



Hôpital général de Nipissing Ouest
West Nipissing General Hospital
725 ch. Coursol Rd. Sturgeon Fall, ON P2B 2Y6

Accessibility Plan

2026 – 2031

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Ontario's Accessibility Framework and Our Commitment

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), organizations in the broader public sector, including hospitals, are required to identify, prevent, and remove barriers for persons with disabilities through ongoing accessibility planning.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 provides a framework for developing and enforcing accessibility standards to improve access for persons with disabilities across Ontario.

The AODA establishes accessibility standards in the areas of:

- Customer service
- Information and communications
- Employment
- Transportation
- The built environment

This accessibility plan will help to plan for requirements under the new Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) enacted July 1, 2011, under the AODA. The IASR requires designated public sector organizations, including hospitals, to establish, implement, maintain, and document a multi-year accessibility plan to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

Our accessibility plan outlines the specific actions our organization is taking to improve accessibility and enhance opportunities for persons with disabilities, with regular progress updates provided to the public.

Building on previous planning cycles, this accessibility plan aligns with the priorities and direction of the Ontario Ministry of Health, while outlining the specific actions our hospital will take to support accessibility for all Ontarians.

For more information on accessibility in Ontario, visit Ontario.ca.



Executive Summary

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) is committed to providing an accessible and inclusive environment for patients, families, staff, and the community.

This Accessibility Plan outlines the hospital's strategy to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities. It highlights key priorities and actions that will support equitable access to care, services, information, and employment.

The plan is developed in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, which set out requirements for accessibility across Ontario's broader public sector.

WNGH's accessibility efforts focus on:

- Improving access to patient care and services
- Enhancing communication and information in accessible formats
- Addressing physical and environmental barriers within hospital facilities
- Supporting accessible employment practices
- Promoting education and awareness among staff and volunteers

This plan applies to all areas of the organization and supports patients, residents, clients, families, staff, students, volunteers, and visitors.

What this means in practice:

- Patients will have better access to information and communication supports
- Services and facilities will continue to be reviewed and improved for accessibility
- Staff will receive training to provide inclusive and respectful care
- Feedback will be used to guide ongoing improvements

Accessibility is an ongoing priority at WNGH. Progress will be monitored and reported regularly to ensure continued compliance and meaningful improvements in the patient and staff experience.



Goals and Objectives

Goals

Our goal is to promote awareness of accessibility requirements and to support ongoing compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

This plan builds on previous progress and outlines the actions West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) will take to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for persons with disabilities.

Objectives and Measurable Outcomes

Identify, remove, and prevent barriers

- Conduct regular reviews of hospital services, facilities, and practices to identify barriers at least annually
- Track and document barriers identified and actions taken to address them
- Incorporate accessibility considerations into new initiatives and projects

Review and improve policies, programs, and services

- Review relevant policies and practices at least every 3 years
- Update policies to reflect current accessibility standards and best practices
- Ensure accessibility considerations are included in program planning and service delivery

Enhance awareness, training, and engagement

- Provide ongoing accessibility training to staff, volunteers, and applicable stakeholders
- Promote awareness of accessibility policies and supports across the organization
- Encourage feedback from the public to inform improvements

Ensure public availability and transparency

- Make the accessibility plan and updates available on the hospital's website and in accessible formats upon request
- Provide regular updates on progress, at minimum annually
- Maintain a process for receiving and responding to accessibility feedback



Commitment to Accessibility Planning

The West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) Accessibility Team is committed to ongoing improvement in accessibility across the organization.

We will:

- **Continuously improve access**
Work to identify, remove, and prevent barriers in hospital facilities, services, programs, policies, and practices, to support patients, residents, clients, families, staff, health care practitioners, volunteers, and members of the community.
- **Engage people with lived experience**
Seek input from persons with disabilities in the development, review, and update of accessibility plans and initiatives, where appropriate.
- **Align policies with accessibility principles**
Review and update hospital policies on a regular basis to ensure they reflect accessibility requirements and best practices under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.
- **Sustain an active Accessibility Team**
Maintain an interdisciplinary Accessibility Team with defined roles and responsibilities, meeting regularly to monitor progress, support implementation, and guide ongoing improvements.

