



# **Accessible Customer Service Plan**

December 2011

## **Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY)**

### **Diversity & Inclusivity Guiding Principles**

The following policies are to guide ASCY's customer service delivery. These are for

- all employees
- those who visit our sites or use our services, programs and supports

We will

- provide equal access to goods or services
- be accessible – e.g. facilities, website, etc.
- offer appointments, training and meetings at varied times and in community-based locations
- have professional education and networking opportunities accessible to all who work or live in Hamilton and work with children and youth
- ensure appropriate programs and services are open to all children, families and professionals who work with children and youth
- be respectful and sensitive to the needs of each person
- support independence
- create a culture to 'make things possible' in a manner that supports the person's preferences, when possible
- treat all people with dignity

### **Our Mandate**

ASCY exists for the optimal development of all children through investment worthy of the results.

## **Our Commitment**

We are committed to providing:

- community professionals and learners with the knowledge, resources and current skills to support the optimal development of all children
- families with the skills, knowledge and resources to support the optimal development of all children
- children's services that are:
  - high quality
  - integrated
  - co-ordinated
  - based on current best practices and evaluation
- children's services that are:
  - timely
  - reflective of current best practices
  - based on their individual needs and strengths
  - family-centred and facilitate their optimal development

Our goal is to:

- provide goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of all people
- give people with disabilities equal opportunity to access our goods and services which:
  - allows them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients, members, etc.
  - takes into account their preferences in the manner in which we assist them

## **Providing Goods & Services to People with Disabilities**

We are committed to excellence in serving all those including those with disabilities who:

- enter our sites
- use our programs and services

### **Communication**

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that meet their needs.

To ensure this, we will:

- access sign language and cultural interpreters when possible and requested
- train staff
- provide resources to those who communicate with clients, members and others using our sites and services on how to interact and communicate with people with different types of disabilities

#### **i. Telephone Services**

To meet client needs, we will:

- provide fully accessible telephone service to our clients, members and those using our sites and services
- train staff to communicate over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly
- offer to use email, TTY or other modes of communication that are accessible to both our staff and those we are communicating with

#### **ii. Assistive Devices**

Assistive devices may include:

- canes
- wheelchairs

- TTY
- other devices

To meet the needs of those using assistive devices who use our sites and services, we will train staff on:

- the different types of assistive devices
- how to use assistive devices at our sites:
  - TTY
  - wheelchair access buttons – at main doors
  - accessible washrooms
  - small magnifying devices – at reception and the Professional Resource Library (PRL) member area

The main site location at 526 Upper Paradise Rd. is wheelchair accessible with

- sidewalk ramps
- wheelchair access button at the main door
- wheelchair accessible washroom

Our Early Words location at 1160 Upper Paradise Rd. is wheelchair accessible with wheelchair access button at the main door, however, there are no wheelchair accessible washrooms on-site.

### **iii. Invoicing**

We will provide accessible invoices to all our clients and members.

We will:

- provide invoices in different formats when requested
  - hard copy
  - electronic copy
  - large print
- answer questions about the content of the invoice by

- telephone
- e-mail
- in person by appointment

## **Service Animals**

We welcome people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. They are welcome in the areas that are open to the public and other third parties.

We will train all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public in how to interact with those accompanied by a service animal.

## **Support Persons**

We welcome people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. A support person is someone who is helping or supporting a person with a disability and is recognized by the person with a disability as their support person.

At no time will a person with a disability be prevented from having access to their support person while at our site.

Fees will only be charged to support persons for meals or materials if this part of the fee for individuals attending training, events, meetings or functions.

We will inform our clients, members and others who use our sites about our policy regarding support persons:

- through a notice posted on our sites
- Professional Education Brochure
- promotional flyers/information for events

- Professional Resource Library Membership Guidelines
- newsletters or e-newsletters
- Accessible Customer Service Plan posted on our Agency website.

## **Notice of Temporary Disruption**

If there is a disruption in access to our sites or services, we will post notices:

- at the public entrances of the site affected
- at [www.ascy.ca](http://www.ascy.ca) or [www.earlywords.ca](http://www.earlywords.ca) as appropriate
- on the Professional Education Calendar at [www.ascy.ca](http://www.ascy.ca)

The notices will clearly state:

- the reason for the disruption
- the expected length of time of disruption
- where clients may access services, if available

## **Training for Staff**

Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf.

