

Nova Scotia Health Accessibility Report Card



Executive Summary

April 2026





Nova Scotia Health Accessibility Report Card - Executive Summary

The Nova Scotia Health Accessibility Report Card outlines the important work already underway and new initiatives to ensure accessibility across our health system and workplaces is inclusive, equitable and aligned with our commitment to serving all Nova Scotians.

Important updates:

- Nova Scotia Health identified over 400 actions to improve accessibility during the engagement activities that informed the 2023-2026 Accessibility Framework.
- Over three years, 162 of these actions are now complete, and 240 are in progress, ongoing, or yet to begin.

Accessibility Standards - Focus Areas

- Built Environment
- Information & Communications
- Education
- Goods & Services
- Employment
- Transportation

Feedback

We aim to redesign a way to continue tracking the progress of accessibility initiatives and projects across Nova Scotia Health. We will review priorities annually and make necessary adjustments. Feedback about Nova Scotia Health Accessibility Report Card can be sent here: www.engage4health.ca/accessibility-nsh.



Completed Actions - Built Environment

The Built Environment standard focuses on ensuring all Nova Scotia Health facilities – clinical, administrative and community-based – are physically accessible, safe and inclusive for patients, visitors and staff. This includes removing structural barriers, upgrading infrastructure and incorporating universal design and trauma-informed principles.

Completed Action
Installed electric door openers in patient washroom at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Northern Zone.
Installed an electric door opener in a patient washroom at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Northern Zone.
15 accessible washrooms on site at the Aberdeen Regional Hospital available to the public.
Installed an electric door opener in emergency triage at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Northern Zone.
Installed an electric door opener for emergency main doors at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Northern Zone.
Installed an electric door opener to a patient washroom at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Northern Zone.
Installed an electric door opener to a patient washroom at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Northern Zone
New client washrooms in the dialysis unit in Northern Zone
A physical space audit was done for libraries across NS Health. An in-house checklist was created based on Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B651:23 Accessible Design for the Built Environment (2023).
Installed bathroom grab bars in a patient washroom at Colchester East Hants Health Centre.
Accessible garden furniture and sensory boards were added to the courtyard to meet patient’s sensory needs with the Central Zone Mental Health and Addictions team.
Accessible seating layouts (varied table heights, wheelchair spaces, bariatric seating, high-tops for power chairs) at Veterans Memorial Building in Central Zone.

Action
Accessible walkway constructed in Adult Neurodevelopmental Stabilization Unit (ANSU) courtyard. New access from the hallway was added.
Accessible/wheelchair parking spaces repainted at Soldiers Memorial Hospital
Accessible/wheelchair parking spaces – Two new spaces provided at Soldiers Memorial Hospital
New Glasgow Outpatient/Recovery Support Centre: Installed wider chairs and accessible seating in waiting and/group rooms.
Installed door openers, therapeutic quiet space and upgraded seating at Truro Day Hospital.
Created barrier-free access to spaces, accessible washrooms, ensured mobility accommodation, created a quiet room option; developed a fragrance-reduced policy; embedded universal design into spaces; ensured service animal support at the Amherst and Truro Recovery Support Centre.
Created barrier-free access to spaces, accessible washrooms, ensured mobility accommodation, created a quiet room option; developed a fragrance-reduced policy; embedded universal design into spaces; ensured service animal support at Springhill Inpatient Withdrawal Management Unit (IWMU).
Installed door openers, mobility bars, adjustable seating and lighting adjustments At the Truro Outpatient.
East Hants Mental Health and Addictions: Ensured Fragrance-reduced environment and service animal support at East Hants Mental Health and Addictions space.
Installed door hold open magnet in patient waiting room at Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Northern Zone.
Installed bariatric seating in waiting rooms at Chipman, Soldiers Memorial Hospital
Installed electric door opener in emergency registration room at Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Northern Zone.
Installed electric door opener in emergency triage room at Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Northern Zone.
Installed electric door opener at Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Northern Zone.
Community Transition Program added low sensory space to support staff with neurodivergent needs or mental health conditions.
Community Transition Program added space for clients that is more trauma-informed and with less sensory, therefore less stimulating.