Philosophy

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) is committed to providing equitable, respectful, and people-centered care to all individuals, without discrimination.

We recognize that accessibility is essential to high-quality care. We strive to ensure that our services, communication, and environments are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of our patients, families, staff, and community members.

As language plays an important role in access to care, WNGH is committed to providing services in both official languages—French and English—to support effective communication and understanding.

WNGH also recognizes its role within the broader health care system and works collaboratively with community partners to support health promotion, illness prevention, and accessible care for all.



Purpose, Values, and Priorities

Purpose

The West Nipissing General Hospital is a leader in the local health system and is committed to improving the health and wellness of our culturally diverse community.

Values

- **People** – *Being kind, compassionate, empathetic and inclusive*
- **Communication** – *Being consistent, open and transparent in the sharing of information*
- **Quality Care Close to Home** – *Providing responsive and accessible care*
- **Accountability** – *Fostering fiscal responsibility, ethical care and integrity*
- **Teamwork** – *Promoting mutual respect, trust and support*

Our Priorities

- **Finances** – *Strive for fiscal sustainability*
- **People** – *Value our team*
- **Care Environment** – *Ensure quality and safety*
- **Communication** – *Communicate openly and often*
- **Partnerships** – *Partner wisely*

Statement of Commitment

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) is committed to providing accessible, inclusive, and respectful care and services for all individuals.

We are guided by our purpose and core values, and we believe that every person deserves to receive care that respects their dignity, independence, and individual needs, including persons with disabilities.

Accessibility is integrated into how we deliver care and services across the hospital, wherever possible, to support a positive and equitable experience for everyone we serve.

People with disabilities will have the same opportunity as others to access, understand, and benefit from the care and services provided by WNGH.



Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Accessibility Team supports West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) in identifying, preventing, and removing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Accessibility planning is integrated into the hospital's corporate, strategic, and operational planning processes.

The Accessibility Team is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, review, and evaluation of the organization's Accessibility Plan in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

The Accessibility Team also ensures that French Language Services and active offer requirements are consistently considered, and that communication to patients, families, caregivers, and the public is provided in both official languages (French and English), in alignment with applicable designation requirements.

Role and Responsibilities

The Accessibility Team will:

1. Maintain knowledge of relevant legislation, hospital policies, programs, services, and facilities related to accessibility.
2. Understand and identify barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing care and services.
3. Review progress and successes in removing and preventing barriers across the organization.
4. Identify and prioritize barriers to be addressed through accessibility planning.
5. Develop strategies and recommend actions to improve accessibility.
6. Support the development, publication, and communication of the Accessibility Plan.
7. Review and update the Accessibility Plan annually.
8. Monitor and report on accessibility-related concerns, including French Language Services considerations, as part of regular reporting processes.
9. Review accessibility-related feedback and complaints and support appropriate follow-up actions.

Meetings

The Accessibility Team will meet at least twice per year and may meet more frequently as required. Meetings are integrated within the Quality, Risk & Patient Care Committee structure.



Membership

The Accessibility Team sits as a sub-group of the Quality, Risk & Patient Care Committee and benefits from its multidisciplinary membership, with representation from across the organization.

This structure ensures accessibility planning is informed by clinical, operational, and administrative perspectives throughout the hospital.

In addition to members of the Quality, Risk & Patient Care Committee, the Accessibility Team includes:

- Human Resources
- Plant Maintenance & Environmental Services
- Health & Safety
- A Patient Advisor, who provides lived experience perspective and feedback to support the identification and resolution of accessibility barriers

The Patient Advisor contributes lived experience to help ensure accessibility barriers are identified and addressed from the perspective of patients and families.

Additional staff or stakeholders may be invited to attend meetings as required to provide expertise or input.

