multi-year accessibility plan 2021-2024

tpl toronto public library

tpl.ca

*Accessible formats of this document are available upon request. To make a request, contact the Manager of Accessibility at accessibleservices@tpl.ca.

table of contents

message from the City Librarian 3

executive summary 4

introduction 5

statement of commitment 5

background 6

AODA program 6

guiding principles 7

legislated accessibility compliance 7

accessibility by design 8

community leadership 8

advancing accessibility and inclusion 8

open, accessible, and inclusive spaces 9

general requirements 10

initiatives 10

outcomes 11

information and communication standards 12

initiatives 12

outcomes 14

customer service standards 15

initiatives 15

outcomes 16

employment standards 17

initiatives 17

outcomes 18

built environment and public spaces 19

initiatives 19

outcomes 20

conclusion 21

appendix 1: definitions 22

message from the City Librarian

Equity and inclusion are fundamental values of Toronto Public Library (TPL). They're core to our mission to promote universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment. Through our Strategic Plan 2020-2024, we've further advanced our commitment to accessibility, removing barriers, and creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for all Torontonians.

As part of that commitment, we have developed this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to enhance the accessibility of our digital and physical spaces, services, programs, and employment practices. We want to ensure that our customers and employees with disabilities feel welcome at the library, and can access our services how and when they need to.

This Plan is a foundational piece of our Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Program, which is focused on implementing system-wide policies, plans, processes, and training to further advance accessibility and inclusion at TPL.

Our aim, in addition to exceeding our legislated compliance requirements under the AODA and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), is to ensure that the principles of accessibility – dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity – are reflected in everything we do. We will continue to stay accountable to our Board, to our staff, and to our customers through annual reporting on the progress of our Plan, which we will post on our website.

This work has never been more important, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further exacerbated the inequities facing persons with disabilities in our society. We look forward to working with our colleagues, partners and communities to understand and remove accessibility barriers, and create a truly equitable and inclusive environment for our employees and our customers with disabilities.

Vickery Bowles.

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian, Toronto Public Library

executive summary

As a foundational piece of our Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Program, this Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) enhances the accessibility of our digital and physical spaces, services, programs, employment practices, and more.

The MYAP serves as the Library's long-term accessibility road map, outlining our vision, outcomes and actions that will guide our journey over the life of our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan to remove and prevent barriers for our staff and customers with disabilities.

TPL's Plan is organized around relevant accessibility standards under the AODA - General Requirements, Information and Communications, Customer Service, Employment, and the Built Environment and Public Spaces - which are aimed at making Ontario accessible by 2025 so persons with disabilities can fully participate in their communities. Each action is connected to the TPL division(s) that will lead its development and delivery.

The Plan also outlines how we will remain accountable through annual reporting on our progress. Accessibility is a shared responsibility by everyone at the Library, and will be incorporated into the work of all of our divisions.

introduction

statement of commitment

The Toronto Public Library (TPL) is committed to providing equitable access to library service that meets the changing needs of all Torontonians, including persons with disabilities, in a welcoming and supportive environment. The Library will develop and support a work and service environment where the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in accordance with the principles of dignity, independence, equal opportunity, and integration. TPL will meet and exceed the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its regulations.

In developing and delivering services and programs to persons with disabilities, the Library will be guided by the service values of equity and diversity in the treatment of individuals. The Library will establish, implement and monitor policies, services and practices that balance the needs of persons with disabilities and others to support the accessibility standards of customer service, information and communication, employment and the built environment, established under the AODA.

background

In 2005, the Government of Ontario enacted the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Under the AODA, the Toronto Public Library is required to develop a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which outlines how the library will advance accessibility and inclusion in the following areas:

- General Accessibility
- Information and Communications
- Customer Service
- Employment
- Built Environment and Public Spaces

As we continue to meet and exceed our compliance requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) (O. Reg. 191/11) under the AODA, the Library is committed to the identification, removal, and prevention of systemic accessibility barriers within our goods, services, programs, employment practices, and facilities.

Through an Accessibility by Design approach, the Library will strive to create and maintain open, accessible, and inclusive spaces for all Torontonians.

TPL's AODA program

Launched in 2021, the Library's AODA Program is a multi-year, organizational-wide initiative that is focused on:

- ensuring compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR);
- developing, reviewing, and implementing system-wide policies, plans, processes, and training that will advance accessibility and inclusion;
- identifying, removing, and preventing systemic accessibility barriers.