Action
Created more inclusive and welcoming environment through thoughtful design, functional improvements and the integration of inclusive art and signage at the Mellor Public Health site.
Consulted for dementia friendly design at the new Dartmouth Geriatrics clinic. In addition, the frailty-friendly acute care ward physical design recommendations (optimize mobility and toileting)
Created three workspaces to reduce noise impacts for staff in working environments under the Palliative Care Integration Network
Created bookable workspaces to reduce noise impacts for staff in the Provincial Care Coordination Centre (C3) hub
The Palliative Care Integration Network created Eye Bank laboratory space to fit at minimum two full work benches with equipment.
Reduced visual overstimulation, created sensory accessible spaces and inclusive seating at the Day Hospital.
Installed electric door opener in a vestibule in Northern Zone.
Installed ambulance doors in emergency department at Valley Regional Hospital.
Submitted evidence to HRM, through the Special Planning Area process, for two large community developments. Evidence included accessible design and infrastructure to support physical health, mental well-being, social connection and safety.
Fully accessible office space for the Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) team and visitors.
Installed accessible lever style handles on the public washrooms doors at Aberdeen Regional Hospital.
Increased Blue Badge parking spaces at Valley Regional Hospital.
Offices were designed to enhance privacy, reduce interruptions and support staff well-being at Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD).
Installed large monitors to support visibility of data in Care Coordination Centre (C3) Hubs.
Palliative Care Integration Network moved Legacy of Life offices to Parklane from Abbie J Lane building.
Nova Scotia Hospice standards were revised in 2025. They included key requirements for hospice building design, including accessibility standards.
Created a neuromodulation- accessible clinical environment, including inclusive seating and accessible washrooms. Additional reduced environmental overstimulation in Mental Health and Addictions spaces in Western Zone.

Action
Installed new ramps and railings at the main entrance of a facility and at two patient drop-off areas for the dialysis unit in Northern Zone.
Incorporated accessibility design for the new veteran’s patio at Soldiers Memorial Hospital. This included wheelchair access for patio door and new signage for better visibility to main entrance of the hospital.
Public Health Mobile Unit hosted a first-person voice session, highlighting the lived experience of a member from the persons-with-disabilities community.
Installed parking lot lighting at Valley Regional Hospital.
Expanded the parking lot to create two handicapped parking spaces in Northern zone.
Upgraded a parking lot ramp grade at Valley Regional Hospital.
Quality Improvement Project to make New Waterford Public Health office environment more trauma-informed, accessible and welcoming. All Public Health staff in New Waterford received three-day trauma-informed care training.
Installed a ramp and automatic door modification at Chipman Building, Soldiers Memorial Hospital to ease entrance (ramp grade reduced and automatic door timing slowed).
Removed wall signs and posters which helped to reduce clutter at Chipman Building, Soldiers Memorial Hospital.
Reduced environmental overstimulation, improved safety, (inclusive and weighted seating added), removed excess signage and surplus furniture at facilities in Western Zone. This also included Trauma-informed environmental review for all three inpatient mental health units in Western Zone (South Shore, Valley and Yarmouth).
Installed an electric door opener at the oncology department at Aberdeen Hospital.
Created inpatient mental health anteroom, seclusion room, nursing station, charting space and medication room at the St Martha’s Regional Hospital.
Separated the provincial Care Coordination Centre (C3) Hub and Central Zone C3 Hub to ensure accessibility of provincial resources to all provincial access and flow network teams.
Creation of South Shore EDIRA-T team in 2024 through the Mental Health and Addictions Program. Completed multiple community projects, including a mural project at Dawson Centre. Creation of a trauma-informed care check list tour was done at Dawson with Tonya Grant. Majority of spaces met or went beyond standards with room for improvement.

Action
Opened Gender Affirming Care Clinic in February 2025 with two clinically appropriate gender affirming spaces on the South Shore.
Reduced clutter by removing wall signs and many posters at the Dawson Centre and Queens General Hospital on the South Shore.
Changed lighting at the Dawson Centre.
The Gathering Place is a program in Western Zone that provides safe and welcoming space for people who are stable in their diagnoses. In 2026, the program moved to Bridgewater to improve access to services. Plans to expand The Gathering Place are being explored.
Installed bariatric chairs for waiting rooms and several offices at the Dawson Centre.
Supporting welcoming office spaces by intentionally choosing artwork aligned with a trauma informed approach in Eastern Zone.
Created all gender washrooms, installed sharps containers and grab bars and made space ostomy friendly in Western Zone in the Mental Health and Addictions facility.
Reduced clutter by removing wall signs, posters and surplus furniture at Zonal Urgent Care and Specialized Primary Mental Health Care at Yarmouth Regional Hospital, Valley Regional Hospital, South Shore Regional Hospital and Western Zone school office spaces.