All members are expected to respect the confidentiality of matters discussed.

Administrative Support

Administrative support will be provided for meeting coordination, preparation of agendas, and distribution of minutes.

Accountability

The Accessibility Team reports to the Senior Leadership Team of West Nipissing General Hospital. The Accessibility Plan and progress updates are also shared with the Board of Directors.



Training Plan

Overview

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) provides mandatory accessibility training to all staff, volunteers, students, and anyone who provides goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the hospital.

This training helps ensure that everyone understands how to provide accessible, respectful, and inclusive care and services for people with disabilities.

Training is based on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Ontario Human Rights Code, which set out requirements for accessibility and the duty to accommodate.

This training has been in place since 2010 and is completed during orientation for all new staff and affiliates.

When Training Happens

Accessibility training is completed during the first day of orientation.

It is delivered through the “Surge Learning” system and tracked electronically to confirm completion.

What the Training Covers

Training includes:

- An overview of accessibility rights under the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code
- What disability means and how barriers can affect access to care and services
- How staff and service providers support accessible and respectful care
- Key hospital policies, including:
 - Assistive devices
 - Service animals
 - Support persons
 - Disruption of services
- How to access the hospital’s Accessibility Plan and related resources

Participants confirm they have completed and understood the training.

Training is not considered complete until it has been successfully acknowledged in the system.

Accessibility Plan Awareness

The Accessibility Plan is reviewed and updated annually.

It is shared with staff through departmental updates, internal communications, and the hospital learning system, and is available on the West Nipissing General Hospital website at www.wngh.ca.

Accessibility Policies



When accessibility policies are updated, staff, volunteers, students, and service providers are informed and asked to review the changes.

Policies are reviewed at least every three years, or sooner if required.

Tracking and Support

Training completion is tracked through the hospital's Human Resources system.

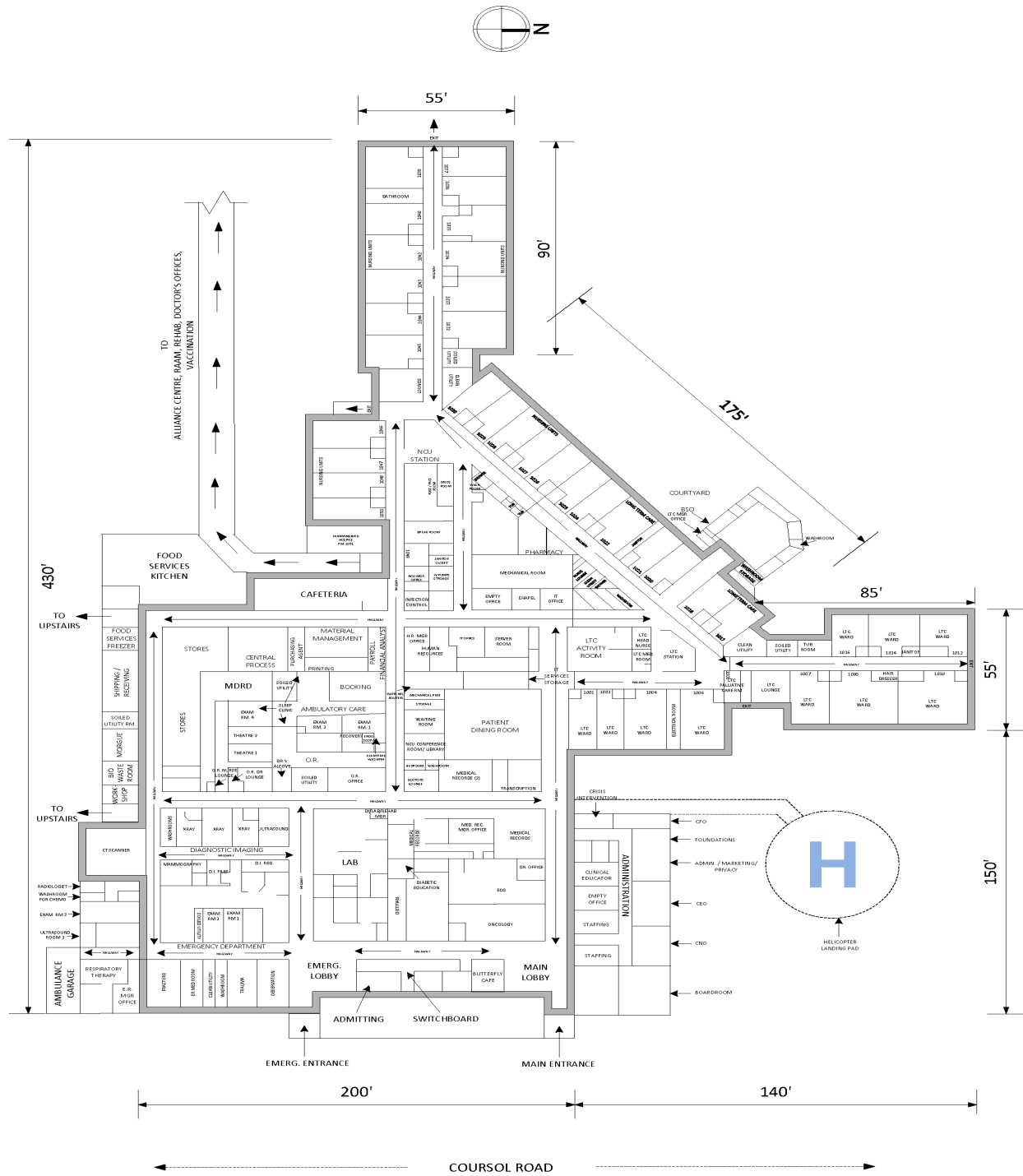
All required training must be completed before beginning duties.

