

**Category:** General Agency

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**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

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# Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region Accessible Information and Communication Policy

## Content of Policy:

1. Commitment
2. Definitions
3. Plain Language
4. Alternative Formats
5. Communication supports and Services
6. Notification and Feedback
7. ILCWR's Plan

## **Commitment**

### **1.1 Statement of Commitment**

Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region (ILCWR) is committed to providing information and communication supports, services, resources, products, practices and systems that are consistent with the requirements of the Information and Communication Standard of the AODA.

To ensure that all information and communication is accessible and inclusive ILCWR will follow the standards laid out in this document. ILCWR will consider the values of the organization when preparing any information or communication: justice, dignity, welcoming, respect and teamwork.

### **1.2 Train staff**

All staff will be trained in providing accessible information and communications.

### **1.3 Time Frame**

ILCWR will meet alternative format requests in a timely fashion that responds appropriately to the urgency of the situation.

**Category:** General Agency

---

**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

---

## **1.4 Remove Barriers**

ILCWR is committed to identifying, removing and preventing barriers to access of information and communication.

### **Definitions**

These are the definitions as stated in the Accessible Information and Communication Standard.

#### **2.1 Information**

Information is: data, facts, knowledge and subject matter that may exist in any format such as text (e.g. annual report), numbers (e.g. budgets), image (e.g. advertising) or sound (e.g. outgoing voice mail) that convey meaning.

#### **2.2 Communication**

Communication is: the interactive process between two people or systems where information is provided (e.g. website), sent (e.g. mail out) or received (e.g. emails).

#### **2.3 Accessible Information and Communication**

Accessible Information and Communication is: Considering accessibility and all ability levels when planning information/communication. Giving people adequate time to process and reply to information provided. ILCWR will provide everyone with the same quality of information/communication and within a reasonable timeframe.

### **Plain Language**

ILCWR will make every effort to ensure that all information and communication is accessible and inclusive. When possible documents created for public review will be written taking the principles of plain language into account. This includes all policies, forms and manuals. In the event that this is not possible to create a document in plain language, a

**Category:** General Agency

---

**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

---

separate plain language version must also be created.

### **3.1 Plain Language Definition**

Plain English is clear, straightforward expression, using only as many words as are necessary. It is language that avoids complicated wording and sentence structure. Plain language is a language that everyone in your audience can easily understand.

### **3.2 Elements of Plain Language**

- Plain language uses familiar words
- Plain language uses personal pronouns
- Plain language uses an active voice
- Plain language avoids unnecessary qualifiers and multiple negatives
- Plain language documents leave plenty of white space on the page
- Plain language documents use large accessible font with even larger headings
- Plain language documents include visuals where appropriate
- Plain language documents are as short as possible and well organized

## **Alternative Formats**

### **4.1 Definition**

Refers to making use of formats other than standard print (e.g., audio tapes, video tapes, large print, Braille, computer text) to change the way information and material is presented to meet an individual's learning style needs and ability.

### **4.2 Requests**

Alternative formats will be provided upon request.

### **4.3 Timeline**

ILCWR will provide information in an appropriate format within a reasonable timeframe.

**Category:** General Agency

---

**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

---

#### **4.4 Cost**

Where possible ILCWR will prepare alternative formats in-house. In the event that we must hire outside of the agency ILCWR will cover the cost for this service. If there is a fee for a document there will be no additional fee for an alternative format.

#### **Communication Services**

Communication services include the services of qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, intervenors<sup>1</sup>, captioners and note-takers.

#### **5.1 Requests**

When an ILCWR consumer or member of the public requests an ASL interpreter, captioner or note-taker ILCWR will arrange for the services at no cost to the consumer or community member. It is assumed if someone required an intervenor that they will bring their own staff person, however, in the event that this is not the case ILCWR will contact the Canadian Hearing Society to make arrangements.

#### **5.2 Timeline**

ILCWR will provide information in an appropriate format within a reasonable timeframe.

#### **5.3 Cost**

If there is a fee for communication services ILCWR will cover this cost.