Completed Actions - Education

The Education standard ensures all learning materials, training, professional development and onboarding processes across Nova Scotia Health are accessible to diverse learning needs. This includes digital accessibility, universal design for learning and multi-format educational content.

Completed Action
Library Services offered closed captioning and other accessibility features for Microsoft Teams meetings.
Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) had accessible parking spaces added and elevator access to office space for staff and group social work sessions for patients.
Mental Health and Addictions program in New Glasgow ensured accessible formatting practices were in place for group materials.
Eastern Zone administrative staff completed the Introduction to Accessible Communications, Plain Language Core Skills, and Core Skills of Digital Accessibility courses. In addition, these training modules are now included as part of team orientation.
Community Transition Program staff in Central Zone learned how to improve equipment use and increase client mobility and safety.
Eastern Zone co-hosted a Health Protection Community two-day workshop with the Indigenous Community Health Centres to reconnect with Community Health Nurse partners to increase collaboration with both services while creating opportunity for learning and information sharing.
Provided easier access to the Community Outreach Assessment and Treatment (COAST) and Adult Neurodevelopmental Stabilization Unit (ANSU) pamphlets by having them on Nova Scotia Library site.
Library Services created three sessions for library staff on how to improve accessibility, which included how to check PDFs for accessibility, how to add alt text to PowerPoints and how to adjust reading order on PowerPoints. In addition, improved subject guides to make them more accessible.
Library Services created patient education resources.

Completed Action
Palliative Care Integration Network developed and implemented provincial policies on deceased donation with updated clinical forms.
Care Coordinator Centre (C3) developed and implemented provincial process standard work related to Interfacility Transfers.
Care Coordinator Centre (C3) developed educational and informational videos for staff that had text and audio options.
Care Coordinator Centre (C3) updated on-boarding materials to support variety of learners.
Palliative Care Integration Network updated on-boarding materials to support variety of learners.
Library Services offered a digital accessibility session. A one-hour session covering accessibility features available on MS Word and PowerPoint.
Provided materials and delivered information sessions to program teams on the use of 'Language Line' services, helping increase awareness and understanding of available resources within Eastern Zone.
Equity Educate provided 2SLGBTQIA+ diversity and inclusion training for all Western Zone staff and leadership.
Key clinicians and the manager from the Western Zone Mental Health and Addictions program attended a specialized accessibility conference focused on supporting neurodivergent clients.
Learning Management System module developed for Physicians on Care Coordination Centre (C3).
Learning Management System module for deceased organ/tissue donation.
Learning Management System module created called Fostering Inclusivity and Belonging; Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Accessibility.
Library Services presents PowerPoints on Microsoft Teams by uploading slides via PowerPoint Live rather than screensharing whenever possible. Many accessibility features become available when PowerPoint Live is used.
Staff from Eastern Zone participated in the IONS Advancing Equity and Justice workshop with community partners, and also collectively completed the IONS Pathways to Action training.
Through the Palliative Care Integration Network, public education materials were developed to incorporate recent legislative changes and system-wide updates on deceased and living donation and transplantation.

Completed Action

Continuing Care ensured information about the Accessibility Plan was shared with all team members so the team remains aligned and informed.

Under People Services the training and organizational development team standardized templates for facilitated programs that align with accessibility standards in terms of colour contrast, font size, reviewed for plain language, demonstrated how to turn on captions at the beginning of sessions, and included a customized (written by the facilitator) land acknowledgement at the beginning of each session.

In Western Zone, staff strengthened Inclusive Interprofessional Practice by participating in the provincial four-session learning series.

Updated the Continuing Care General Orientation module to include the requirement to complete the Nova Scotia Health general orientation, which includes the EDIRA component.

Western Zone Public Health staff from all program areas participated in Accessibility Foundations Training.

A website for the Care Coordination Centre (C3) was developed and launched to provide clearer, more accessible information, helping clients and partners access services more easily.

A website for the Legacy of Life program was developed and launched to provide complete, accessible information, helping individuals and families more easily access organ and tissue donation resources.

