

Information and Communications Standard

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This training resource is not legal advice and should you require assistance in interpreting the legislation or the regulation, please contact your legal adviser. This resource has been created to assist in understanding the legislation and/or regulation and does not replace the official version of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, Ontario Regulation 191/11 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). If there is any conflict between this resource, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and the AODA, the regulation and the AODA are the final authorities.

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Information and Communications Standard

In this module you will learn about the requirements of the Information and Communications Standard.

Before viewing this introductory video, consider for a moment all of the things you've done so far today that have involved communicating with others or giving or receiving information.

Video Transcript

It is Possible: Introduction to the Information and Communications Standard – Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation

Narrator:

Consider for a moment what you've done so far today. Perhaps you browsed a newspaper on the Internet or checked your email. Maybe you attended a meeting or had a casual conversation with a colleague in the hall or through instant messaging?

So much of our world today is about information and communications...

...from chatting with your son or daughter...

...to reaching out to colleagues.

But imagine what it would be like if all of those lines of communication suddenly became blocked.

If, when surfing the Internet, some pages just don't work.

When you open up a document that you were told contains information you need, such as a bus schedule, it's unreadable.

Or what if, while in a meeting, suddenly, it's as if the sound is turned off.

If your access to information was turned off, how would you know what's going on in the world around you? How would you make decisions?

It would be like entering a world where everything appears to be the same. But rather than finding information that will allow you to participate, you find barriers....

...Always another barrier.

The good news is there are solutions to information and communication barriers, for example technology.

For people without disabilities, technology makes things convenient. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible. As long as they're set up right.

For example, if you're following web development best practices, your website may only need a few tweaks to be accessible to those with disabilities.

In addition, some accessible solutions can be as simple as reading a document out loud to someone, or providing an electronic version so they can re-size the text to suit their needs.

Making information and communications accessible is not only helpful to people with disabilities, it benefits us all. A properly formatted document or accessible website displays properly in all browsers, including personal hand-held devices.

The Information and Communications Standard, as covered in this module, outlines how organizations will be required to create, provide, and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities.

[Text on screen:] Developed by Curriculum Services Canada with support from the Government of Ontario Copyright 2012

Now let's take a closer look at the requirements of this standard.

Module Topics

- Accessible Formats and Communication Supports
 - Exceptions to the Requirement
- Feedback Processes
- Emergency Procedures, Plans, or Public Safety Information
- Accessible Websites and Web Content
- Educational and Training Institutions:
 - Educational and Training Resources and Materials
 - Training to Educators
 - Libraries of Educational and Training Institutions
- Producers of Educational or Training Material
- Public Libraries

This module will take you approximately 17 minutes to complete.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

When requested, you must provide information and communications in an accessible manner to people with disabilities.

Alternatives to standard print are often referred to as accessible formats, and ways to help communication between people are referred to as communication supports.

When a request is received, you must consult with the person to determine their accessibility needs.

You have the flexibility to determine the most appropriate accessible format or communication support depending on the accessibility needs of the person and the capability of your organization to deliver.

Accessible formats and communication supports must be provided in a timely manner and at a cost that is not more than the regular costs charged to other people.

What are some examples of alternate formats and communication supports?

- Reading written information to a person directly
- Large print
- Text transcripts of audio or visual information
- Handwritten notes instead of spoken word
- Information written in plain language
- An electronic document formatted to be accessible for use with a screen reader

When do you need to comply?

The deadline for your organization to meet the requirements of this section:

- Government of Ontario and Legislative Assembly must comply by January 1, 2014
- Large designated public sector organizations must comply by January 1, 2015
- Small designated public sector organizations, and large organizations with 50 or more employees must comply by January 1, 2016
- Small organizations with 1 to 49 employees must comply by January 1, 2017

For a description of how organizations are classified under the regulation, please refer to the Organizational Classification Chart in the Training Resources section of the AccessForward website.

Exceptions to the Requirement

This requirement is about providing accessible information and communications about goods, services, or facilities offered to customers, clients, and others.

The requirement does not apply to the following:

- Products and product labels.

Note: A store that sells DVDs for example, does not have to make its products or product labels accessible, but the store must still take into account a person's disability when communicating with them about their products, such as verbally informing a customer with vision loss about their DVD selection.

- Information that you do not control directly or indirectly through a contract, unless your organization is involved in education or training as defined in the regulation.
- Information or communications that cannot be converted.

