

# Junction Climbing Centre Accessibility Policy

Notice to reader: Where not explicitly written to refer to both sites, the use of 'Junction' or 'Junction Climbing Centre' refers to the operations and policies at both the Junction Climbing Centre and J2 Bouldering, as well as any off-site programs being run by our organization, or any additional sites that are established following the creation of this policy.

## Preamble and Statement of Commitment

In alignment with our belief that indoor climbing should be as inclusive as possible to all persons, the Junction Climbing Centre is committed to ensuring equitable access for people with disabilities to our facilities and sport. Through our actions, words, equipment, and infrastructure, we will strive to prevent or remove barriers to participation by persons with disabilities, to ensure that the experience of all climbers is one of dignity and independence, and to meet our accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

We are committed to meeting our current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination. We understand and affirm that obligations under the AODA and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit our obligations under Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

## About Climbing and Accessibility

Indoor climbing has inherent and tangible risk of harm that cannot be removed, only mitigated. Participating safely in climbing as a recreational activity requires a mix of physical challenge, emotional intensity, technical knowledge of rope safety systems, and physical equipment like harnesses. Different disabilities will interact in different ways with these four factors, and as such each person's individual needs will need to be considered carefully when we are adapting our climbing experience to ensure that participation is not going to create an unacceptable increase of risk of physical or emotional harm to a participant. Given the diversity of disabilities, it is very possible that a person's individual needs may fall outside our current knowledge of how to deliver a safe, equitable, and enjoyable experience.

When presented with an adaptation requirement that presents substantial obstacles to safe and meaningful participation we will:

- Where possible, consult with the participant and their support team (parents, caregivers, therapists, etc) to better understand the participant's needs.
- Consult with knowledgeable medical resources to gain insight on how risks may be increased by participating in climbing.

- Consult with the wider climbing industry to see if and how other organizations have successfully adapted climbing.
- Ensure the participant is aware of the risks of participation and the limits of our equipment's ability to create adaptations.

To ensure we are remaining open minded to creating the best opportunity for the participants' to have a meaningful experience, all research will be done from the point of view of 'How do I give this person a meaningful climbing experience?', instead of 'why should this person not climb?'

Following each new adaptation, we will review the approaches taken to determine if they met the goal of providing the person with a disability an enjoyable and safe experience, or if there is a better course of action to take when a similar situation occurs.

## Training

All staff of Junction will be trained in accessible customer service, Ontario's accessibility standards, and the aspects of the Ontario Human Rights code that pertain to persons with disabilities. We will ensure that external partners assisting our organization in program delivery or policy development have received our training or have received equivalent training through their organization. This training will be delivered during the onboarding process, and any changes to policies or procedures will be communicated during staff training events. Record of this training is kept in the employee's HR file.

The training will cover the following areas:

- The purpose of the AODA and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards.
- Our policies related to the Customer Service Standards
- Best practices on:
  - Interacting and communicating with people with various types of disabilities.
  - Interacting with people who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- The safe and appropriate use of the accessible equipment we have on site. This currently includes:
  - Full body harnesses
  - Chest harnesses
  - Pregnancy harnesses
  - 4:1 pulley
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our facility.

## Regarding Liability Waivers

Where an individual's disability precludes the use of our waiver station, the individual has the option of either:

- A paper copy of the waiver
- A large-print paper copy of the waiver
- Having the waiver read to them in its entirety, with the words 'read verbally' added to the front page and signed by the participant, the reader, and a witness.

As per our standard policy, waivers for participants with a disability who are under 18 may only be signed by a parent or court-appointed guardian. In the case where it has been determined by the guardians of a participant over 18 that they cannot sign legal documents on their own behalf, only a person with a power of attorney for the patron can sign the waiver on their behalf.

## **Customer Files**

As part of our risk management, each person attending Junction has a file made which keeps record of their waiver, orientations, check-in history, belay certification, and other relevant data. To streamline the customer experience, it may be beneficial to have alerts or notes for staff on the climber's adaptation needs. Where such notes are medical in nature, and shared by the client directly, these notes should only be made with the climber's awareness and express permission that they can be read by any member of staff, and only contain the minimal amount of information necessary for staff.

## **Assistive Devices**

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our facilities. Where such devices are being brought up a climbing wall, they will need to be secured in a manner that prevents the risk of falling onto other climbers, or if that is not possible, the area in a potential fall zone cleared of climbers and belayers, and secured to prevent others from entering.

## **Service Animals**

Service animals are welcome inside Junction. Staff may request documentation from a qualifying regulated health professional indicating the animals' service animal status when it cannot be easily identified through its harness or vest.

Staff will assist the patron in identifying any areas where the animal may be at risk and should not enter—these are primarily on the boulder pads and in the fall zones of lead climbers.

## **Regarding Support Persons**

Patrons attending with a support person are allowed to have that person accompany them. There is no charge for the person attending when their primary task is to assist an individual with a disability. The support person attending will still require the same waiver and orientation as all participants.

## Disruptions to Services

When a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities occurs, we will notify our customers through posted notices in the facility.

If the disruption is one that might deter a person with a disability from attending, we will post the disruption on social media and our website.

## Availability of Documents

The Junction will notify the public that documents related to accessible customer service are available upon request through signage in our waiver area and on our website.

## Information and Communications

When communicating with persons with disabilities, we will take into account their disability. No additional charge will be added for any extra time this process may take. In the event the information is not convertible to a format which accommodates their disability, an explanation will be provided as to why.

## Feedback Process

We recognize that creating true accessibility for persons with disabilities is an ongoing process. We welcome feedback on the service we provide to affirm when we have been successful and guide us when we are not meeting the participants expectations, and also make us aware of barriers we may not be recognizing.

In escalating order of urgency or importance—participants can provide feedback via:

- The contact form on our website or emailing [info@junctionclimbing.com](mailto:info@junctionclimbing.com).
- Emailing [manager@junctionclimbing.com](mailto:manager@junctionclimbing.com) if the issue needs to be addressed to a manager as it pertains to an experience with staff.
- Emailing [owners@junctionclimbing.com](mailto:owners@junctionclimbing.com) if the issue pertains to organizational policy or an experience with a manager.
- Emailing [diversitycommittee@junctionclimbing.com](mailto:diversitycommittee@junctionclimbing.com) or report it to our discrimination reporting form on our website if the issue is one where the participant believes they experience discrimination.

For those whose use of a computer presents a barrier, the same processes can be utilized by phone and by requesting to speak to the manager/owner/diversity committee.

## **Regarding Employment**

### **During Recruitment**

- Postings will make it known that accommodations are available, and that applicants may ask for accommodations for the interview.

### **During Selection**

- Junction will consult with the applicant around the nature of the accommodation.

### **When offering a position**

- The offer will include our accommodation policies, including who in the organization is responsible for implementing/adapting these policies.

### **During employment**

- Our policies will be available to employees in a format that reflects their disability if necessary.
- When an individual accommodation plan has been created, it will be:
  - Done in consultation with the employee to reflect their specific needs.
  - In a format that reflects the employee's communication.
  - In a manner that protects the employee's personal information.
  - Determine how and how often the plan is reviewed and updated.
  - Explained if any denial of accommodation is made and the reason why (if applicable).
- Training plans and performance management metrics will accommodate their disability.
- Emergency response plans must reflect their disability.