

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD (AODA)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to address the accessibility requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005.

POLICY STATEMENT

Optimism Place is committed to eliminating barriers for employees, clients, and visitors with disabilities and improving accessibility in a manner that respects their dignity, independence and integration.

PRINCIPLES

Every reasonable effort will be made by Optimism Place to ensure that:

1. Persons with disabilities have equal access to services.
2. Service is provided in a manner which respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities
3. The provision of service to persons with disabilities is provided in the same manner as service is provided to other individuals unless an alternate approach is required to facilitate full access to the service.
4. Communications with an individual with a disability are conducted in a manner that fully takes into account the individual's disability.
5. Individuals who may require assistive devices (i.e. service animals, support persons etc.) in order to access services may do so as necessary

Scope

This policy applies to all employees who deal with the public or other third parties as well as persons developing policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of services to the public or other third parties, whether they do so as employees, agents (Service Providers) or otherwise.

DEFINITIONS

Person with Disabilities shall mean those individuals that are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Disability

1. 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.

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD (AODA)

Disability (continued)

2. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
3. A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
4. 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.

Assistive Device: is an auxiliary aid such as technical aids, communication devices, cognition aids (reading, listening, talking aids) personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, hearing aids etc.) that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities to access and benefit from the services offered by the agency.

Barrier: as defined by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his/her disability including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice

Service Animal: animals trained to assist a person with disability. The service animal is trained to assist people with disabilities in the activities of normal daily living, to enhance quality of life and mitigate their disabilities. The animal provides a variety of services, including but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision; alerting individuals who are hearing impaired to sounds; providing companionship; pulling a wheelchair; alerting to seizures; opening/closing doors, or retrieving dropped items. A service animal may access all places open to the public when accompanying its human partner, as required by law (health and safety guidelines). Service animals may include dogs, cats, rabbits, etc.

Service Equity: a process designed to result in consistent and fair quality of service to people who have been historically excluded from receiving equitable service; and elimination of barriers to access in service.

Support Person: persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their support person in areas/premises that are open to the public when accessing services provided by the agency. If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises. If there is confidential information to be disclosed, consent must be received from the person with the disability.

Service Disruption: in the event of a planned disruption to facilities, services or systems that are relied upon by persons with disabilities to access services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance.

Notice of the disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities, services or systems, if any, that may be available.

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD (AODA)

Service Disruption (continued):

Notice of the disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities, services or systems, if any, that may be available.

Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on the agency's premises or on the website or such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.

Information related to temporary disruption of local services (such as washrooms, elevators) will be available in person and by telephone. Information agents located at the premises provide verbal information about suspension of such services. If requested, and where available, a staff person will guide the person to the alternative service available.

In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

Training: Optimism Place is committed to establishing, implementing and maintaining a program for training on how to provide customer service to people with disabilities.

The agency shall ensure that the following positions will receive training about the provision of its services to persons with disabilities:

Employees, clients, families, visitors, suppliers, contractors and any other person who may interact with the public on behalf of Optimism Place. This policy also applies to activities occurring on premises or off-site activities.

The training shall include but not be limited to:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- The requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.
- What to do if a person with a disability is experiencing difficulty in accessing Optimism Place services.

Employees will be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to policies, practices and procedures dealing with the provision of services to the public and other third parties. New employees, including volunteers and students will receive training as part of their Orientation.

Feedback Process: Optimism Place will maintain a feedback process to enable members of the public to comment on the provision of services to persons with disabilities. Feedback for the public is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback shall be received in any form (i.e. in person, by telephone, in writing, fax or in electronic format including email) and all such feedback will be logged for reporting purposes.

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD (AODA)

All feedback received shall be maintained in strict confidence and used solely to improve customer service. All feedback will be reviewed and forwarded to the Executive Director for follow-up.

Availability of Accessible Customer Service Documents: Optimism Place shall prepare any additional documents describing its policies, practices and procedures as may be required and, upon request, shall give a copy of such documents to any person. Further, Optimism Place shall notify persons to whom it provides services that the documents required are available upon request. The agency shall give the person the documents, or the information contained in the documents described above, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Modifications to this or other policies: The agency is committed to developing client service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. The agency will consider the modification or removal of any policies that do not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities on an ongoing basis.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Optimism Place

- Ensuring compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Including considerations for accessibility in annual planning processes
- Budgeting for accessibility requirements
- Communicating all policies, procedures and practices to staff, and working with relevant committees to develop policies, procedures and practices.
- Identifying and coordinating required training requirements
- Supporting staff attendance at required training
- Maintaining training records
- Establishing and maintaining an ongoing training program to ensure all staff are trained in providing Accessible Customer Service as part of the orientation process
- Communicating, coordinating and/or providing service to a person with a disability regarding the use of, or who may use a service animal, support person or assistive device
- Providing notification of service disruptions
- Providing all documentation in appropriate formats upon request by a person with a disability.

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD (AODA)

Contact Information: For more information about this policy or questions related to accessibility at Optimism Place please contact:

Anne McDonnell, Executive Director 270 Freeland Drive,
Stratford, Ontario N4Z 1G8
amcdonnell@optimismplace.com
519-271-5310 x12

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Ontario Human Rights Code

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-commission-submission-requiring-accessibility-ontarians-disabilities-act>

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

<http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws.statutes.O1032.ehtm>

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (2007)

Ontario Regulation 429/07 made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>

Ministry of Community and Social Services: Making Ontario accessible for Ontarians with disabilities:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-community-and-social-services-2015-accessibility-plan>