When It's Not Possible

There might be instances when you are unable to convert the requested information or communication. For example, if:

- The technology to convert the information is not readily available, or
- The information may be lost in the conversion process and cannot be conveyed in a meaningful way, for example, the visual information in an x-ray or architectural blueprint.

Organizations will need to determine, in consultation with the person requesting the information or communications, if it is possible to provide it in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports.

When it's not possible to convert requested material, you need to provide the individual making the request with the following:

- An explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible, and
- A summary of the information or communications.

By providing these two things, you may be helping someone to obtain an understanding of the information they need.

Feedback Processes

Under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, organizations had to establish a customer service feedback process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which they provide goods or services to people with disabilities.

Your organization may have other types of external or internal feedback processes to receive and respond to the public and/or employees. For example, an organization may gather feedback through online surveys or forms, by email, by phone, or in print.

Under the Information and Communications Standard, if your organization has feedback processes in place, you must make them accessible. This may include:

- Arranging for accessible formats and communication supports on request.
- Notifying the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

When do you need to comply?

The deadline for your organization to make your feedback processes accessible:

- Government of Ontario and Legislative Assembly must comply by January 1, 2013
- Large designated public sector organizations must comply by January 1, 2014
- Small designated public sector organizations, and large organizations with 50 or more employees must comply by January 1, 2015
- Small organizations with 1 to 49 employees must comply by January 1, 2016

Emergency Procedures, Plans, or Public Safety Information

It is vital that everyone be able to access emergency and public safety information.

Does your organization provide emergency procedures, plans, or public safety information to the public? If yes, you must provide these in an accessible format, on request.

Examples of emergency information include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency plans and procedures
- Maps, warning signs and evacuation routes
- Information you give the public about alarms or other emergency alerts

Real-time emergency information (such as announcements and alarms) is not included in this requirement.

Compliance deadline for all organizations is **January 1, 2012**.

Knowledge Check

The Information and Communications Standard applies to which of the following?
Choose the best response.

- a) Information that you do not control directly or indirectly through a contract, unless your organization is involved in education or training
- b) Products and product labels
- c) **Information and communications about products and services that your organization provides**
- d) Information and communications that cannot be converted

Answer c) is correct. The Information and Communications Standard applies to information and communications about products and services that your organization provides.

Accessible Websites and Web Content

An organization's website is often a primary way it shares information. That's why it's important that your website and web content be accessible.

Your organization must conform with the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, as outlined in the standard. The WCAG 2.0 guidelines explain how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. These guidelines were developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

WCAG 2.0 has different levels of compliance that determine how accessible a site is. So, what makes a website more accessible?

Examples of A and AA Features

Examples of what types of features are required within the compliance Levels A and AA, are provided below:

- Level A:

The first, most basic level of accessibility compliance is called Level A. An example of a Level A accessibility feature on a web page is alternative text. Alternative text appears when your mouse hovers over an image. It's important to use appropriate text when describing an image so that screen reader technology can describe the image to a person with vision loss.

- Level AA:

The second, more extensive level of accessibility is called Level AA. An example of a Level AA accessibility feature on a web page is properly named headings and labels, which enable people using screen reader technology to scan through the information on a web page efficiently.

For example, to quickly identify what stories are on the home page of a newspaper, a screen reader can search just the headings for each story. Properly labelled headings allow the screen reader to tell when one article stops and the next begins. If this is not done, every individual article will be read as one story.

Each header should be labelled with the news article's subject. This allows users to easily find the information they want.

For more information about the levels of accessibility outlined in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), please visit the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) website.

Website Requirements and Timelines

The requirements your organization must meet and by when, are provided below:

- Government of Ontario and Legislative Assembly:
To set an example for other organizations, the Government of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly have earlier deadlines in meeting the requirements. Refer to the timelines tool for details. The timelines tool is a quick reference chart providing the deadlines for meeting the requirements of the regulation based on organizational class and size. It can be viewed in the Training Resources section of the AccessForward website.
- All Designated Public Sector Organizations and Large Organizations:
 - **By January 1, 2014**, new Internet websites and the web content available on these sites must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level A.
 - **By January 1, 2021**, all Internet websites must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, and all web content available on these sites that was developed after January 1, 2012, must also conform. The exceptions are live captioning and pre-recorded audio descriptions.
- Small Organizations: There are no website requirements for small organizations.

Knowledge Check

By which date must all new Internet websites of designated public sector organizations and large organizations conform with WCAG 2.0 Level A requirements?

