



POLICY: AD-I-11
DEPARTMENT: Administration
CATEGORY: General
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 2016
SUPERSEDES VERSION DATED: July 2014
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Policy & Procedure Manual

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE - AD-I-11

POLICY:

In fulfilling its mission, OPTIONS northwest strives at all times to provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity of access to all of our services in the same locations and in a similar way as these services are available to all others we serve.

OPTIONS northwest is committed to excellence in providing services to individuals with disabilities and to the continual improvement of accessibility and the ongoing removal of barriers in order to provide greater equity for all.

OPTIONS will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that all policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity to all, with particular attention for persons with disabilities. Any policy of OPTIONS that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

DEFINITIONS:

1. A "Customer" is any person who accesses the services of OPTIONS northwest.
2. An "Assistive Device" is any device used by people with disabilities to help with daily living. Assistive devices include a range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, electronic communication devices.
3. A "Service Animal" is an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a regulated health professional.
4. A "Support Person" is a person who assists or interprets for a person with a disability as they access the services of the agency. A support person is distinct from an OPTIONS northwest employee who supports an individual within the agency.



Personal Support Services

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5. A "Third Party Contractor" is any person or organization acting on behalf of or as an agent of the agency.
6. "Barriers to Accessibility" means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of the services of the agency. This includes but is not limited to, a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier.
7. An "Accommodation" is a means, through reasonable efforts, of preventing and removing barriers that impede individuals with disabilities from participating fully in the services of the agency.

PURPOSE:

To communicate the agency's expectation for upholding the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity through our work environments.

To ensure compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

PROCEDURE:

1. All staff and volunteers shall communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.
2. All staff and volunteers shall provide services that respect the dignity of persons with disabilities, which may include incorporating measures such as the use of assistive devices and service animals.
3. OPTIONS will provide training for all staff members and volunteers of the organization, on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities. Such training will be provided as a component of their initial orientation and training program.
4. OPTIONS will make available to its customers and the public, its policies and procedures related to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and will also ensure there is capacity to provide communication about these policies and procedures in a format that takes into account a person's disability.
5. When services that are normally provided to a person with a disability are temporarily unavailable, such as access to an elevator, a disruption of service notice will be posted at the site.
6. All agency staff involved in the selection and purchase of new equipment or systems or planning a new initiative of the agency, shall take into account this policy.



7. OPTIONS shall ensure the effectiveness of implementation of the Accessible Customer Service Standard, through development of a process to receive and respond to feedback. No changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities.
8. Questions and inquiries about this policy are welcome and may be directed to any Director or Supervisor. Responses to questions/inquiries shall be provided within a reasonable period of time.

APPENDICES:

The following appendices will set out the agency's specific procedures for carrying out job functions and responsibilities in meeting customer service standards:

- A – Communication and Assistive Devices
- B – Use of Support Persons and Service Animals
- C – Notice of Temporary Disruption, including Notice Template
- D – Training
- E – Feedback Process, including Feedback Form

RECOMMENDED BY: Director, Human Resources

APPENDICES: 7

OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Personal Support Services Administration, Personal Support Services, Community Resource Team

ORIGINAL POLICY DATE: November 2011

AUTHORIZED BY: Executive Director

SIGNATURE: _____

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE:

COMMUNICATION AND ASSISTIVE DEVICES

COMMUNICATION

Communication with people with disabilities shall occur in ways that take into account their disability.

OPTIONS shall train designated staff and volunteers who deal with members of the public on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

Telephone Services:

OPTIONS is committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers and as such, shall train staff and volunteers (as applicable) to communicate with individuals with disabilities over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.

We will offer to communicate with individuals by all other available means (ie: video conference, TTY, relay services) if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

To make a call using the Relay System

Phone the number (1-800-855-0511), and tell the operator your name, the name of the person you are calling, and the number you wish to reach.

The operator will make the call for you, and you speak to the operator as if you were talking directly to the person you are calling. For example, say "Hi, `How are you doing?" Do not say: "Tell him I said hello." Remember to say "Go Ahead" when you finish speaking, so the person on the other end will know it is his or her turn to speak.

If you normally speak very quickly, the operator may ask you to speak slower so your message can be typed. There will be brief silences as the operator types to the TTY user and the user replies.

Operators will not betray confidences. They will not relay profanity, threats or criminal propositions, but will relay marriage proposals, banking and personal financial information and other personal (and even intimate) conversations.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

OPTIONS welcomes and is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our services. We will ensure that our

staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our services.

OPTIONS website will indicate that we shall provide services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities and offer services that include the use of assistive devices. Further, the website shall indicate, as applicable, the availability of assistive devices at the Cumberland office, provided by OPTIONS to assist in the provision of services to people with disabilities.

The Cumberland office, which is open to the public, will post information in the front office/reception area that: (a) welcomes the use of assistive devices and encourages users to seek support from staff and volunteers as they require it and (b) indicates the availability of assistive devices at the Cumberland office, provided by OPTIONS to assist the provision of services to people with disabilities.

Examples of Assistive Devices may include:

- Telephones with large numbers, amplifiers,
- wheelchairs,
- scooters,
- walker,
- amplification devices that boost sound for listeners who are hard-of-hearing without reducing background noise,
- hearing aids,
- oxygen tanks,
- electronic notebooks or laptop computers,
- personal data managers,
- communication boards used to communicate using symbols, words or pictures or
- speech-generating devices that “speak” when a symbol, word or picture is pressed

Key Point To Remember: One should not touch or handle an assistive device without permission.