Led by the Manager, Accessibility, the Program is supported by a cross-divisional Core Working Group, internal subject matter experts, and a Steering Committee.

guiding principles

These guiding principles serve as the foundation for future initiatives the Library will be undertaking to remove barriers and advance accessibility and inclusion for its employees and customers with disabilities.

legislated accessibility compliance

The Library is committed to meeting and exceeding its legislated compliance obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

The Library will:

- monitor and address any relevant changes to the accessibility standards under the IASR;
- establish dedicated accessibility staff resources to provide subject matter expertise on achieving compliance.

accessibility by design

An equitable and inclusive environment can be established and maintained by intentionally integrating accessibility into the planning, development, design, procurement, and delivery of the Library's goods, services, policies, branches, employment practices, and programs.

The Library will:

- incorporate accessibility requirements and best practices at the beginning, and at every stage of a project or initiative;
- include accessibility subject matter experts as members of the project team or governance model for an initiative or program;
- consult with persons with disabilities to identify any potential accessibility barriers.

community leadership

Toronto Public Library will strive to lead by example in its identification, removal, and prevention of systemic accessibility barriers. With accountability to the communities we serve, accessibility and inclusion are shared responsibilities by all staff at all levels of the Library.

The Library will:

- foster an organizational culture that provides equitable access and inclusion to the communities we serve through our goods, services, digital and physical spaces, employment practices, and programs;
- adapt to the changing needs of the community through the development and delivery of new and innovative solutions;
- proactively prevent discriminatory language, behaviour, and actions.

advancing accessibility and inclusion

The Library is committed to advancing accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities by providing equitable access to our goods, services, facilities, information and communications, technology, and employment opportunities in a manner that meets their individual needs.

The Library will:

- employ accessible customer service best practices when interacting with persons with disabilities;
- provide services and programs to our employees and customers with disabilities in a manner that upholds the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity;
- collaborate and engage with our employees and customers with disabilities in the development and delivery of the Library's goods, services, and programs.

open, accessible, and inclusive spaces

The Library strives to provide and maintain physical and digital spaces that are accessible, inclusive, and available to all of our employees and customers, including persons with disabilities.

The Library will:

- incorporate the barrier-free and technical requirements under the Ontario Building Code and the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards into the design and construction of new and renovated branches and facilities;
- incorporate the requirements under the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines into the Library's websites, web content, and web-based applications;
- provide appropriate and timely accessibility accommodations to the Library's employees and customers with disabilities so they can fully participate in, and benefit from, in-person and online resources.

general requirements

The General Requirements under the IASR relate to the establishment of a Statement of Commitment, corporate policies, a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, accessible procurement practices, and organizational accessibility training.

initiatives

1. Revise the Library's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy to reflect applicable amendments to legislated compliance requirements, and post it to our external website. (Human Resources)
2. Establish, deliver, and maintain a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. (Human Resources)
3. Develop and make available an annual status report on the progress of the implementation of the Library's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan. (Human Resources)
4. Incorporate accessibility criteria into all procurement proposals and contracts related to the acquisition of goods, services, products, and facilities. (All Divisions)
5. Develop staff resources on accessible procurement practices. (Human Resources, Finance)
6. Incorporate accessibility criteria into future procurement processes and documents related to the acquisition of self-serve kiosks. (Finance, Information Technology Services)

7. Establish, maintain, and track training on the IASR and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to persons with disabilities, and provide it to staff, volunteers, and third parties conducting business on behalf of the Library. (Human Resources; Policy Planning, & Performance Management; Service Development & Innovation; Finance)
8. Establish accessibility standards, in consultation with Human Resources, Service Development & Innovation, and Information Technology Services, for the development of employee-focused learning opportunities. (Policy, Planning, and Performance Management)
9. Create and provide all future newly designed or redeveloped training-related forms and materials as accessible digital documents. (Policy, Planning & Performance Management)

outcomes

- An organizational culture that values the lived experiences and individual accessibility needs of its employees and customers with disabilities.
- Clear and understandable staff responsibilities to advance accessibility throughout the organization.
- Procurement processes and practices that advance accessibility and inclusion.
- The acquisition of products and technologies that support equitable and inclusive access to the Library's goods, services, and facilities.
- Greater staff awareness and understanding of the barriers facing persons with disabilities and the importance of providing accessible goods, services, programs, employment practices, and facilities.
- Accessible and inclusive learning opportunities for employees with disabilities.

information and communication standards

The Library will continue to provide information and communications to its employees and customers with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their individual accessibility needs. This commitment will be achieved through an accessible feedback process, the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for Library meetings, programs, and events, and an accessible website, web content, and web-based applications.