The SchoolsPlus Mental Health Clinician delivered a presentation on sexuality and disabilities that supports inclusive, accessible education for all learners.



Completed Actions - Employment

The Employment standard ensures Nova Scotia Health is improving recruitment practices, aims to eliminate workplace barriers and supports staff requiring accommodations. Work under this standard strengthens the organization’s ability to attract, retain and support a diverse workforce.

Completed Action
People Services created an internal EDIRA resources page where staff can find links, videos, documents and other resources related to EDIRA topics.
Primary health care has added a permanent 1.0 FTE Nurse Practitioner to the Nova Scotia Brotherhood and Sisterhood services.
People Services created The Leadership Hub, a centralized resource to provide guides, forms and information to leaders that includes how to create designated positions, inclusive hiring practices, and EDIRA resources.
Mental Health and Addictions offers interviews through Microsoft Teams to accommodate the accessibility needs of candidates applying for positions at the Adult Neurodevelopmental Stabilization Unit (ANSU). This approach is used for any candidate unable to attend an in-person interview.
People Services launched a new general orientation, and staff who required accommodations for this training can request them in advance. The orientation also includes an overview of Nova Scotia Health’s Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Accessibility (EDIRA) resources.
The Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) program purchased accessible office equipment including variable height work stations, creation of wide access doors to offices, and accessible washrooms for staff.
Palliative Care Network created EDIRA working group.
Palliative Care Network updated their job postings to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements.
Care Coordination Centre (C3) updated their job postings to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements.

Completed Action

All AI/ML tools built within the Applied Analytics Team are considerate of accessibility needs of users.

All dashboard build intake requests assessed any accessibility requirements for users that should be reflected in the build.



Completed Actions - Goods and Services

The Goods and Services standard focuses on ensuring patients, families, and visitors can access health services, supports, equipment, and programs without barriers. This includes communication supports, service redesign, assistive technology, inclusive policies, and equitable access to care services.

Completed Action
Mental Health and Addictions reviewed its current booking processes, and improvements now include Community Wellness Supports (CWS) offering outreach drop-in services and on-site intake assessments at schools to help reduce access barriers.
Across all sites, Mental Health and Addictions offered flexible scheduling options, including evening appointments (where available), as well as first- and last-of-the-day appointment choices. Services are delivered using trauma-informed and gender-affirming care approaches, with opportunities for family and support-person involvement.
All Mental Health and Addiction sites offered ASL/LSQ interpretation and virtual care when clinically appropriate.
All Mental Health and Addiction sites offered client experience surveys by email, paper, or staff-assisted completion.
Mental Health and Addictions site in New Glasgow offered structured written summaries for visually impaired client.
Mental Health and Addiction site in Springhill & Amherst offered plain language materials, large print and digital formats.
The Valley Regional Hospital added push press doors throughout site.
Palliative Care Integration Network advocated and participated in national committees to ensure changes to national health regulations to improve gender-affirming care delivery in deceased donation.
Valley Regional Hospital installed a baby-friendly space.
Valley Regional Hospital purchased bariatric equipment.

Completed Action
Care Coordination Centre (C3) improved the booking process to inter-facility transfer to support phone or electronic option for staff.
Nutrition and Food Services continued to accept cash in retail food services (cafeterias and coffee shops) even as sites move toward cashless.
Western Zone implemented equipment lending cupboards to ensure patients have timely access to essential items, supporting smoother discharge planning and continuity of care.
Perioperative Services Network implemented an electronic referral system for surgical services, and Diagnostic and Therapeutic Services Network has introduced a similar system to streamline diagnostic imaging and gastroenterology referrals from primary care providers.
Care Coordination Centre (C3) implemented frontline feedback systems to support ongoing technology and process improvements, offering multiple channels, such as email, phone and Microsoft Teams.
Mental Health and Addictions in Western Zone implemented sensory-supportive tools in waiting rooms, such as fidgets, to support neurodivergent clients and others who benefit from sensory regulation.
Care Coordination Centre (C3) improved electronic booking form for transfers to improve available supports for patients with various mobility needs.
Library Services staff followed accessibility guidelines for all PDFs produced or authored by the library, including literature search results and any files posted to Subject Guides, and ensured each document passed an Adobe accessibility test, included an appropriate title, and had assigned metadata to provide structured, machine-readable information about its contents.
Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) purchased “Pocket Talker” devices for clients with hearing limitations.
Continuing Care provided information on the presence of service dogs during home visits.
Palliative Care Integration Network purchased and installed new exam tables in the Multi-Organ Transplant Program clinics to enable height-adjusted and other accessibility needs (previous products were immobile).
Palliative Care Integration Network purchased new technology supports for staff that included voice-text software to improve access and efficiencies with technology.
Quality reviews and improvements implemented within the Communicable Diseases Program to strengthen engagement and services to unhoused clients.
Continuing Care ensured all social media posts included alt text for images to support screen reader accessibility.

