

Customer Service Accessibility Policy

This policy is consistent with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* (Customer Service Standard) made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

1. POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Plan is committed to maintaining an accessible environment for persons with disabilities in the delivery of its services.

The Plan will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its services to persons with disabilities are consistent with the following principles:

- Goods and services are provided in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- Persons with disabilities are able to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other persons;
- Persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to obtain, use and benefit from the Plan's goods or services.

2. DEFINITIONS

Disability means,

- 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,
- d) A mental disorder, or
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Guide dog means a dog trained as a guide for a person who is blind or visually impaired

Service animal means an animal with a person with disabilities where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability or where the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that he or she requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support person means a person who accompanies a person with disabilities in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods and services.

3. APPLICATION, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

This policy applies to Plan services that are provided to its members, clients or third parties.

The policy applies to all lawyers, and support staff at the Plan (including summer students and co-op students), agents, volunteers, clients, and visitors to the Plan.

a) Providing Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

The Plan is committed to excellence in serving all clients, including persons with disabilities, and will carry out its functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

- ***Communications***

The Plan recognizes that communication is the process of providing, receiving, and understanding information. Plan staff will communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

- ***Assistive Devices***

The Plan is committed to serving people with disabilities, who use assistive devices to benefit from our services. Staff will be aware of any available assistive devices that are available on Plan premises.

- ***Support Persons***

Persons with disabilities may enter the Plan's premises with a support person and have access to the support person while on the premises.

The Plan may require persons with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with disabilities or the health or safety of others on the premises.

Upon the request of a client with a disability, the Plan will ensure that the client has given permission prior to disclosing information in the presence of the support person.

- ***Service Animals***

A person with disabilities may be accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal when on Plan premises. In the event that service animals are excluded by law, the Plan will provide other resources or supports to enable the person with disabilities to access the services and goods offered by the Plan.

b) Notice of Temporary Disruption

The Plan will notify the public in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The notices will be posted at all public entrances and reception desks of the Plan, on the Plan website, or communicated by such method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

c) Training for Staff

The Plan will train its staff on the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.

The training will be provided as soon as practicable after a staff person commences his or her duties and will include the following topics:

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard;
- How to interact with persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog, service animal or support person;
- How to use or access any equipment or devices available on Plan premises or otherwise, that may help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities;
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty in accessing the Plan's goods and services;
- The Plan's policies, practices, and procedures relating to customer service standard.

The Plan will provide training on an ongoing basis when changes are made to the Plan's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

d) Document Publication and Distribution

The Plan will notify persons to whom it provides goods and services of its policies, by posting the information at a conspicuous place on Plan premises, on the Plan website or by such method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

Upon request, the Plan shall provide a copy of this document or any other document describing its policies, practices or procedures, to any person. If such person has a disability, the Plan will provide the document in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

e) Modifications to this or other Policies

Changes will not be made to this policy unless the impact of the changes on persons with disabilities has been considered. Any Plan policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities will be modified or removed.

f) Feedback and Questions

The Plan welcomes any feedback and/or questions regarding this policy. Individuals may contact the Plan in person, by phone, in writing, or by email as follows:

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Complaints will be reviewed and assessed and, where possible, the issues will be addressed. If a complaint cannot be addressed, the complainant will be so advised.