If staff or service providers have questions about accessibility training or policies, they are encouraged to speak with their manager or contact the Accessibility Team.



Accessibility Plan

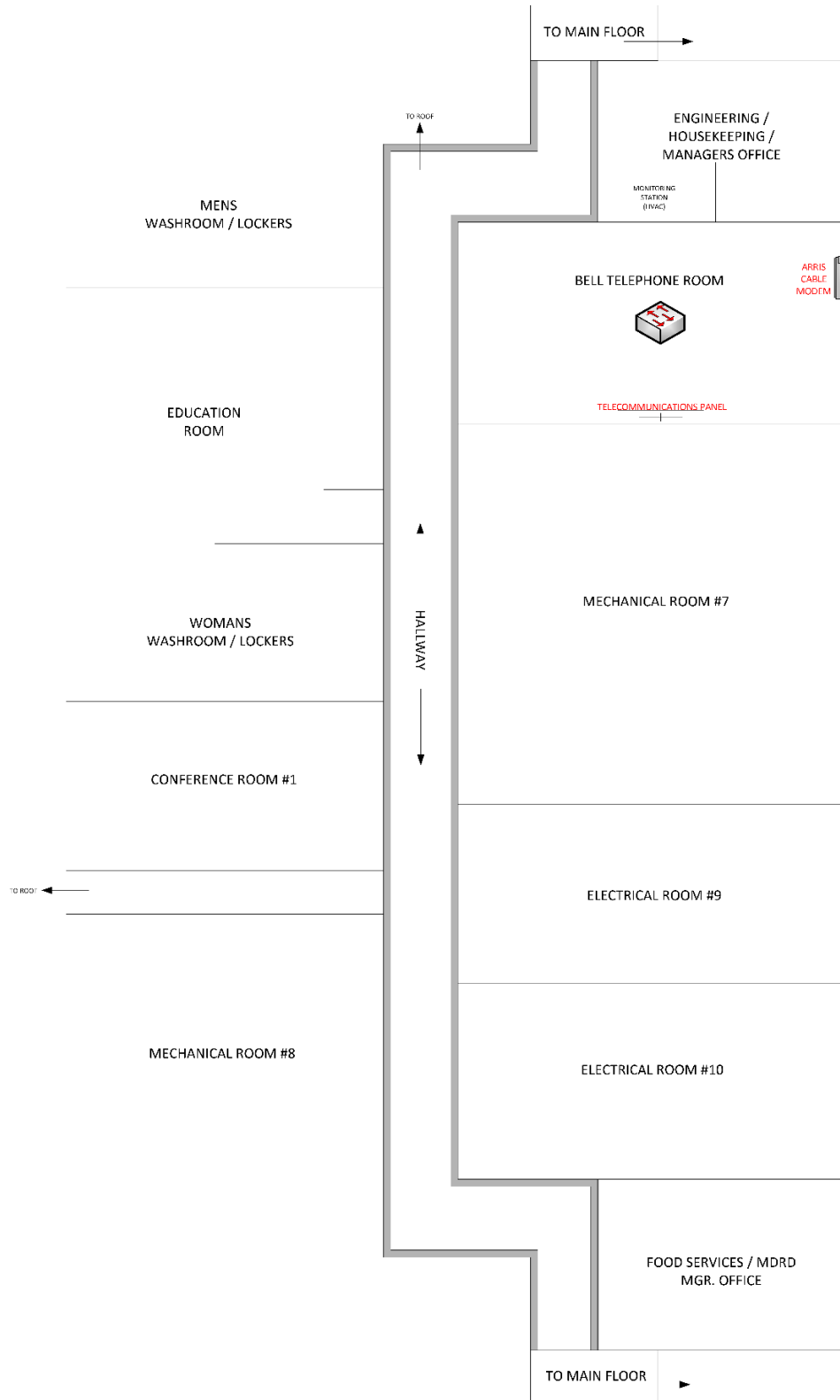
Floor Plan



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Accessibility Plan





Services

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) provides acute care services to residents of the Municipality of West Nipissing and surrounding communities, serving a population of approximately 14,500 people.

As a fully accredited acute care hospital, WNGH provides a range of inpatient and outpatient services delivered by approximately 300 employees and affiliated health care providers.

We are committed to ensuring that all services are accessible, respectful, and responsive to the needs of patients and families, including persons with disabilities.

Capacity

- 31 Acute medical beds
- 19 Complex Continuing Care Beds
- 48 Long-Term Care beds
- 1 Hospice suite
- A 24-hour Emergency Department

Diagnostic and Clinical Services

- On-site Laboratory services
- Diagnostic imaging services:
 - General X-ray
 - Digital imaging
 - Low-dose CT Scanner
 - Ultrasound
 - Mammography

Mental Health and Addiction Services

- Mental health and substance use programs
- Crisis intervention services
- Addictions medicine support
- Visiting psychiatry services
- Community-based sharps harm reduction program

Medical Staff and Speciality Clinics

- General medical and surgical care
- Physiotherapy and occupational therapy services
- Visiting Speciality clinics

Emergency and Cardiac Services

- 24-hour emergency care
- 6 treatment rooms
- 4-bed observation unit
- Cardiac monitoring and resuscitation equipment
- Advanced respiratory and infusion support equipment
- ECG testing
- 24-, 48-, and 72-hour Holter monitoring
- 24-hour blood pressure monitoring
- Full-time respiratory therapy
- Geriatric Emergency Management nursing support

WNGH remains committed to providing high-quality, accessible care across all services. We continue to work to identify and remove barriers so that patients, families, and community members can access care with dignity, independence, and respect.

French Language Services

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) recognizes the importance of providing care and services in both official languages, French and English.



We understand that receiving care in a person's preferred language improves communication, safety, and overall patient experience.

WNGH is committed to meeting its obligations under the French Language Services Act by ensuring that French language services are available to patients, families, caregivers, and members of the public.

Wherever possible, services are actively offered in both French and English to support clear communication and equitable access to care.

Barrier Identification Methodology

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) uses multiple methods to identify, track, and address barriers experienced by patients, families, staff, and members of the community.