Individuals in the following positions will be trained:

Managers

Professional Education Consultants

Early Literacy Specialists

Project Staff

Professional Resource Librarians & Program Support

Administrative Support/Reception/Intake Personnel

Speech & Language Pathologists

Family Support Worker

Early Childhood Vision Consultants

Communicative Disorders Assistants

Community Screeners

Board of Directors

Third-Party Consultants/Trainers (presenters, independent contractors working with the public)

Volunteers who are under the direct responsibility of our Agency

Students on placement with the Agency

This training will be:

- provided within 1 month of beginning with the Agency
- part of the orientation process or during a group training session, if available

All employees will be asked to sign a form stating they have:

- read the Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) Accessible Customer Service Plan
- read other training materials located on the ASCY/Early Words (EW) shared server, or
- completed a group training session as outlined below

Training will include:

- the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- 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
  - a service animal
  - a support person
- how to use TTY or other assistive devices available on-site to help provide goods or services to people with disabilities

- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing goods and services
- the Agency's policies, procedures and practices relating to the customer service standard

Please note: a complete overview of the information covered in the group presentation is outlined in the Appendices.

Volunteers and independent contractors who deal with the public or third parties will be asked to sign a form stating they have:

- read the one-page handout highlighting information from the Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) Accessible Customer Service Plan

If an employee or others dealing with the public on behalf of Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) have any questions about the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service legislation, please contact the staff presenter or Director of Organizational Effectiveness.

Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

## **Feedback Process**

The ultimate goal of ASCY is to meet and surpass the expectations of clients, members and others we serve who have disabilities. We welcome and appreciate comments on how well we are meeting those expectations.

Feedback regarding the way we provide goods and services to people with disabilities can be made:

- by e-mail
- verbally
- in writing
- by using the suggestion box located in the ASCY Professional Resource Library
- through our feedback form on our website

All feedback will be sent to the Director of Organizational Effectiveness. Anyone who gives feedback will hear back in 3 to 5 business days.

Complaints will be addressed using our regular complaint procedures.

## **Modifications to this or other Policies**

We will develop customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. No changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities.

Any policy of Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) that doesn't respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

## **Questions about this Policy**

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to our clients, members and others we serve with disabilities. The Director of Organizational Effectiveness will respond to any questions about this policy.

## **In Closing**

Our Agency considers this a work in progress as we continue to learn and build our awareness, knowledge and capacity in providing goods and services to individuals with disabilities.

## Appendix A

### Background

In May of 2008, Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY) participated in a pilot Diversity Assessment with the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion (HCCI). We formed a working group to make recommendations about how we could be more inclusive. We developed Guiding Principles for Diversity and Inclusivity for our Agency. These have recently been adapted to align with the core principles of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07).

The Diversity/Inclusivity Working Group remains active within our organization. They are becoming familiar with the new legislation which comes into effect on January 1, 2012. Together we will bring our Guiding Principles and the legislation to life as the working group, along with the agency as a whole, will continue to:

- increase our knowledge
- enhance our policies
- implement practices

### **What is the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Legislation?**

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into effect on January 1, 2008. The Act states that if you are a provider of goods or services and have one or more employees in Ontario, you are required to comply with the regulation.

Public sector organizations such as hospitals, schools, municipalities, colleges and universities were required to come into compliance with the Act by January 1, 2010. Non-profit organizations, private businesses and other service providers are required to come into compliance by January 1, 2012.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service legislation is part of a broader Act – the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). This broader Act is working towards making Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025 and includes:

- customer service
- transportation
- employment
- information and communications
- built environment - buildings and other structures

The intent of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service is to:

- foster an appreciation for the unique and individual needs of people with disabilities
- provide goods and services in a manner that meets the client’s needs to the best of our ability

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service involves:

- developing and documenting policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities
- ensuring the policies, practices and procedures are available to the public
- training staff, independent contractors, volunteers and others who deal with the public
- protocols and practices on dealing with people with disabilities who:
  - have service animals
  - use a support person
  - use assistive devices
  - have other communication preferences

- providing information on how we will notify the public of any temporary disruption to services
- ways clients, members and others can give feedback on goods and services provided and how we will respond to the feedback in a timely manner

## APPENDIX B

### Accessibility Training for Affiliated Services for Children and Youth: Facilitator's Guide

1. Handouts: Awareness Quiz, Training Resource Booklet, Tip Sheets, Test Your Knowledge Quiz, Evaluation Form.

- **Ensure everyone in attendance has signed in with name and date.**
  
- **Awareness quiz on the table for participants to do as they arrive.**
  
- **Opening questions for discussion:**
  - a. How much do you know about disabilities?
  - b. How much do you know about serving people with disabilities?
  - c. What are some common perceptions about people with disabilities?
  - d. How knowledgeable are you on the rights of people with disabilities?