- a) **2014**
- b) 2016
- c) 2021

Answer a) is correct. By January 1, 2014, all new Internet websites of designated public sector organizations and large organizations must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level A.

Educational and Training Institutions

There are sections of the standard that apply specifically to educational and training institutions, such as:

- Public and private elementary and secondary schools
- Colleges and universities
- Other educational and training organizations defined in the regulation

The following sections of the standard apply specifically to educational and training institutions:

- Educational and training resources and materials
- Training to educators
- Libraries of educational and training institutions

These requirements are outlined in the next three sections.

More specific details on what organizations must comply are provided below.

Which educational and training institutions must comply:

- Organizations that are governed by the Education Act or the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005.
- Organizations that offer all or part of a post-secondary program leading to a degree pursuant to a consent granted under the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000.
- Designated public sector organizations (colleges and universities) described in paragraph 3 or 4 of Schedule 1 of the IASR.
- Public or private organizations that provide courses or programs or both that result in the acquisition by students of a diploma or certificate named by the Minister of Education under paragraph 1 of subsection 8 (1) of the Education Act.
- A private school within the meaning of the Education Act.

Educational and Training Resources and Materials

If you belong to an educational or training institution and a student notifies you of a need due to a disability, you must:

- Provide learning resources or material in an accessible format that takes into account their accessibility needs.
- Provide student records and program information in an accessible format that takes into account their accessibility needs.

You can provide the student with one of the following:

- An accessible or conversion-ready electronic format, where available or
- A comparable resource in an accessible or conversion-ready format, if the resource cannot be obtained or converted into an accessible format.

When do you need to comply?

The deadline for educational and training institutions to meet the requirements of this section:

- Large designated public sector organizations, and large organizations with 50 or more employees must comply by January 1, 2013
- Small designated public sector organizations, and small organizations with 1 to 49 employees must comply by January 1, 2015

Training to Educators

Educators need to know how to make their teaching accessible. This means that educational and training institutions must:

- Provide educators with accessibility awareness training related to accessible course delivery and instruction.
- Keep records of training provided, including the dates it was provided and number of individuals trained.

When do you need to comply?

The deadline for organizations to provide their educators with accessibility awareness training:

- Large designated public sector organizations, and large organizations with 50 or more employees must comply by January 1, 2013
- Small designated public sector organizations, and small organizations with 1 to 49 employees must comply by January 1, 2015

Libraries of Educational and Training Institutions

Where available, libraries of educational or training institutions, as defined in the regulation, must provide an accessible or conversion-ready format of print, digital, or multimedia resources or materials, on request.

Are there any exceptions? The following are exempt from the requirements:

- Special collections
- Archival materials
- Rare books
- Donations

When do you need to comply?

The deadline for educational and training institutions to meet the requirements of this section:

- By January 1, 2015, these libraries must provide accessible formats for print-based resources or materials, on request.
- By January 1, 2020, these libraries must provide accessible formats for digital or multimedia resources or materials, on request.

Producers of Educational or Training Material

Producers of educational or training textbooks and print-based learning resources who supply educational and training institutions must provide accessible or conversion-ready versions, when requested.

Examples of producers include, but are not limited to:

- Publishing companies
- Universities
- School boards

When do you need to comply?

The deadline for producers of educational or training material to meet the requirements of this section:

- By January 1, 2015, producers must provide accessible or conversion-ready versions of textbooks, on request.
- By January 1, 2020, producers must provide accessible or conversion-ready versions of printed educational or training supplementary learning resources, on request.

Public Libraries

Public libraries must:

- Provide or arrange to provide accessible materials where they exist, when requested.
- Make information publicly available to inform people that materials can be provided in an accessible format, on request. Keep in mind that this information needs to be accessible as well.

When do you need to comply?

The deadline for public library boards to comply is **January 1, 2013**.

Knowledge Check

Which of the following statements is **false**? Choose the best response.

- a) **Special collections and rare books must be provided in an accessible format at libraries of educational and training institutions.**
- b) Student records must be provided in accessible formats, on request.
- c) Educational and training institutions must provide educators with accessibility awareness training.
- d) Colleges and universities must provide learning materials in accessible formats, on request.

Answer a) is correct. Special collections and rare books are exempt from having to be provided in accessible or conversion-ready formats.

Summary

You have now completed the Information and Communications Standard module.

Module Topics

- Accessible Formats and Communication Supports
 - Exceptions to the Requirement
- Feedback Processes
- Emergency Procedures, Plans, or Public Safety Information
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