

WoodGreen Community Services

Title of the Policy: AODA - Customer Service for Persons with Disabilities Policy



Policy #	300 - 12 v0.5	Original approval date:	01/12/2011
Category:	Health & Safety	Effective date:	01/12/2011
Prepared by:	VP, People & Culture	Last reviewed date:	12/01/2014
Approved by:	President & CEO	Next scheduled review date:	01/01/2018

Customer Service for Persons with Disabilities Policy

1. Preamble

WoodGreen Community Services is committed to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal opportunity to benefit from programs and services offered at the agency. Programs and services will be delivered in a manner that supports the independence, dignity, and integration of persons with disabilities.

WoodGreen Community Services supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all our programs and services as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001 and the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

2. Policy

Programs and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities; whether these are visible or invisible disabilities and when the person self-identifies as having a disability, even though it may not be obvious. The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities and others will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from our goods or services.

When persons with disabilities are having difficulty accessing our programs, the individual should be asked if they require accommodation and what type of accommodation. The staff is then required to provide an alternative method of service provision taking into account the required accommodation. If the staff and client are unable to arrive at an acceptable accessible option, the issue should be immediately referred to a Program Manager for further problem solving support.

Whenever it is not possible to provide access to programs and services at WoodGreen due to the physical limitations of the site, staff will work with the client to identify an alternative service delivery options that would allow the client to obtain the same opportunity.

3. Procedures

Communication

Staff will communicate with clients in a manner which takes into account her or his disability while respecting their privacy, dignity and independence. Staff will explore with the client how best to communicate effectively with them and what supports WoodGreen can offer to assist the client in accessing our program and services. Staff are expected to adopt the “How may I help you?” approach when offering services to persons with disabilities. Staff are expected to adapt their communication to meet the specific needs of the client and may include:

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- Making the original communication more accessible (plain language, large print, adding audio files to website, providing telephone numbers so an individual can call to get information verbally)
- Changing the usual method of communication (providing written material verbally or verbal information in written format such as picture symbols; Text-to-Speech electronic options)
- Using assistive devices (magnifying glass; automatic readers, TTY machines)

Assistive Devices

Clients will be permitted to use their personal assistive devices, if necessary, to access the programs and service of the organization. Assistive devices should never be touched without the permission of the user. Purchase of on-site assistive devices will be determined by the program based on cost effectiveness and availability of other options to accommodate client needs. Availability of any on-site assistive devices should be clearly communicated in program promotional material. Listing of on-site available assistive devices will be listed on the Site Accessibility Information to be developed for each site accessed by clients.

Service Animals

Persons with disabilities are permitted to bring their service animals onto any part of the premises that is open to the public, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law. It is recognized that service animals are used for persons with a variety of disabilities; including those who are blind, hearing impaired or suffer from seizure disorders. When an animal is brought into our facilities, if it is not readily apparent, staff should seek to clarify if the animal is a service animal before the client is advised that pets are not permitted on the premises.

Service Animals are highly-trained working animals that help provide mobility, safety and increased independence for persons with disability. It is the responsibility of the client to attend to the needs of the service animal while on WoodGreen premises. Staff must avoid petting, talking to or feeding the service animal without the permission of the person with a disability.

Support Persons

Persons with disabilities who use a support person are permitted to have their Support Person accompany them while accessing programs and services at WoodGreen. A Support Person is someone either hired or chosen to help a person with a disability with communication, personal care or medical needs. A Support Person can be a paid professional or a volunteer, family member or friend. If the client identifies their companion as a Support Person, WoodGreen will acknowledge them as such.

When providing services to a persons with disability who uses a support person, staff must speak directly to the person with a disability, and not the support person. Initial contact by staff must be made with the client; additional secondary or back-up information may be sought from the Support Person with the client's permission. Additionally, when confidential information is going to be discussed, staff must confirm with the client that they are comfortable having this discussion in front of their support person. Program policies will determine if it is necessary to the client sign a consent form permitting the discussion in the presence of the Support Person and if the Support Person would be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

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Where admission fees are charged for participation in a program or event, WoodGreen will provide notice in advance of what charge, if any, would be charged to the Support Person. Each program is responsible for making this decision based on the details of the program and event. If fees for the Support Persons are not identified in advance (listed on Site Accessibility Information), the Support Person is permitted to attend at no additional cost.

Notices of Temporary Disruptions

When facilities or services that persons with disabilities rely on in order to access our programs and services are temporarily disrupted, a notice must immediately be posted both on site and on our website advising of: the nature of the disruption, what measures are being undertaken to resolve the disruption and expected duration of the disruption. Examples of disruptions that might require notification include but not limited to: on-site elevator being unavailable; ramps being inaccessible due to weather or construction; automatic door openers being under repair.

When feasible, staff should contact affected clients in advance if they are aware that the circumstances have changed and might prevent the persons with disabilities ability to access the programs and services.

Each worksite is expected to conduct an accessibility audit to determine the degree of accessibility for clients with a variety of disabilities. This audit will help identify key facilities or services which might impact the ability of clients who are attempting to access our services. The results of the audit will be made available on our website and will be included in any promotional material. This will also highlight the key facilities or services that are necessary to ensure accessibility illustrated with the universal disability symbols. Disruption in the availability of this facility or service would trigger a disruption notification.

Feedback Process

Receiving feedback on the manner in which program and services were delivered to persons with disability must be incorporated into all program and unit feedback forms. The feedback process should be available in a variety of formats to accommodate various disabilities. Clients should be advised that they can submit feedback on the customer service that they received through the completion of the onsite Customer Service Feedback form, through the online link on the WoodGreen's website, by sending an email to customerservice@woodgreen.org or by calling the Manager of Human Resources at 416-645-6000 ext. 1173. All feedback will be forwarded to the appropriate Unit Director for follow-up action. All complaints will be handled according to WoodGreen Client Complaint Process. When the client has requested a response to their feedback, an initial response will be provided within 3 business days.

4. Training Plan

All WoodGreen staff, volunteers and students will receive Customer Service and Accessibility Awareness training within three months of being hired by the organization. The Manager of Building Services will ensure that all contractors who will perform maintenance or repairs services and who interact with clients have received Customer Service and Accessibility Awareness training before they are permitted to perform

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work for the organization. The Director of Finance is responsible for ensuring that all other independent contractors who involved in delivering programs and services have received this training.

The training program will include:

- A review of the purpose of the Act and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of the Support Person.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our program and services

Units are responsible for training their staff on the use of any equipment or assistive devices available to support persons with a disability.

5. Communication Process

Upon the introduction of this policy, Human Resources will communicate this policy to all Directors and Managers and Managers will be responsible for communicating this policy to their staff. The Manager of Volunteer Engagement will be responsible to ensure that volunteers receiving training on how to provide services to persons with disabilities. Managers will be responsible for communicating this policy to all new staff upon hire and ensuring they have completed the training within their first three months of employment.