- **Take up Awareness Quiz.**

- **Points to convey as you take up the quiz :**

**Removing Barriers:** A major barrier for people with disabilities is attitudes.

Removing physical barriers is a start and can be the easiest to remove. Building accessibility into the life and operation can help avoid costly accessibility mistakes or the creation of unintentional barriers.

**Statistics:** about one in seven (1.85 million) Ontarians has a disability. Over 47% of people over the age of 65 have disabilities. As the general population ages, the number of people with disabilities will increase.

**Spending Power:** Customers with disabilities form a significant consumer group with a spending power of \$21-25 billion a year (Royal Bank of Canada). People

with disabilities like to eat out, work, travel and enjoy retirement. “With disabilities” is an untapped labour market potential.

- **Training Resource Guide for Small Businesses and Organizations.** Briefly outline the guide and highlight from pages 10-11, the lime green statements of the organization’s duties and obligations under the Act.
  
- **Power point presentation.** Stop and pause as needed to ensure everyone understands or has any thoughts or questions. Let participants know that the **tip sheets booklet** provided as a handout is from the website recommended tips. Have participants take a few minutes to go through the tip sheets and discuss with a partner which ones they felt were most relevant to them or those on which they felt they needed more training or information. Take up as a group discussion.
  
- **“Test your knowledge” quiz.** Give participants 5-10 minutes to complete.
  
- **Follow-up questions to encourage discussion and learning while taking up the quiz:**
  - What points stood out for you the most during today’s presentation?
  - How can you/we improve service for customers or clients with disabilities?
  - What do we do well in terms of serving clients using the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity?
  - Next Steps? Recommendations?
  - Your suggestions are important, so please fill in the evaluation form and indicate any additional thoughts or concerns. Also, contact Joyce Minten or me if you think of anything else after you have left today.

- **Direct participants to:** Ontario.ca/AccessON for more information and resources as well as Serve-Ability for more training. Highlight and show the CD “Let’s Talk” that is also available for participants to watch (enhanced training), other resources: [www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/serve-ability/splash.html](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/serve-ability/splash.html) for PowerPoint or radio versions, Ontario Non-profit Network/ Enabling Non-profits Ontario for webinars, chats and resources.
- **Hand in attendance and evaluations to Director of Organizational Effectiveness.**
- **Follow-up with feedback in evaluations.**

### Training Outline for E-Learning:

- 1) The Director of Organizational Effectiveness will meet with new employees to review Agency and Human Resource policies and procedures. Included in this will be a time scheduled for you to complete on-line Accessibility Standard Training.
- 2) One copy of the “Serve-Ability- Transforming Customer Service” DVD will be made available at ASCY offices and one copy will be located at Early Words in their respective Health and Safety areas. The “End User Agreement” is located on the ASCY shared drive for you to read prior to commencing the DVD.
- 3) Copies of the “Accessibility Tip Sheets” are located in the main office areas of each site and also in the ASCY Resource Library. It is suggested that you have the tip sheets on hand to review throughout your e-learning session (the tip sheets are also located in the “Resource Section” of the DVD).
- 4) Please set aside one hour for your training in a comfortable, quiet environment without interruption.
- 5) Questions to ask yourself while going through the training:
  - What points stood out for you the most during today’s presentation?

- What can you/we do to improve service for customers or clients with disabilities?
  - What do you think we do well in terms of serving clients or customers using the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity?
  - Next steps? Any recommendations? Your suggestions are important so please be sure to report any additional thoughts or concerns.
  - Please let us know if there is anything else we can provide to support your education in this area.
- 6) You may want to stop the presentation from time to time to write down any questions, concerns or feedback you may have on the Standard.
- 7) When you have completed your e-learning, be sure to read and sign the 'Declaration Form' that will be provided. Please give the completed form with any recommendations to the Director of Organizational Effectiveness.
- 8) You can also access **Ontario.ca/AccessON** for more information and resources. We also have "**Let's Talk**", an additional resource and DVD which highlights the impact of this Standard on individuals with a disability and is highly recommended viewing.