

SECTION I: ORGANIZATION

SUB-SECTION: GENERAL

POLICY TITLE: **Serving People with Disabilities**

POLICY NUMBER: **I, 1.4**

INITIAL DATE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPROVAL OF POLICY: **July 12, 2011**

REVIEW/REVISION DATE(S): **Jan. 17, 2014; July 16, 2014**

Purpose:

The policy addresses the development, implementation and enforcement of the standards relating to *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA 2005)*.

Policy:

The Centre is committed to principles and practices that govern the provision of services to persons with disabilities. The Centre shall implement measures for the identification and removal of barriers in our provision of services to persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, residential accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises, or such things as may be described by AODA, 2005.

The Centre shall develop and implement a multi-year accessibility plan that shall be reviewed and updated as required to maintain compliance with the *Act*.

The Centre believes that treating people with respect is a key guiding principle for excellent client service and an effective, healthy organization. We are committed to eliminating differences between groups and creating a diverse and inclusive service environment.

All goods and services provided by the Centre shall be handled in a manner that respects the **dignity and independence** of people with disabilities.

All goods and services provided by the Centre to people with disabilities shall be **integrated** into service delivery, and allow people with disabilities to benefit from the same services as other people, delivered in a similar way.

People with disabilities shall be given **equal opportunity** to obtain, use and benefit from the services or goods provided by the Centre.

People with disabilities have the right to use their own **personal assistive devices** while accessing the goods or services provided by the Centre.

All individuals involved with our Centre shall **communicate** with people in ways that take into account that their disability and services shall be provided according to individual needs, e.g. interpreter, sign language, communication board, Braille, printed material in large font, etc.

The Centre staff shall be familiar with **supports, assistive devices and accessible spaces** available at the Centre to increase the accessibility of our services to people with disabilities.

People with disabilities who use a **service animal** have the right to enter the Centre with the animal and keep the animal with them, unless this is precluded by law. Where a service animal

is excluded by law, the Centre shall ensure that other measures are available to the person with a disability to obtain, use and benefit from the service provided.

People with disabilities who are accompanied by a **support person** have the right to have access to that support person while accessing goods and services of the Centre. The person with a disability shall be asked if she or he prefers the support person to stay present when confidential information is being discussed.

The Centre shall provide notice in the event of a **planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services** usually used by people with disabilities. This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services. All Centre staff shall endeavor to provide notice directly to clients (for example by phone or email depending on the person's disability), and through posted announcements. Planned service interruptions for elevators, driveways and parking areas shall be posted by the landlord. If there is an unexpected disruption, clients shall be notified as soon as possible.

All employees, volunteers, students, consultants and any other people who interact with the public on behalf of the Centre shall receive **training** on providing customer service to people with disabilities. A variety of methods shall be used including an information guide/booklet, and in-service education as appropriate to job roles and functions based on the Centre's training plan.

The Centre shall have a process to **receive feedback** on the provision of services provided to people with disabilities who are accessing service at the Centre. Clients shall be directed to the policy on *Client and Public Complaints* and the policy on *Client Feedback* for additional information.

All policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and meeting other requirements set out in the government standards shall be documented in writing. A notice will be posted in reception and on the website to inform anyone of the documents that exist in writing and how to **access the documents**.

The Centre shall review and update this policy as needed to ensure compliance with the *Act*. The Centre's policy and accessibility plan will be posted on the Centre's website.

The Centre shall take into consideration the person's ability to access the information and provide the document or information in a format that meets those needs as agreed upon with the person, to the best of our ability, e.g. via email, large font, hard copy verbally reviewed in person or over the phone. The Centre shall notify people who are accessing our services that documents are available upon request.

The Centre shall incorporate, where appropriate, accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities.

The Centre shall submit all AODA reports to government as required by the *Act*.

Definitions:

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an informational or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Disability according to the AODA (2005):

1. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfiguration that is caused by bodily injury, defect birth 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 impairment, 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;
2. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
3. A learning disability or dysfunction in one or more processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
4. A mental disorder; or
5. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Note: Disabilities can be visible as well as non-visible; of different severity and the effects of a disability may come and go.

Examples:

A person with arthritis has a disability that over time may increase in severity.

A person with a brain injury has a disability that is not visible.

A person with multiple sclerosis has a disability that causes her or him to experience periods when the condition does not have an effect on daily routines and other times when it does.

Assistive Devices:

Devices used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by this standard. Assistive devices include, but are not limited to wheelchairs, reading machines, hearing devices and devices for grasping, cane (AODA, 2005).

Service Animal:

A service animal is an animal - most often a dog-trained especially to help a person with a disability. Service animals may accompany people with physical (sight, hearing), cognitive or seizure-related disabilities among others.

In most cases it will be obvious that an animal is being used for reasons relating to a person's disability. If it is not apparent, the person will usually have a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the animal is needed for reasons relating to a disability or certificate confirming that the animal has been trained by a professional service animal institution. A service animal

should not be confused with a “pet therapy” animal, which is used to provide comfort and motivation.

Support Person:

A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

The support person may be a paid personal support worker, a volunteer, a friend or a family member. He or she does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

Procedure:

1. All employees, volunteers, students and consultants who act on behalf of the Centre, and who provide client services or who deal with the public, family members or community partners will be familiar with this policy.
2. The Centre will undertake training that aims to create an accessible service environment. Training will address the nature of accessibility and inform all employees, students, volunteers and consultants of the requirements of the legislation and the policy on working with people with disabilities.
3. The *Client and Public Complaints* process outlined in the policy of the same name may be used by clients to express concerns.
4. The manager, administrative services will lead the Centre’s accessibility program.