A. **Introduction**

In 2005, the Ontario Government enacted the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). This legislation was put forth in an effort to provide Ontarians with equal access to products and services, in a manner that respects the dignity, independence, and value of persons with disabilities. The immediate focus of Niagara College is to strive towards an atmosphere of inclusion of all individuals, and the long term goal of this legislation is to achieve a barrier-free Ontario by 2025.

The Customer Service Standard was the first component to be implemented at the college, in 2010. The next three accessibility standards; Information and Communications, Employment, and Transportation, all fall under one regulation, called the Integrated Accessibility Standards. The requirements defined in these integrated standards will be phased in over time between 2011 and 2021. In addition, plans are already underway for the Built Environment Standard which will help remove barriers in buildings and outdoor spaces for people with disabilities.

The requirements in these Standards are not a replacement for the requirements established under the Human Rights Code, nor do these Standards limit any obligations owed to persons with disabilities under any other legislation. Rather, the AODA has challenged us to think about accessibility in much broader terms, and to create a culture where accessibility is seen as part of the way we do day to day business.

B. **Purpose**

This practice is intended to set a foundation of expectations while meeting the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 as set forth under the AODA. Niagara College is committed to developing and implementing strategies to comply with the accessibility legislation, and also to strengthen the underlying principles of the AODA in conducting our daily operations and administering our diverse services. It is also intended to provide a framework to guide the review and development of other policies, practices, and procedures at our College. This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance as the various components of the AODA Standards become applicable.
C. **Statement of Commitment**
Niagara College operates and provides its services in accordance with the provisions of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and its associated Regulations, and maintains the goal of creating a barrier-free learning and working environment which will foster academic and employment success. To accomplish this goal, the College is committed to meeting all the requirements of the Accessibility Standards.

D. **Scope**
This practice applies to every person who is employed by, represents, or acts on behalf of Niagara College. The practice is intended to create real and effective change for people of all abilities (whether the individual is a student, employee, visitor, or member of the public) so that all may share the same level of access to and benefit from our services, and to participate in the full range of college opportunities to fully achieve their potential.

E. **Accommodation**
Achieving the principles of AODA will involve attempting to meet the different needs of individuals with disabilities so that everyone has equal opportunity to achieve academic and/or employment success. Since each person’s accommodation will be specific to their disability, individual attention may be required in designing an appropriate strategy.

Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate individuals that self identify as having specific needs related to a disability, to the point of undue hardship. This accommodation will be provided in a timely manner, and the principles of dignity and respect will be maintained throughout the accommodation process. Undue hardship varies according to circumstances, but may include accommodation requests that would significantly alter essential course or program requirements, would create a risk to public safety or personal injury, or would cause the college to incur a cost that could fundamentally diminish its overall operations, or any of its individual programs or services.

F. **Practice on AODA - Integrated Accessibility Standards**

1. **Accessibility Plan**
The College produced a multi-year Accessibility Plan that outlines how we intend to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. This plan was created with input from various operating areas across the college, and will be reviewed by our Accessibility Committee, along with consultation with persons with disabilities. The plan is posted on the AODA section of our website and will be made available in an accessible format or with communication supports, upon request. The Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated periodically as legislation continues to come into effect, and at least every 5 years. A status report will also be provided annually outlining where we are in the process.
2. **Training**  
Educators at Niagara College will be provided with accessibility awareness training related to accessible program or course delivery and instruction. Appropriate information and resources which will assist them in creating accessible documents, developing solutions, and eliminating barriers for people with disabilities will also be provided.

In addition, all College staff will receive training on how to provide goods and services to people with disabilities, and to communicate and interact in ways that take into account their individual needs.

Records are maintained in Human Resources for all training required under the AODA legislation.

3. **Educational Materials**  
Communication is the foundation of much of our lives and is a basic human right. In this age of rapid information, the importance of accessible communications in the learning environment cannot be underestimated. As an educational institution, Niagara College provides educational and training resources or materials (where possible), student records, and program information, in accessible formats upon request. Each request is considered based on the accessibility needs of the student, and is resolved either by purchasing, creating, or obtaining an accessible or conversion ready electronic format, or arranging for a comparable resource in an accessible format. In addition, educational resources purchased by the Libraries for all programs, will be selected with accessibility standards in mind.