initiatives

1. Continue to receive and respond to employee and customer feedback in a manner that takes into account the individual's accessibility needs. (All Divisions)
2. Establish guidelines and resources that support accessible virtual and in-person public consultation and engagement activities. (Service Development & Innovation)
3. Establish an organizational process for providing accessible formats and communication supports for staff and public meetings, programs, and events upon request. (Human Resources, Service Development & Innovation)
4. Provide continuous training to staff on creating accessible digital documents. (Human Resources, Information Technology Services)
5. Provide ongoing staff updates through TPL's internal channels to build awareness of the AODA Program and updates on our progress. (Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement; Human Resources)

6. Provide automated or live closed captioning for key public and staff meetings and events upon request. (All Divisions)
7. Review and update public and staff emergency and evacuation procedures to ensure they include provisions for persons with disabilities, and provide this information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports upon request. (Human Resources, Branch Operations & Customer Experience)
8. Establish digital accessibility guidelines for the design and maintenance of the Library's websites, web content, and web-based applications. (Information Technology Services)
9. Establish a process for conducting accessibility evaluations and user testing of the Library's websites, web content, and web-based applications that include persons with disabilities. (Information Technology Services)
10. Establish a process for ensuring the accessibility information, provided on the Library's website and through print materials, is updated on a regular basis, and provided in an accessible format or through a communication support upon request. (Human Resources, Service Development & Innovation)
11. Continue to provide information related to accessible collections on the Library's website. (Service Development & Innovation, Collections & Membership Services)
12. Continue to work with, and promote, the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) to provide accessible library collections and services to persons with print disabilities. (Service Development & Innovation)
13. Establish a process to provide accessible formats of special collections, rare books, and archives upon request. (Service Development & Innovation)
14. Establish a corporate glossary of inclusive language and terminology for use by all divisions. (Human Resources; Service Development & Innovation; and Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement)
15. Create and provide accessible templates for newly designed and redeveloped documents that will be shared internally or published externally. (Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement)
16. Incorporate accessibility best practices when adding information into internal document template shells. (All Divisions)
17. Establish a process for identifying, providing, maintaining, and supporting the use of assistive hardware and software that meets the information and communication needs of employees and customers with disabilities. (Information Technology Services, Service Development & Innovation, Human Resources)

outcomes

- Staff are equipped with the necessary information and tools to provide accessible formats and communication supports to employees and customers with disabilities upon request.
- Websites, web content, and web-applications are accessible, inclusive, and compatible with various assistive technologies.
- Greater access to assistive hardware and software to support the information and communication needs of customers and employees with disabilities.
- Greater awareness and understanding of the Library's emergency procedures and practices as they relate to persons with disabilities.
- Greater participation of employees and customers with disabilities in the Library's meetings, programs, and events.

customer service standards

The Library is committed to providing and upholding accessible and inclusive customer service practices. We will continue to offer equitable access to our goods, services, programs, and facilities that uphold the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity, while always meeting the individual accessibility needs of our customers with disabilities.

initiatives

1. Incorporate the requirements under the Accessible Customer Service Standards into the Library's revised Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Policy. (Human Resources)
2. Incorporate the Library's Accessibility Statement of Commitment into any revised or newly developed policies and procedures related to customer service. (All Divisions)
3. Update the Library's Rules of Conduct to reflect current legislated requirements for service animals. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience)
4. Update the Library's Rules of Conduct to include a new bulletin that reflects the current legislated requirements for support persons. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience)
5. Establish, maintain, and track staff training resources and opportunities on welcoming service animals and support persons within the Library's branches, facilities, and Book Mobile vehicles. (Service Development & Innovation)

6. Integrate information about welcoming service animals and support persons into any revised or newly developed programming policies, procedures, and/or strategies. (Service Development & Innovation)
7. Establish branch signage to communicate that service animals and support persons are welcome in the library. (Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement)
8. Update the Library's Service Disruption Guidelines to reflect the applicable requirements under the Accessible Customer Service Standards. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience)
9. Incorporate accessibility best practices into any future communication plans related to service disruptions and long-term branch closures. (Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement)

outcomes

- Greater access to the Library's goods, services, programs, and facilities for customers with disabilities at the same time, location, and in the same manner as all customers.
- An equitable and inclusive environment that fosters and supports the reading and learning needs of persons with disabilities.
- Greater staff awareness, understanding, and access to resources that support excellent customer service practices for persons with disabilities.

