

HRLSC access and accommodation policy 2010

Objective

The objective of this policy is to make sure that people using the services of the Human Rights Legal Support Centre have equal access to legal advice and support from the Centre. Staff at the Centre will make every effort to provide service that accommodates a variety of physical, mental, language and cultural needs, while respecting the privacy and dignity and independence of the people served.

Accommodation:

All requests for “accommodation” will be met unless it creates extreme costs or health and safety risks (defined as “undue hardship” under Ontario’s *Human Rights Code*). “Accommodation” means making sure you receive the full benefit of our services by providing you with service in a way that makes sense to you, depending on your physical, mental, emotional and linguistic needs. We want to make sure that our service is as “barrier-free” as possible. All persons using the centre’s services will be free to use assistive devices (such as canes, wheelchairs) and service animals (such as guide dogs).

Examples of accommodation:

We will provide you with an interpreter (including ASL and LSQ sign language interpreters), make sure the physical space is wheelchair accessible, make sure we are flexible on what time of the day you get help and for how long so that you can discuss your human rights claim.

If your interview has been scheduled on your religious holiday, we will reschedule it.

If you need to bring a support person with you, you do not have to tell us why they have to be with you, just that “I need this person with me.”

If it hard for you to meet privately with persons of the opposite sex, you can just tell us you would like to meet with a woman/man.

If you have limited vision we can give you documents in large print, Braille, an audio version of the document or the format that works best for you.

If you have a disability that makes it very difficult to be in a closed room, you do not have to tell us about your condition, but you could say “I would like to be in a larger room with the door open.”

If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to understand speech:

- bring a support person with you
- ask the person speaking to you to speak slowly
- ask the staff person or your support person to write down some key points to take with you

If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to read or understand printed materials, you can ask to have documents read and explained to you.

If organizational difficulties are part of your disability you can ask for help in putting your documents together in a logical order.

If your disability causes memory problems you can ask to have key information and dates written down for you in point form or a chart.

Children are welcome, and women are free to breastfeed.

Telling us about your disability or your need for accommodation

You do not have to give details of your disability or, for example, your religion when you ask for accommodation, just the way in which you need to be accommodated. Each person's needs are individual, please tell our staff what you need to serve you better.

If your disability is related to your human rights claim, you will want to tell us about your disability in relation to your human rights application and what you need by way of accommodation.

Off site meetings

Requests for meetings outside of the Centre's normal business places will be considered if it is required to meet your accommodation needs.

Scent-free policy

Please do not wear perfume or after-shave if you are meeting with Centre staff in person.

Asking for accommodation

If you would like to ask for accommodation in advance of your conversation with a member of the staff, you could contact Consuelo Rubio at 416-326-7286 or 1-866-625-5179 (please ask the receptionist to put you through) or TTY 416-314-6651. Or by mail at 400 University Avenue, 7th Floor M7A 1X8 or by fax at 416-314-6202. Or by e-mail to Consuelo.Rubio.hrlsc@ontario.ca. Please mark the fax or e-mail or letter clearly as a **request for accommodation**. If your question is about something other than accommodation, please use the main telephone line 1-866-625-5179.

Or, you can speak privately with the staff person who is helping you with your human rights application.

Staff training

HRLSC staff receive ongoing training on access, anti-racism, accommodation of disability and a wide range of issues to try to make sure that staff have a broad knowledge of human rights issues.

Periodic review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed within one year and we welcome your suggestions to improve this policy.

Feedback and Evaluation

Clients of the Centre who have requested accommodation may be asked to fill out an evaluation form about the services at the Centre so that you can tell us how we are doing at meeting accommodation needs if you choose to fill it out..

Reference documents:

Ontario's *Human Rights Code*
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005