Employees are encouraged to identify barriers, raise concerns, and suggest improvements to support accessibility and inclusion in care and service delivery. Managers are reminded annually to review and report any known or potential accessibility barriers within their areas of responsibility.

All accessibility-related concerns, including those related to discrimination or barriers to care, are managed in accordance with hospital policy #100-19. Where barriers are identified, they are shared with the Accessibility Team for review and follow-up.

Patient and client feedback is an important part of barrier identification. Hospital satisfaction surveys are made available to inpatients and outpatients to gather feedback on their experiences and identify areas for improvement.

In addition, mental health and addiction services use the Ontario Perception of Care (OPOC) questionnaire to gather patient feedback and identify potential barriers specific to mental health and addiction care.



Barrier Removal Initiatives

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) continues to implement improvements to reduce and remove physical, communication, and environmental barriers across the organization.

Recent accessibility improvements include:

Digital and Information Accessibility

- The hospital website was updated to improve accessibility and align with AODA requirements
- Internal and external signage within the hospital and Medical Clinic was updated to reflect current layouts and improve wayfinding

Physical Access Improvements

- The sidewalk at the Coursol Street entrance was replaced to improve wheelchair accessibility
- The dining room in Long-Term Care was modified by widening the entrance and removing a central barrier to improve movement and safety
- Bariatric beds and patient lifting equipment were purchased to better support patients with mobility needs within existing care spaces

Automatic Doors and Accessible Entry Points

To improve ease of movement throughout the hospital, automatic door access was installed in several key areas, including:

- Medical Clinic hallway doors
- Connection between the Emergency Department and Butterfly Café
- Main entrances to Pods 3 and 4
- Public washrooms in the Medical Clinic hallway
- Public washroom in the Emergency Department waiting area
- CT scanner room door
- Front and back entrances of the Emergency Department

Patient Privacy and Safety Enhancements

- Privacy improvements were made at the Emergency Department triage desk, including the installation of a plexiglass barrier and the introduction of a private triage process to support confidential patient discussions



Barriers to be Addressed

Barrier	Objective	Means to Prevent / Remove Barrier	Performance Criteria	Resources	Timing	Responsibility
*Cafeteria Entrance	To improve accessibility for wheelchairs and those with disabilities	Widen doorway and/or add automatic button	Facilitate access	Modifications, labour, material required	Ongoing	Plant Maintenance Manager
*Bariatric Accommodations	To improve access and facilitate care	Larger entrances to patient bathrooms, shower rooms, & tub rooms to facilitate bariatric bed removal	Improve care	Modifications to building, high cost	Ongoing	Administration
French Language Services	To ensure patients, visitors, and residents can receive information in their preferred language	Translated job postings are available to both linguistic groups, having signs and directions around the building in both languages	Improve information access	Minimal	Complete and ongoing	Administration
Laboratory Public Entrance	To improve accessibility for wheelchairs and those with disabilities	Widen doorway and/or add automatic button	Facilitate access	Modifications, labour, material required	Ongoing	Plant Maintenance Manager
Wayfinding Signage	To improve patient experience, accessibility, and efficiency by reducing confusion and ensuring clear navigation	Update signage in the facility	Improve navigation	Minimal	Ongoing	Administration
Long-Term Care Tub Room	To improve accessibility to residents with disabilities	Redevelop current space to better accommodate wheelchair and lift access	Facilitate access	Modifications, labour, material required	Ongoing	Administration
ED Room #4 Doorway	To improve accessibility for wheelchairs and those with disabilities	Widen doorway	Facilitate access	Modification, labour, material required	Ongoing	Plant Maintenance Manager

* Denotes areas are currently accessible and with infrastructure funding we could enhance accessibility.



Preventative and Emergency Maintenance of Accessible Elements in Public Spaces

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) is committed to ensuring that accessible features within the hospital are maintained in good working order and remain available for use wherever possible.

