the Accessibility Committee and WRHN leadership for review and follow-up.
Employee feedback	Internal surveys and awareness campaigns are used to encourage employees to communicate accessibility barriers to the Accessibility Committee.
Focus groups and community or public consultations	The Accessibility Committee met on several occasions to brainstorm a list of current accessibility barriers. The Committee engages with individuals with lived experience who identify as Deaf, disabled, or neurodiverse, as well as family members and support persons of patients with disabilities (through input from various Patient and Family Advisory Councils).
Consultation with accessibility professionals	WRHN consults with accessibility professional when required, for the purpose of reviewing and auditing WRHN facilities, services, programs, policies, procedures, and plans. Where possible, individuals with lived experience are included in professional consultations.
Review of AODA standards and requirements	The Accessibility Committee reviews both AODA requirements and the WRHN Accessibility Plan on a regular basis, to ensure barriers identified in legislation are addressed through WRHN departmental goals and workplans.

Multi-Year Work Plan

The WRHN multi-year work plan is a living document that will be updated on an ongoing basis by the Integrated Accessibility Committee. Accessibility goals, actions, and timelines are detailed below for the following categories:

- Customer Service
- Information & Communications
- Employment
- Procurement
- Training
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces
- Other

Self-Service Kiosks are not included in this plan as WRHN does not provide or manage any self-service kiosks.

Customer Service

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Review and update WRHN accessibility feedback methods (e.g. consider online feedback form).	Patient Experience	2026	
Raise awareness among employees and public on methods to gather, address, and track feedback on accessibility barriers.	Patient Experience	2026	
Create user-friendly, plain language guides, fact sheets, toolkits, etc. related to WRHN.	Patient Experience, Communications	2026, 2027, 2028, 2029	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			

Information & Communications

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Complete a thorough review and update of signage and wayfinding at all WRHN sites.	Communications, Facilities	2025-2027	
Review all public WRHN web content and social media that the Hospital manages or controls meets or exceeds WCAG 2.0 level AA guidelines (excluding live captioning and audio description)	Communications	2026	
Establish approval committee to review all public facing material for AODA compliance.	Communications, Professional Practice, Patient Experience	2026	
Review existing WRHN policies and procedures with an accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. Edit policies and procedures as needed, using plain and inclusive language and accessible format	All programs & departments, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion consultants, Director of Social Accountability	Ongoing every three years at minimum and/ or as per legislative compliance where applicable	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			

Employment

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Recruit new Director of Social Accountability.	Quality & Patient Experience	2025	
Review processes across WRHN regarding recruitment, job offers, and onboarding material for accessibility.	Talent Acquisition, Disability Support	2026	
Establish an employee resource group for the engagement of and support for employees with disabilities.	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	2025	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			

Procurement

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Review procurement policy and supporting resources (e.g., RFP and agreement text, procurement checklists) to ensure accessible and inclusive purchasing guidelines.	Supply Chain Sourcing	2026	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			

Training

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Review and update current AODA and accessibility training to reflect updated policy.	Learning & Organizational Development	2026	
Update onboarding for new staff and provide training to all existing team members on updated AODA policy.	Learning & Organizational Development	2026	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			

Design of Public Spaces

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Plan and schedule a series of built environment audits to support capital planning and accessibility planning.	Facilities	2026, 2027, 2028, 2029	
Conduct a review and audit of exterior accessibility (e.g., sidewalks, pathways, parking, pick-up and drop-off areas) and related signage identifying accessible parking, entrances, etc.	Facilities	2026, 2027, 2028, 2029	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			

Transportation

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Review staff transportation services between WRHN sites and parking lots for accessibility.	Business Development	2026	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			

Other

Accessibility Goal & Action	Stakeholders	Timeline	Status Update on Improvements
Review the multi-year accessibility plan and status of accessibility goals.	Accessibility Committee	Annually	
File AODA compliance report based on stated deadlines in the AODA.	Director of Social Accountability	Bi-Annually	
Ensure that the updated Statement of Commitment to Accessibility is shared within the organization and posted on the WRHN website.	Communications	2026	
Update Accessibility Committee Terms of Reference in alignment with WRHN Strategic Plan	Accessibility Committee	2026	
Investigate opportunities for KPI reporting or development.	Accessibility Committee	2027	
<i>Placeholder for additional initiatives</i>			