Moving personal assistive devices

If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair remember to:

- wait for and follow the person’s instructions;

- confirm that the person is ready to move;
- describe what you are going to do before you do it;
- avoid uneven ground and objects that create bumpy and unsafe ride; and
- practice consideration and safety – do not leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
- Do not move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of the user's reach.
- Respect personal space. Do not lean over a person with a disability or lean on their assistive device.
- Let the person know about accessible features in the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

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ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES

USE OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND SERVICE ANIMALS

USE OF SUPPORT PERSON

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter OPTIONS premise with his or her support person and he/she shall have full access to his/her support person while on our premise. At no time will services ever be restricted or fees charged to the support person or to a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person.

USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on parts of our premise that are open to the public and other third parties. This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include places or areas of the agency where the public does not have access. We will ensure that our staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety. The customer service standard's provisions also apply to animals providing other services to people with disabilities.

It is "readily apparent" that an animal is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or by what it is doing. For example, it may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that identifies it as a service animal or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if a person is using the animal to assist him or her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.

Exclusion of Service Animal

A service animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples include the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Food Safety and Quality Act. The former Act prohibits service animals in places

where food is prepared, processed, or handled (e.g. culinary arts classroom,) although service dogs are permitted where food is served and sold (e.g. restaurant).

Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a service animal, consideration must be given to options available prior to exclusion of a service animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal. It is the OPTIONS expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate the risk be considered, e.g. creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alterations to schedules, etc.

A service animal can be excluded if it is of a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.

Alternative measures if Service Animal must be excluded

In the rare instance where a service animal must be excluded, OPTIONS must make every effort to put alternative arrangements in place to provide the services required by the person with a disability. This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussing with the person how best to serve them, e.g., a person with a vision disability might need someone (a member of staff or volunteer) to guide them.

When it is necessary to confirm an animal is a Service Animal

Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, an OPTIONS staff member may ask the person using the service animal for documentation from a regulated health professional, confirming that the animal is needed because of a disability. The document does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used. Where the person using the service animal regularly attends at the office open to the public, a Director of OPTIONS may request to keep a copy of the documentation on file but only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the person using the service animal may be asked to bring documentation with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The Director shall preserve the confidentiality of the documentation and information contained in the documentation, and shall not use or disclose the documentation or information except as provided for in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, cM56, or as otherwise required by law.

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTION

OPTIONS northwest will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the office or of services usually used by people with disabilities.

A notice of disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. Such notice will be placed at the public entrance to our office location and in the reception area.

Any Director of OPTIONS having knowledge of a planned or unexpected disruption shall ensure that the Notice of Disruption in Services is posted forthwith. Other options for notice may be used and would include: posting a notice on the agency website, through direct communication with users of the services.

Examples of areas of disruption may include, but are not limited to: accessible washrooms, elevator, parking lot, sidewalk, grab bars, lighting,

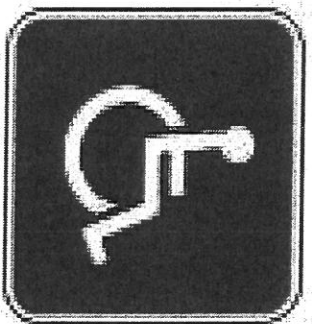
Example of Notices of Disruption:

Type of disruption: Elevator Access

Reason for disruption: Routine Maintenance

Duration of disruption: November 4, 2016 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Alternative facilities: As arranged, on a case by case basis



NOTICE OF DISRUPTION

Type of disruption _____

Reason for disruption _____

Duration of disruption _____

Alternative facilities or services _____

We apologize for any inconvenience that this disruption may cause. If you have any questions or concerns, please call (807)344-4994, to speak to our receptionist, who will be happy to assist you.

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES

TRAINING

OPTIONS northwest will provide training to all staff members and volunteers of the organization. Training is to take place within one month of hire, barring any exceptional circumstances.

Training will include the following:

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- How to interact and communicate with people 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 a support person
- How to use the assistive devices that the employer may have on the premise or that persons with disabilities may use and require assistance with
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing OPTIONS services
- OPTIONS northwest policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard

NOTE: Staff members and volunteers will receive additional training (policy review) when changes are made to policies, practices and procedures related to the customer service standard.

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES

FEEDBACK PROCESS

The ultimate goal of OPTIONS northwest is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Feedback on Accessible Customer Service and how well we are meeting such expectations are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback on experiences with or concerns about accessibility of services to people with disabilities will be taken seriously and can be made to any Supervisor or Director: in person, in writing, verbally over the phone or by way of video conference, by email, letter or other correspondence. Feedback can also be submitted into the suggestion box, found at the OPTIONS northwest Cumberland office. Feedback may be submitted on Section A of the attached feedback form, available from Reception at the Administrative Office or on Line at www.optionsnorthwest.com.

Additionally, on request, OPTIONS northwest will provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities to comment on how the organization provides accessible customer service.

A person who provides feedback or submits a complaint is not at risk of having his/her services and supports withdrawn or negatively impacted as a consequence of submitting the feedback.

All feedback shall be reviewed in a timely manner and customers can expect to hear back within ten days from the day the feedback was received, in the same or alternate method as the feedback was provided.

SECTION B

A) Supervisor/Director follow – up (to be completed within 10 business days of receipt):

- 1. Date Received by Supervisor/Director: _____
- 2. Date Supervisor/Director Contacted Person Providing Feedback: _____
- 3. Details of Discussion: _____

- 4. Recommendations: _____

- 5. Follow-up: _____

B) Executive Director Follow – up as required: (to be completed within 5 days of date of contact by Supervisor/ Director):

- 1. Date Received by Executive Director: _____
- 2. Date Executive Director Contacted Person Providing Feedback: _____ N/A
- 3. Details of Discussion: _____

- 4. Recommendations: _____

- 5. Follow-up: _____

Once this form has been completed, scan to Feedback folder on shared Administration directory.