

Policy Name: Accessible Customer Service			Policy No: C-AO-02
Developer: MPC	Division: Corporate Services	Category: AODA	Approval: Board
Effective: October 2024	Reviewed/Revised: October 2024	Supersedes: Accessible Customer Service: January 2025	Next Review: 2028

1. **Purpose**

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

All goods and services provided by the Centre shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

2. **Scope**

This policy applies to the provision of goods and services at premises owned and operated by the Centre.

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of the Centre, including when the provision of goods and services occurs off the premises of the Centre such as in: delivery services, call centers, vendors, drivers, catering and third party marketing agencies.

The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs, service animals and service dogs only apply to the provision of goods and services that take place at premises owned and operated by the Centre.

This policy shall also apply to all persons who participate in the development of the Centre's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

3. **Definition**

3.1 **Assistive Device** – is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive

devices are typically devices that clients/participants bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

3.2 **Disability** – the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

- 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;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder; or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

3.3 **Guide Dog** – is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

3.4 **Service Animal** – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

- it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

3.5 **Service Dog** – as reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562* a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- it is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability;
- or the person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

3.6 **Support Person** – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services.

4. Policy

In accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, this policy addresses the following:

4.1 Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

The Centre will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- ensuring that all clients/participants receive the same value and quality;
- allowing clients/participants with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- using alternative methods, when possible, to ensure that clients/participants with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- taking into account individual needs when providing goods and services; and
- communicating in a manner that takes into account the client/participant's disability.

4.2 Assistive Devices

Client/Participant's own assistive device(s):

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services provided by the Centre.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, open flames and oxygen tanks cannot be near one another. Therefore, the accommodation of a client/participant with an oxygen tank may involve ensuring the customer is in a location that would be considered safe for both the customer and business. Or, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the client/participant.

4.3 Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs

A client/participant with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises unless otherwise excluded by law. "No pet" policies do not apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs.

- Food Service Areas:

A client/participant with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog or service dog will be allowed access to food service areas that are open to the clients/participants in all the respective programs of the Centre unless otherwise excluded by law.

Other types of service animals are not permitted into food service areas due to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*.

- Exclusion Guidelines:

If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law (see applicable laws below) the Centre will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

- Applicable Laws:

The Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60, normally does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. It does allow guide dogs and service dogs to go into places where food is served, sold or offered for sale. However, other types of service animals are not included in this exception.

Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pit bulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

- Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the client/participant for reasons relating to his or her disability, the Centre may request verification from the client/participant.

Verification may include:

- a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
- a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

- Care and Control of the Animal:

The client/participant that is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.

- Allergies:

If a health and safety concern present itself for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, the Centre will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

4.4 Support Persons

If a client/participant with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the Centre will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the client/participant is not prevented from having access to the support person.

There may be times where seating and availability prevent the client/participant and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations, the Centre will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the client/participant, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.

Admission Fees:

If payment is required by a support person for admission to the premises the Centre will ensure that notice is given in advance by posting notice of admission fees for support persons where the Centre fees are posted.

4.5 Notice of Service Disruptions

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of the Centre. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that clients/participants with disabilities rely on to access or use the Centre's goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

a. Notifications will include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable
- reason for the disruption
- anticipated duration
- a description of alternative services or options

b. Notifications Options:

When disruptions occur, the Centre will provide notice by:

- posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the Centre's website;

- contacting clients/participants with appointments;
- verbally notifying clients/participants when they are making a reservation or appointment; or
- by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

4.6 Customer Feedback

The Centre shall provide clients/participants with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to clients/participants with disabilities. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all clients/participants and notice of the process will be made available by the Centre's website, newsletter and bulletin board. Feedback forms along with alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (handwritten, delivered, website or email), will be available upon request.

Customers can submit feedback to:

- Director, People and Culture
- Phone Number: 416-425-6348
- Mailing Address: 1102 Broadview Avenue, Toronto, ON M4K 2S5
- Email Address: aoda@abionacentre.ca
- Website: www.abionacentre.ca

Clients/Participants who wish to provide feedback by completing an onsite customer feedback form or verbally can do so to any Centre Manager.

Clients/Participants that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

4.7 Training

a. Training will be provided to:

- all employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of the Centre; for example: receptionists, intake social workers, volunteer drivers, and third-party marketing agents; and,
- those who are involved in the development and approval of client/participant service policies, practices and procedures.

b. Training Provisions:

As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- A review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- The Centre's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

c. Training Schedule:

The Centre will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractor who deal with the public or act on our behalf during orientation. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

d. Record of Training:

The Centre will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

4.8 Design of Public places

The Centre will comply with Design of Public Spaces Standards when constructing and/or re-developing public elements. This includes and not limited to:

Section 80.29 Exterior Path of travel - Consult with the public and persons with disabilities on the design and placement of rest areas along the exterior path of travel (walkways, sidewalks).

Section 80.41(1,2) Service Counter – From customer facing, at least 750 mm wide X 680 mm high X 250 mm deep below the service counter with an additional toe space beyond 750 mm wide X 230 mm high X 230 mm deep. This will allow most people who use wheelchairs to approach and use the counter and allowing sufficient clear floor space.

4.9 Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

The Centre shall notify clients/participants that the documents related to the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the client/participant's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place owned and operated by the Centre, the Centre's website and/or any other reasonable method.

When asked, we will provide information about our organization and its services, including public safety information, in accessible formats or with communication supports:

- in a timely manner, taking into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability; and
- at a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.
- We will consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an

accessible format or communication support.

5. Administration

The Director of People and Culture will be responsible for the administration and communication of this policy. If you have any questions or concerns about this policy or its related procedures, please contact:

Director of People and Culture
Abiona Centre
1102 Broadview Avenue,
Toronto, ON
M4K 2S5
Phone: 416-425-6348
Fax number: 416-425-4056
E-mail: aoda@abionacentre.ca

This policy and its related procedures will be reviewed as per the Centre's policies and procedures or as required in the event of legislative changes.

RELATED POLICIES

C-AO-01 Accessibility Policy for Employees and Volunteers
C-AO-03 Accommodation Policy
C AO-04 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

6. Acknowledgement & Agreement

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read and understand the Accessibility Policy for Employees and Volunteers. I agree to adhere to this policy as a whole. I understand that if I violate the rules set forth in this policy, I may face disciplinary actions, up to and including termination of employment.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____