Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) - Customer Service Standard Policy

The Newcomer Centre of Peel
Subject: AODA – Customer Service Standard
Index Number: 8.1
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1. Scope

This Policy applies to all employees, supply teachers, volunteers, internship students and any other personnel who work with NCP.

2. Purpose

This policy is delivered in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and is applicable to all policies, procedures and processes of NCP. This policy establishes that all goods and services provided by NCP shall be provided to persons with disabilities and all other clients in accordance with the following key principles:

Independence - Services for persons with disabilities shall support their independence free from the influence of others while respecting their individual rights to personal privacy and safety.

Dignity - Services for persons with disabilities shall be provided in a respectful manner, by treating all clients as valued and deserving of effective and full service.

Integration - Services offered shall allow persons with disabilities to fully benefit from services in the same or similar way and in the same place as other clients. Alternate measures may be used when integration does not serve the needs of all people with disabilities.

Equality of Opportunity - Persons with disabilities shall have the same opportunity to benefit from goods or services as other clients and shall not need to make significantly more effort to access or obtain services.

3. Definitions

The following are some definitions that are part of the core policy. If there are any questions in regard to their meaning, please address them with your Manager/Supervisor, Human Resources or the Executive Director.

Assistive Devices - Any auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).

Disabilities - Same as the definition of disability found in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Persons with Disabilities - Individuals that are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Service Animals - Any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. Section 4(9) of the Accessibility Standards on Customer Service indicates that an animal is a service animal if 1) it is readily apparent that the animal is being used for reasons related to a person's disability; or 2) if the person provides a letter from the doctor or nurse confirming that the animal is required for reasons relating to the disability.

Support Persons - Any person hired or chosen by a person with a disability, to accompany him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical care or with access to goods or services.

4. Policy

NCP is committed to excellence in serving all clients including people with disabilities and we will carry out functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

I. Assistive Devices

NCP shall permit persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services offered through NCP. In the event that a person with a disability is unable to access NCP's goods or services, NCP will accommodate the client by providing any other assistive measure available on an as needed basis.

II. Communication

NCP's staff will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

NCP will train staff who communicate with clients on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities on an as needed basis.

III. Services Animals

Service animals such as but not limited to Seizure Response dogs, Guide dogs, Hearing dogs and other certified service animals will be permitted to enter NCP's premises unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. Should a service animal be excluded from the premises, then NCP shall ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with the disability to obtain, use or benefits from the goods and/or services by:

- Providing them with a support person;
- Changing the meeting location or format, where technology permits;
- Changing meeting date and/or time;
- Serving the person in another location where the service animal is permitted.

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.

IV. Support Persons

Support persons will be permitted on all of NCP's properties and meeting rooms which are open to the public.

Fees will not be charged for support persons for admission to NCP's premises in the case that a fee is in place.

Where confidentiality is a concern, NCP may request the support person to sign a confidentiality agreement.

All staff will be properly trained to identify support persons who may be a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend that may accompany a person with the disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods and services.

The client shall determine whether a support person is necessary however, NCP may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when the health and safety of the person with a disability and of others on the premises are at risk. The following criteria will be used when consulting with the client:

i. When there is a significant risk to the health and safety of the persons with a disability or others (the mere possibility of risk is insufficient);
ii. When the risk is greater than the risk associated with other clients;
iii. When the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means;
iv. When the assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the duration of the risk, the nature and severity of the potential harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm; and
v. When the assessment of the risk is based on the individual's actual characteristics, not merely on generalizations, misperceptions, ignorance or fears about a disability.

V. Disruption Notices

In the event of a temporary service disruption that may prohibit a person with a disability from accessing NCP's goods and services or facilities, NCP will post a disruption notice one (1) week in advance when possible or otherwise make the disruption known through the following methods:

- Message on our phone
- Notice on Main Entrances
- Website

All service disruption notices will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

VI. Training

All staff, volunteers, and third parties that interact with the public, or who are involved in the development of policies, practices and procedures, are required to receive training.

All training shall include:

- An overview of the purposes of the AODA requirements of the customer service standard and an overview of NCP's Accessible Customer Service policy;
- Information/instructions on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- Information/instructions on how to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or the assistance of a support person;
- Information/instructions on how to use equipment or devices available at NCP;
- Information/instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing NCP's goods or services.

Training will include the core principles of customer service as set out by NCP which include dignity, independence, integration, and equality.

Records will be kept indicating the date and training provided and the number of individuals to whom it was provided.

Training will be mandatory for all new employees and employees will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

VII. Feedback Process

NCP will welcome feedback from all clients on the provision of goods and services available to persons with disabilities. Feedback may be provided in any manner convenient to the individual including in person, by telephone, by email, or in writing. NCP has also developed a feedback form that is available to all clients to gain feedback on the provisions or our goods and services and can be found on our website or at NCP. All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and used to improve our customer service.

VIII. Notice of Availability of Documents

NCP's Accessible Customer Service policy and all other documentation deemed to be important in the delivery of goods and services will be made available to clients upon request in a format that takes into consideration their disability.

A copy of this policy is available on NCP's website (www.ncpeel.ca).

IX. Modifications to Policies

NCP is committed to developing customer 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 persons with disabilities.

Any policy of NCP that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

X. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to clients with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation will be provided by, or referred to Human Resources.