4. **Transportation**  
While the college is not primarily in the business of transportation, we do periodically provide or arrange for transportation services for certain college related functions. In these instances, accessible transportation or equivalent services is provided (upon request) for persons with disabilities, and is provided at no additional cost. Individuals must contact the coordinator of their particular event to request this accommodation.

Please be aware that most services, events, and normal operations that the College undertakes do not include providing transportation services to any individuals. In these circumstances, persons with disabilities are responsible for their own accessibility needs when they are to provide their own transportation.

5. **Procurement of Goods and Services, and Self Service Kiosks**  
When procuring goods, services, self-service kiosks or facilities, the College incorporates accessibility criteria and features into its selection process. In instances where this is not feasible, the College will provide an explanation, upon request.

In addition, the College requires that for any contractors or service providers whose staff may interact with employees, students, or the public on behalf of the College, it is necessary that those individuals have received training in the Customer Service Standard prior to commencing their duties at, or on behalf of, the college. It is the responsibility of the contractor or service provider to provide this training to their employees.
6. **Emergency Information and Workplace Emergency Response Plans**

Niagara College is committed to ensuring the health, safety, and security of all of our employees, students, volunteers, and any members of the general public that visit our campuses or facilities. As such, we provide all existing public emergency procedures, plans, and public safety information (upon request), in a format that takes into consideration the individual needs of the requester, and in a timely manner.

A crisis situation can affect everyone differently, so consideration of the unique needs of employees with disabilities is factored into planning our emergency response procedures. For employees that have a disability which they believe may require individual accommodation in an emergency situation (ie. fire safety, evacuation, violent acts, disaster response), they are asked to self identify. The College then works with the individual as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the need for such accommodation, to identify individualized solutions and options that take into consideration their needs, and a specific plan is developed for the employee. In addition, if this plan includes the involvement of a designated person to provide assistance, this information is also provided to that individual (with the employee’s consent). This individualized plan will be reviewed; a) when the employee moves to a different location, b) when the employee’s overall accommodation needs or plans are reviewed, and c) when the College reviews its general emergency response plans.

If you require either of these accommodations, please contact one of the following:
Manager, Campus Security and Parking  Manager, Health and Safety
Phone: (905) 735-2211 x7350  Phone: (905) 735-2211 x7417
In person: Welland Campus Room L22  In person: Welland Campus Room L21

G. **Comments and Requesting Accommodation**

Comments and feedback on how we provide goods and services to people with disabilities are welcome and appreciated. Please contact us at disabilitycentre@niagaracollege.ca or by calling 905-735-2211 extension 7602. We will attempt to respond to all inquiries within 5 business days.

For specific accommodation requests, it is advisable to contact the department most directly involved with the service provided, such as the appropriate Academic Program Office, the Center for Students with Disabilities, or any Department or Manager that may be identified within this document as associated with a particular issue. If it is unclear who the appropriate contact is, you may make your request through any of the following and it will be addressed or forwarded on to the appropriate area:

**For Students**
Manager, Student Services  Human Resources Consultant
(905) 735-2211, ext. 4259  (905) 735-2211 ext. 7530
Niagara on the Lake Campus, Room W104  Welland Campus, Room L21

Center for Students with Disabilities
(905) 735-2211, ext. 7602
Welland Campus, Room SE102

**For Employees, Visitors, or Public**
Manager, Human Resources
(905) 735-2211 ext. 7534
Welland Campus, Room L21
All requests are considered on a case-by-case basis to best accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities under the AODA legislation.

H. Related Documents
Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities
Student with Disabilities
Harassment and Discrimination
Practice: Standing Committee – College Accessibility Committee

I. Links
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm

Customer Service Standard, Regulation 429/07

Integrated Accessibility Standards, Regulation 191/11

Niagara College AODA Web Section
http://www.niagaracollege.ca/content/HumanResourcesDepartment/AODA.aspx