Completed Action

Valley Regional Hospital created a spiritual health & wellness centre.

Valley Regional Hospital introduced Staxi chair systems, durable, nestable medical transport chairs with a fail-safe braking system and high weight capacity, and enhanced safe and efficient patient transport, adding five chairs for porters and five for general use.

Adult Neurodevelopmental Stabilization Unit occupational therapist position is filled. This position started assessing the various accessibility needs of patients.

Continuing Care worked with partners on the Shared Services Pilot, supporting the Remedy Report (Seniors and Long-Term Care and the Opportunities and Social Development) and ensured clients had broader access to the services they required and preferred.

Early Years team completed a health equity impact assessment to find health needs not being addressed and to recommend ways to improve services.



Completed Actions - Information and Communications

The Information & Communications standard ensures all information shared by Nova Scotia Health online (printed, spoken or visual) is accessible, readable, understandable and available in formats that meet diverse communication needs.

Completed Action
Tools and resources are provided to staff and patients (new and existing) on the use of interpretation services.
Bilingual English/French patient notifications and reminders are supported.
Mental Health and Addictions sites shared information in different accessible formats, such as email, paper, and virtual options. They also offered interpretation services and supported inclusive ways of communicating.
Valley Regional Hospital purchased additional “Pocket Talkers”, which are small devices that make voices louder so patients can hear conversations more easily.
The Palliative Care Integration Network made sure all patient education materials (including websites, pamphlets and printed resources) followed accessibility guidelines, including plain language and readable font sizes.
Mental Health and Addictions developed and shared a ‘What to Expect’ visual PowerPoint guide for clients. It supported accessibility for neurodivergent clients and for people with anxiety or sensory needs.
Communications and Marketing had digital signage guidelines that required all video content to be easy to read and hard-captioned before posting.
Mental Health and Addictions ensured proper signage and information is readily available to clients regarding EDIRA services (pridehealth, Indigenous health patient navigator).
The IT help ticket process has an option for support with Dragon Speech recognition software.
The Halifax Regional Centre for Education, the Newcomer Welcome Centre, and Public Health worked together to create a resource that explains Public Health’s community programs and services. This helps newcomer families understand what is available and makes it easier for them to get the support they need.

Completed Action

Valley Regional Hospital purchased a Language Translator for WCS.

Library Services worked with Business Productivity Services to create guidelines and gather resources for making accessible eLearning courses. They also reviewed new and updated eLearning courses to make sure they met basic accessibility needs.

Offered resources and communications to the public in a variety of formats (paper, online) and languages (including interpretation services) to support a variety of client needs.

Library Services created physical space descriptions for each library. These descriptions explained any accessibility barriers people might have faced when entering or using the library, such as tables that are too low for wheelchair users. They also list any accessible features, like automatic doors.

Library Services revised Policy AD-LIB-001 to reflect the integration of accessibility improvements.

Provincial lab work advanced efforts related to gender diversity and reference ranges, and ensured respectful self-identification of patients during registration.

Communications and Marketing ensured that the YourHealthNS app meets WCAG Level AA accessibility standards for mobile applications, the level set by the federal government.



Completed Actions - Transportation

The Transportation standard focuses on reducing mobility related barriers that affect access to healthcare. This includes supporting patients who require travel assistance, reducing unnecessary travel and identifying transportation challenges earlier in the care pathway.

Completed Action
Emergency Health Services and the Provincial Care Coordination Centre (C3) help make sure patients can move safely between facilities. C3 finds the best transport option to match each patient's needs.
Mental Health and Addictions Springhill & Amherst site defined taxi and gas voucher criteria to support better access to care.
Palliative Care Integration Network worked with national partners to ensure transfer of organs for live donors to prevent the movement of a live donor to a recipient hospital location outside of Nova Scotia.