### **Notification and Feedback**

#### **6.1 Duty to Notify**

ILCWR will notify members of the public about the availability of accessible information and communications using a variety of measures including: a

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<sup>1</sup> **Intervenor** is a professional service to facilitate the interaction of a person who is deaf-blind with other people and the environment. Intervention may include providing access to environmental information (auditory, visual and tactile) by means of a variety of communication methods and acting as a sighted guide or interpreting on behalf of the person who is deaf blind.

**Category:** General Agency

---

**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

---

sign at reception or on the front door, a notice on all printed documents and on the ILCWR website.

## **6.2 Feedback**

ILCWR has a feedback process available to the public with regards to our accessible customer service<sup>2</sup>. A similar feedback process will be put in place regarding our Information/Communication practices.

ILCWR is committed to making all feedback and complaint processes available to persons of all abilities. The process shall permit people with disabilities to identify their communication needs and to do so using alternative formats, communication supports and services when necessary.

## **ILCWR's Information and Communication Plan**

At this time ILCWR has set out two phases in our compliance plan.

### **7.1 Phase one**

Phase one of ILCWR's Information/Communication policy pertains to email use as well as new Word and Excel documents. All changes are to be made by **December 31, 2010**.

#### **Email:**

- All staff member will set their email font default to a minimum of Arial 14, Verdana 12 or Tahoma 12.
- All staff will amend email signature to above font and will include job title, organization, contact information then the tag line "Helping people with disabilities achieve independence".

#### **Word and Excel Documents**

- The default fonts for Word and Excel documents will be a minimum of Arial 14, Verdana 12 or Tahoma 12.

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<sup>2</sup> As required by the Accessible Customer Service Standard of the AODA.

**Category:** General Agency

---

**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

---

## 7.2 Phase two:

Phase two of ILCWR's Information/Communication policy pertains to physical documents. All changes are to be made or be in the process of being made by **April 1, 2011**. As April approaches the deadline will be reviewed and may be extended based on the extent of the task.

### **Document font and font size**

- All ILCWR documents must be written in a minimum of Arial 14, Verdana 12 or Tahoma 12.

### **Brochures**

- All ILCWR brochures must be written in a minimum of Arial 14, Verdana 12 or Tahoma 12 and use the principles of plain language.

### **Business cards**

- Business cards will be redesigned to ensure compliance.

### **Letterhead**

- ILCWR electronic and hard copy letterhead will utilize space more appropriately to increase font size.

## **Emergency and Public Safety Information**

### **For the Public:**

- ILCWR shall provide accessible information regarding evacuation procedures and information about building alarms for all buildings where the public is welcome. In addition information about incidents that threaten life, property, operations or the environment and related procedures will be available in alternative formats.

**Category:** General Agency

---

**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

---

**For employees:**

- ILCWR shall provide accessible emergency and public safety information. This will include workplace evacuation procedures and information about building alarms, workplace health and safety, and plans for addressing incidents that threaten life, property, operations or the environment and related procedures.

**Notification of alternative formats**

- ILCWR will notify employees and the public about the alternative formats available. All documents will include a statement regarding alternative formats and may read as simply "Alternative formats available upon request. Please contact the centre". In addition, signage informing the public of our alternative formats will be located at reception.

**Website**

- ILCWR's redesigned website will meet the web content accessibility guidelines from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

**Training Staff**

- Head office staff and all supervisors will be trained on the Accessible Information and Communication Standard and ILCWR's accessible I/C plan on December 17, 2010. All other staff including attendants and volunteers will be given the information in written format by mail.
- There may be other learning opportunities through staff meetings or other measures.

It is expected that that staff will continue to use all existing business cards, documents and brochures. Only upon ordering new materials would these changes come into effect. For materials printed in-house and on a regular basis, changes are to be made as soon as possible.

**Category:** General Agency

---

**Subject:** Information and Communication Policy

---

*Note: The Accessible Information/Communication Standard of the AODA has not yet passed as law. When that standard passes as law and guidance materials on plain language, alternative formats etcetera are made public, this working policy will be revised if necessary*