

Accessibility Standards Policy

Providing Services to Clients with Disabilities

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees, contractors/sub-contractors and 3rd parties conducting work on behalf of A49

PURPOSE

It is the objective of A49 to create and maintain a climate of mutual respect in which all persons who access our services, goods, and facilities will be able to do so irrespective of any disability they may have. This Policy is created in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, (hereinafter referred to as the “AODA”) and specifically, Ontario Regulation 429/07, *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*.

Our business practices and policies will strive to ensure that all of our policies, practices, and procedures are consistent with the core principles as outlined in the AODA. These core principles are:

1. ***Dignity*** – Goods and services are to be provided to persons with a disability in a manner that is respectful to the person and such persons must be treated as valued clients as deserving of service.
2. ***Equality of Opportunity*** – Persons with a disability are entitled to be given an opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from our services equal to that of any other of our clients.
3. ***Integration*** – Persons with a disability are entitled to benefit from our services in the same place and in the same or similar manner as any other client. This may require a different format and maintaining a flexible approach wherever possible, taking into account the person’s individual needs. The objective is to attempt inclusiveness and full participation to the extent possible.
4. ***Independence*** – Services must be provided in a way that respects the independence of persons with a disability and means respecting the person’s right to do it themselves and to choose how they wish to receive services. Any assistance offered must be with the express permission of the person.

APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This Policy applies to all employees and persons who act as our agents (contractors and independent consultants) in dealing with our clients in the provision of services and all persons responsible for developing and updating policies.

DEFINITIONS

1. ***Assistive Device*** – Any device that is used to assist a person in performing a particular task or tasks or to aid that person in activities of daily living. These devices could be such things as: walkers, canes, scooters or more specialized technical software like screen reading, audio recording, voice recognition or communications board.
2. ***Disability*** – *This is the same definition as is provided under the AODA and the Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19.*

“Disability” means,

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan

established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”).

3. **Service Animal** – An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability, to assist that person with his/her disability. This includes any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability.
4. **Support Person** – A person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist that person with, for example, mobility issues, communication or personal/medical needs or with access to goods or services.
5. **Client** – Refers to anyone who is in receipt of the services we provide.

COMPONENTS OF THE POLICY IN PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY:

Communication and Assistive Devices

In order to promote understanding of the content and intent of the communication, all communication with people with disabilities will be done in a manner that takes into account the disability.

To that end, persons using assistive devices will be permitted – where possible – to use those devices when on our premises which are open to the public, it being understood, however, that the use and safety of personal assistive devices is the responsibility of the person with the disability.

Where the use of an assistive device cannot be used because of some barrier, attempts will be made to remove the barrier or the person with the disability will be asked how he/she can be accommodated and/or what alternative methods are available to assist the person in accessing our goods and services.

Service Animals

Persons with disabilities and their service animals, including guide dogs, are permitted access to all parts of our premises that are open to the public and the animal is not otherwise excluded by law. If the service animal is excluded by law, we will attempt to find an alternate means within a reasonable time frame to provide the person with the disability access.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a Service Animal, we may have to ask the person with a disability to provide a letter from a physician confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his/her disability. Staff will receive training on how to interact with persons with a disability accompanied by a Service Animal.

Support Persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

Staff will receive training on how to interact with persons with a disability accompanied by a support person.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities, such as access to our building, we will notify clients promptly of any such planned or unexpected disruption by email and/or through a posting on the website as well as a notice posted at the entrance all of our offices.

The posted notice will include information about:

- (a) the date, time and location of the disruption;
- (b) the reason for the disruption;
- (c) its anticipated length of time; and,
- (d) a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Training for Staff

Training will be provided to all employees/persons to whom this Policy applies on how to interact, communicate, and assist in the proper use of assistive devices for persons with disabilities.

This will include ongoing training when changes are made to this Policy or any related change to policies, practices or procedures. This training will be provided to all new employees as soon as possible following hiring, but no later than one month post-hiring. Records of this training will be kept on file.

Training will include:

- (a) an overview of the AODA and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard;

- (b) a review of this Policy;
- (c) how to interact and communicate with people with various disabilities and with those who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
- (d) how to use the assistive devices we already have; and,
- (e) what to do if a person with a disability is having any difficulties in accessing our goods and services.

Feedback Process

Clients are invited to provide feedback about the way we provide services to people with disabilities. This may include areas that require changes. This can be provided in writing to and/or via email to:

Human Resources
600 Cochrane Drive
Markham, Ontario
L3R 5K3

Email: accessibility@wspgroup.com

All feedback relating to accessibility of our services will be directed to our Human Resources Department. We will attempt to respond in the same format as it is received.

When concerns/complaints are received, every effort will be made to respond within two (2) weeks of the receipt of the complaint/concern.

Modifications to this or other Policies

All of our policies will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure compliance with the AODA. Any policy that does not comply to promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Accessibility of Documents

This Policy and all other documents required by the AODA pertaining to our policies, practices and procedures on the provision of services to persons with disabilities, can also be obtained by contacting our Office Administrator. Upon request, reasonable attempts will be made to provide these documents to clients with disabilities in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Notice of availability of these documents will be posted on our website and/or posted in a conspicuous place where this Policy applies.