**FAMILY & CHILDREN’S SERVICES OF THE WATERLOO REGION**

**ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005 (AODA)**

**STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

**BACKGROUND**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province.

The AODA allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

One of the specific standards that has been developed, and made law, is the Accessible Customer Service Standard. This standard details specific requirements for all service providers.

In general, providers must deliver service in a way that preserves the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Providers must also integrate services and equal opportunities.

The accessibility standards for customer service come into effect on January 1, 2012 for all businesses and organizations in Ontario with at least one employee.

**Requirements under the AODA, regulation 429/07**

Organizations Must:

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access our goods and use our services and about any other measure our organization offers ( assistive devices, services or methods) to enable them to access our goods and use our services.
3. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on our behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
6. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing our policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
7. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of our premises which we own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with the disability.
8. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.
9. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.
10. Provide notice when facilities or service that people with disabilities rely on to access or use our goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how we provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how we will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. We must make the information about our feedback process readily available to the public.

**POLICY**

Family and Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region is committed to providing persons with disabilities with equal opportunities and standards of goods and services in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians Disabilities Act, 2005. These goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

**PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES**

**Service Animal and Support Persons**

Family and Children’s Services (FACS) employees shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and/or services.

FACS employees shall allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal unless the animal is excluded by law.

Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the person with disabilities, and other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with the disability.

When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting or other harmful behaviour) an employee may ask the person with the disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods or services. In this event, other reasonable arrangements to provide goods or services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with the disability.

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person while accessing goods and/or services.

**Admission Fees – Advance Notice**

In the event that admission fees are charged, advance notice concerning what admission, if any, would be charged to a support person shall be posted in a conspicuous place.

**Service Disruption – Notice**

It is possible that from time to time there will be disruptions in service (e.g. an entranceway that is under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, or technology that is temporarily unavailable).

In the event that a disruption in service is planned, and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

People with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transit or arranging a ride. By providing notice, you can save that person an unnecessary trip.

Notice will be provided on the website, over the phone, or in writing.

**Unexpected Disruption in Service – Notice**

In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, notice may be provided in a variety of ways, and will be done as quickly as possible.

In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by service interruption shall be informed of any alternative methods.

**Training Requirements**

Every person who participates in the development of the policy, practices and procedures under Ontario regulation 429/07- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, must be trained appropriately in relation to the this policy.

Every person who deals with the public on behalf of Family and Children’s Services, including third parties i.e. employees, volunteers, agents, management, must complete training in relation to this policy.

Current employees, agents, volunteers, management etc. shall receive training by December 31, 2011.

New employees, volunteers, agents, management shall receive training as soon as practicable following assignment.

Ongoing training on changes to policies, procedures and new equipment shall be provided.

The method and amount of training shall be geared to the trainee’s role in terms of accessibility.

Training records shall be kept, including the dates when the training is provided, the number of individuals to whom the training was provided.

**Client Feedback Process**

FACS is committed to ensuring that its services meet the standards of accessibility for people with disabilities using the facilities and services of the Agency. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way the FACS provides services to people with disabilities can be made by completing the attached AODA Client Feedback Form. All feedback will be directed to Jill Stoddart, Senior Manager of Innovation, Research and Development. Response to your feedback will be provided by direct response to the individual or by email.

Approved by Senior Management- November 23, 2011

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