employment standards

The Library is committed to fostering a welcoming, safe, inclusive, and accessible work environment for its employees with disabilities. This commitment is supported through accessible and inclusive recruitment and hiring practices, providing appropriate and timely workplace accommodations, and ensuring the individual accessibility needs of our employees with disabilities are taken into account when participating in its performance management and return-to-work programs, or any career development and advancement opportunities.

initiatives

1. Establish accessible recruitment and interviewing guidelines and continuous training for hiring managers, including the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for candidates with disabilities upon request. (Human Resources)
2. Continue to provide any requested assistive technology/equipment as part of the hiring process, in consultation with the candidate. (All Divisions)
3. Establish a process for informing successful candidates that workplace accessibility accommodations are available upon request, including the process for submitting a request. (Human Resources)
4. Provide information on the Library's workplace accommodation policies and processes in its New Employee Orientation. (Human Resources)
5. Provide continuous training on the duty to accommodate in employment for managers and supervisors. (Human Resources)
6. Provide all newly developed and revised Human Resources-related forms in accessible digital formats. (Human Resources)

7. Include a notice in all new and redeveloped HR documents about the availability of accessible formats upon request. (Human Resources)
8. Incorporate accessibility best practices into the Library's Remote Work and Return to the Workplace strategies. (Human Resources)
9. Provide information on the Library's process for developing individualized workplace emergency response plans for employees with disabilities in its New Employee Orientation. (Human Resources)
10. Provide information to managers and supervisors on the process for developing individualized workplace emergency response plans for their employees with disabilities. (Human Resources)
11. Update all Modified Work Program documents and processes to reflect current and appropriate language and terminology. (Human Resources)
12. Update the Library's process for developing and documenting individualized accommodation plans that include consultation with the employee, their supervisor, and union representation if applicable. (Human Resources)
13. Review and update the Library's return-to-work process for non-union employees whose disability-related absence is not covered by the applicable process under WSIB. (Human Resources)
14. Establish a process for informing employees participating in the performance management program that related documents are available in accessible formats or through an appropriate communication support upon request. (Human Resources)
15. Establish a process for informing employees that all documents related to career development and advancement are available in an accessible format or through an appropriate communication support upon request. (Human Resources)
16. Continue to ensure that any position or location changes impacting employees with disabilities are aligned with the requirements outlined in the Library's Collective Agreement, and take into account any documented individualized accommodation plans. (Human Resources)

outcomes

- Greater opportunity for the recruitment, employment, advancement, and retention of persons with disabilities throughout all levels of the Library.
- Policies, processes, and practices that support the successful performance of Library employees with disabilities.
- Greater staff awareness and understanding of the duty to accommodate, and the implementation of workplace accommodations that support the full participation of employees with disabilities.

built environment and public spaces

With 100 branches and two distribution facilities, the Library is committed to upholding its strategic priority of providing open, accessible, and inclusive spaces for its employees and customers. As branches are newly constructed or redeveloped, the Library will continue to incorporate the barrier-free requirements under the Ontario Building Code and the technical requirements under the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards into its design and consultation processes.

initiatives

1. Incorporate the technical requirements established under the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards into the design of any future newly constructed or significantly renovated exterior paths of travel, including, but not limited to, stairs, ramps, sidewalks, and walkways. (Transformational Projects)
2. Incorporate accessibility best practices into the public consultation process for all future newly constructed or redeveloped capital projects. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience, Transformational Projects)
3. Establish the City of Toronto's Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG) as a criterion within all procurement documents related to newly developed or redeveloped capital projects. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience, Transformational Projects)
4. Continue to incorporate the requirements established under the TADG into the planning and design of newly constructed or redeveloped capital projects. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience, Transformational Projects)

5. Incorporate the requirements established under the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards into the design and construction of any future on and off-street accessible library parking. (Transformational Projects)
6. Incorporate accessibility best practices into the consultation process for any future capital projects related to parking. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience, Transformational Projects)
7. Incorporate the technical requirements established under the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards into the design of any future newly constructed or significantly renovated service counters and signage. (Transformational Projects)
8. Incorporate accessibility best practices into the consultation process for all future capital projects related to service counters and signage. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience, Transformational Projects)
9. Incorporate the technical requirements into the design of any future newly constructed or significantly renovated fixed queuing guides. (Transformational Projects)
10. Incorporate accessibility best practices into the consultation process for all future capital projects related to fixed queuing guides. (Transformational Projects)
11. Incorporate the technical requirements into the design of any future newly constructed or significantly renovated waiting areas with fixed seating. (Transformational Projects)
12. Incorporate accessibility best practices into the consultation process for all future capital projects related to waiting areas with fixed seating. (Branch Operations & Customer Experience, Transformational Projects)
13. Establish procedures for the ongoing maintenance of the accessibility elements of the Library's branches and public spaces. (Transformational Projects)

outcomes

- Greater accessibility within the Library's branches, facilities, and public spaces for employees and customers with disabilities by incorporating the requirements established under the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines.
- An enhanced public consultation process for newly constructed and redeveloped capital projects that incorporates accessibility best practices and includes persons with disabilities.