Preventative Maintenance

The Plant Maintenance Manager is responsible for developing and maintaining preventative maintenance schedules to ensure that accessible elements are kept in safe and functional condition. Where required, repairs will be completed to restore accessibility features to their intended use.

Planned Disruptions

When planned maintenance or repairs affect accessible features, advance notice will be provided whenever possible. Notices will include:

- A description of the disruption
- The expected duration
- Information about available alternative accessible routes or features

This ensures that patients, families, staff, and visitors are aware of any temporary changes that may impact access.

Emergency Repairs

In situations where an accessible feature breaks down unexpectedly, the item will be taken out of service and repairs will be treated as a priority.

When this occurs, WNGH will take steps to minimize disruption, including:

- Clearly marking the affected area as out of service
- Using appropriate signage (including bilingual notices)
- Redirecting individuals to alternative accessible routes or features, where available
- Providing information about temporary alternatives

Review and Monitoring Process

The Accessibility Team meets at least twice per year, and more frequently as needed, to review progress on the Accessibility Plan.

During these reviews, the team assesses progress on planned actions, including goals, objectives, timelines, and available resources. This helps ensure that identified barriers are being addressed and that accessibility improvements remain on track.

Where adjustments are needed, the Accessibility Plan may be updated to reflect changing priorities, emerging barriers, or new opportunities for improvement.



Communication of the Plan

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) is committed to making its Accessibility Plan easy to access and available in ways that meet individual needs.

The Accessibility Plan is available on the West Nipissing General Hospital website.

Upon request, the plan can also be provided in alternate formats and/or with communication supports to ensure accessibility for all individuals.

Conclusion

West Nipissing General Hospital (WNGH) is committed to providing accessible, inclusive, and respectful care and services for all individuals.

Accessibility is an ongoing responsibility and a shared commitment across the organization. Through this Accessibility Plan, we continue to identify, remove, and prevent barriers that may impact patients, families, staff, volunteers, and members of our community.

We recognize that accessibility is not a one-time effort, but an ongoing process of improvement. WNGH will continue to work collaboratively with staff, patients, and community partners to strengthen accessibility in our services, facilities, and practices.

Feedback and lived experience play an important role in guiding our work. We welcome input that helps us improve accessibility and ensure that everyone can access care with dignity, independence, and respect.

WNGH remains committed to meeting its obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, and to continuing progress toward a more accessible and inclusive health care environment.



Appendix A – Definitions

Disability

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, a disability includes:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation, or disfigurement caused by injury, birth defect, or illness (including conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, brain injury, paralysis, amputation, or vision, hearing, or speech impairments, and the use of assistive devices or support animals)
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- A learning disability or difficulty in understanding or using language
- A mental health disorder
- An injury or disability for which benefits were received or claimed under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

Barrier

A barrier is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society. This may include:

- Physical barriers (e.g., stairs, narrow doorways)
- Architectural barriers (e.g., building design limitations)
- Information or communication barriers (e.g., inaccessible formats, complex language)
- Attitudinal barriers (e.g., assumptions or stigma)
- Technological barriers (e.g., systems that are not accessible)
- Policies or practices that limit access or inclusion

Accessible Formats

Accessible formats are alternative ways of providing information so that it can be understood by people with different accessibility needs. Examples include:

- Large print
- Electronic formats compatible with screen readers
- Audio formats
- Braille (upon request, where available)



Communication Supports

Communication supports are tools or methods that help people understand or share information.

Examples include:

- Sign language interpretation
- Captioning
- Plain language versions of documents
- Assistive communication devices

Support Person

A support person is an individual who assists a person with a disability to access services. This may include support with communication, mobility, personal care, or decision-making during care or service delivery.

Service Animal

A service animal is an animal that is trained to assist a person with a disability. Service animals are permitted in areas of the hospital where public access is allowed, in accordance with hospital policy and applicable legislation.

Barrier-Free Access

Barrier-free access refers to environments, services, and communication methods that are designed or adapted to be usable by all people, including persons with disabilities, without unnecessary obstacles.