conclusion

The Toronto Public Library is committed to fostering an organizational culture that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive. Through new and enhanced policies, processes, plans, and practices, the Library will continue to provide goods, services, programs, facilities, and opportunities that meet the individual accessibility needs of our employees and customers with disabilities.

Accessibility is a shared responsibility by all staff, at all levels of the Library. As such, the Library's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will serve to guide our work over the next three years to remove and prevent barriers and advance accessibility and inclusion throughout the Library.

An annual status report on our progress to deliver on the initiatives outlined in this Plan will be developed and posted to the Library's external website. Our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan will be updated at the same time as the Library's Strategic Plan, and consultations with internal and external stakeholders will be conducted.

For questions about the Library's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, or to request it in an accessible format, contact:

Darren Cooper (He/Him)
Manager, Accessibility
Human Resources Division
Tel: 416-393-6236
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appendix 1: definitions

Accessible Formats

Accessible formats, sometimes called alternate formats, are ways of presenting printed, written, or visual material so that people with print disabilities can access it. People with print disabilities may:

- be blind or live with low vision
- have a learning disability that affects reading
- have a physical disability and be unable to hold material or turn pages

Accessible formats may include, but are not limited to:

- plain language
- large print
- braille
- electronic (MS Office, Rich Text, or PDF)
- audio

Assistive Device

An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating or lifting. Examples include, walkers, magnifiers for reading, computer hardware and software, white canes, wheelchairs, scooters, and smart phones or tablets.

Barrier

A barrier is any systemic, attitudinal, technological, informational, or architectural limitation that prevents someone from participating fully in society due to their disability.

Communication Supports

Communication supports are ways for people who cannot access verbal or audio information to receive it visually, or ways for people who are non-verbal to communicate with people who speak. For instance, people who do not understand verbal communication may:

- be Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing
- be deaf/blind

Some common communication supports include:

American Sign Language (ASL): American Sign Language (ASL) is a complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face. It is the primary language of many North Americans who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, and hard of hearing, and is used by many hearing people as well.

Note: The 'uppercase D' in the word Deaf is used to describe people who identify as culturally Deaf to reflect their participation and belonging in Deaf Culture. The "lowercase d" in the word deaf refers to the physical condition of not hearing.

Communication Access Real-Time Translation (live captioning): Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) is the live, word-for-word transcription of speech to text so that individuals who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard-of-hearing can read what is being said in meetings, events, or at personal appointments on a laptop or a larger screen. CART services can be provided on-site or remotely, in both English and French, via a secure website.

Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ): Quebec Sign Language, known in French as Langue des signes québécoise or Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ), is the predominant sign language of Deaf communities used in francophone Canada, primarily in Quebec.

Deaf Interpreter: A Deaf Interpreter (DI) is a specialist who provides interpreting services in American Sign Language (ASL), Langues des signes québécoise (LSQ), and other visual and tactual communication forms used by individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf/blind.

As a person who is Deaf, the Deaf Interpreter starts with a distinct set of formative linguistic, cultural, and life experiences that enables nuanced comprehension and interaction in a wide range of visual language and communication forms, which are influenced by region, culture, age, literacy, education, class, and physical, cognitive, and mental health. These experiences, coupled with professional training, give the Deaf interpreter the ability to effect successful communication across all types of interpreted interactions, both routine and high risk.

Intervener: An intervener is a trained professional who acts as the "eyes" and "ears" of a person who is deaf/blind, providing specialized communications services and supports.

Disability

As per the Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the term is defined as: (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device, (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability, (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.

Kiosk

An interactive electronic terminal, including a point-of-sale device, intended for public use that allows users to access one or more services or products or both.

Service Animal

A service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, episodic, intellectual, or a mental health disability. Tasks performed can include, among other things, guiding, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, alerting a person to a sound, reminding a person to take medication, or pressing an elevator button.

Support Person

In relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies the individual with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.