



<b>POLICY NAME:</b>	<b>AODA Customer Service Policy – Customer Service Standards</b>
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POLICY NUMBER:	ADMIN-HR-1.31	DEVELOPED / ISSUED BY: (Author / Owner of Policy)	Nicole Dagg, Manager, Human Resources
DEPARTMENT:	Administration	APPROVED BY: (Name & Title)	Cynthia St. John, Chief Executive Officer
ISSUE DATE:	September 9, 2022	SIGNATURE OF APPROVER:	
REVISION DATE:		REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Biennial

**PURPOSE:**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 [1] (AODA) is Provincial Legislation with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

As of January 1, 2012, the health unit must comply with Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled “Accessibility Standards for Client Service [2]” which came into force on January 1, 2008. This regulation establishes accessibility standards specific to client service for public sector organizations and other persons or organizations that provide services to members of the public or other third parties.

The purpose of this policy is to inform Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) Board of Health members, employees, students, volunteers, and contractors of health unit obligations and agency expectations of those who deal with members of the public on behalf of the health unit to ensure compliance the Accessibility Standards for Client Service Ontario Regulation 429/07.

In addition, the policy serves to inform members of the public regarding their rights and health unit obligations with respect to:

1. The provision of services to persons with disabilities;
2. The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities;
3. The use of service animals by persons with disabilities;

4. The use of support persons by persons with disabilities;
5. Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
6. Training;
7. Client Feedback regarding the provision of services to persons with disabilities;
8. Notice of availability and Format of documents and meetings.

## **SCOPE:**

This policy applies to all members of the Board of Health, employees, volunteers, and students. The Customer Service Standard applies to all other persons providing services on behalf of the SWPH.

## **POLICY:**

Southwestern Public Health (SWPH) will provide programs and services in a manner that is based upon the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity to all health unit clients.

Wherever possible, persons with disabilities will benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients. Services will be integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain, use, or benefit from the Health Unit's services.

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **General Policy Maintenance and Interpretation**

The Human Resources Manager will hold the following responsibilities:

- Serve as the AODA Compliance Officer,
- Oversee training regarding this policy,
- Be responsible for policy orientation and interpretation,
- Ensure that this policy and any other policy having an impact on persons with disabilities is regularly reviewed, recommend new policies or revisions to policies to achieve the purpose of this policy, and
- Answer any questions about this policy and accessibility or accommodation at the SWPH.

## **Government Reporting**

The Office Manager will hold the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate the development of accessibility plans and annual reports on the implementation of those plans.
- Ensure that the accessibility report is signed by the Officer Manager and the Director Finance & Facilities. When signing the report, you are certifying that all required information has been provided and is accurate. The Office Manager will file the report online through the Accessibility Compliance Reporting Online Program through Service Ontario's website.

## **Communication in Accessible Format**

The Health Unit will communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that will take into account their disability. Clients with disabilities will be offered alternative communication formats that will meet the needs of the client when necessary. Documents will be provided to clients in an alternative format that will meet the needs of the client in a timely fashion as negotiated with the client.

It will be the responsibility of reception to communicate to the specific departments when a client with a disability needs assistance while obtaining our services when entering the Health Unit through the reception area.

## **Use of Service Animals, Support Persons, and Assistive Devices**

### **Service Animal**

SWPH will welcome people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal that is not in contravention of any law (i.e., the Municipal By-law) on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and owned, leased or contracted and operated by SWPH. If a service animal is excluded by law, SWPH will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Health Unit's goods and services.

### **Support Person**

SWPH will welcome people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on the SWPH premises. SWPH may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when receiving service or participating in a program offered by the Health Unit. Fees will not be charged for a support person when a client is accessing services where an admission fee is applicable. Efforts will be made to ensure clients will be informed of this.

### **Assistive Devices**

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the Health Unit's services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the Health Unit has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of the individual or others on the premises. In these situations, the Health Unit will offer the person other reasonable measures to assist him or her in obtaining, using and benefiting from the Health Unit's services, where the Health Unit has such other measures available. The person with a disability is responsible to ensure that his/her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

### **Notice of Temporary Disruptions**

It is a requirement to post a notice of temporary disruptions when these disruptions occur to health unit services or facilities.

The Office Manager responsibilities:

- Ensure that notice is provided by posting the information in visible places and on the Health Unit's website [www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca) or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances when the interruption is unplanned or planned. If planned, as much notice as possible should be provided. The information provided will include the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.
- Maintain records containing dates of when temporary disruption notices are posted.

Relevant Program Managers' responsibilities:

- Provide clients with notice in the event of a planned disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.
- Notify clients as soon as possible in the event of an unplanned disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.

### **Training on Client Service**

Human resources will ensure training is provided to all board of health members, employees, students, volunteers, and others who deal with the public on behalf of the Health Unit, and all those who are involved in the development and approval of client service policies and procedures.

Training will include but not be limited to the following:

1. Understanding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the client service standards.
2. How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

3. How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person and how to use assistive devices if the health unit is aware in advance of persons attending health unit programs or services in need of these devices.
4. What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Southwestern Public Health Unit's services.
5. Policies and procedures that affect the way programs and services are provided to people with disabilities.

Human resources will maintain records of training including the name of employees trained and date of training.

### **Accessibility of Meetings**

Program management will ensure that meeting space is in an accessible physical environment and that participants have access to the meeting contents and proceedings. Where required to serve the needs of a person with a disability, alternate forms of communication with those in attendance at meetings will be provided at the health unit's expense.

### **Feedback Process**

The ultimate goal of the Southwestern Public Health Unit is to meet and surpass client expectations while serving clients with disabilities. Comments and feedback regarding the way the Southwestern Public Health provides goods and services to people with disabilities are welcomed and appreciated.

Human Resources will ensure that a feedback process is in place to generate and respond to client suggestions and complaints. Feedback can be made verbally, by email, by mail using our Accessibility Customer Service Feedback form. Clients can expect to hear a response indicating an explanation on how the Southwestern Public Health Unit is able or unable to implement the suggestion or if further investigation is necessary. Please see our [accessibility page](#).

### **Format of Health Unit Documents**

Program managers will ensure documents are produced in an alternative format upon request unless it is not technically feasible to do so and subject to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Accessible** shall mean capable of being entered or reached, approachable; easy to get at; capable of being influenced, obtainable; easy to understand or appreciate.

**Assistive Device** shall mean a device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the client Service Standard.

**Disability** shall mean,

1. 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,
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
4. a mental disorder, or
5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997;

**Dignity** shall mean respecting and treating every person including persons with a disability as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other client.

**Equal Opportunity** shall mean having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. People with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods or services as others.

**Guide Dog** shall mean a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations.

**Goods and Services** shall mean goods and services provided by the SWPH.

**Independence** shall mean freedom from control or influence of others, freedom to make your own choices.

**Integration of services** shall mean the integration of services that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same service, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other clients. All program and services are designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities.

**Procedure** shall mean how staff will offer or deliver goods and services and the steps that staff are expected to take to comply with the Accessible Client Service Policy.

**Service Animal** shall mean an animal used to service a person with a disability. To be considered a service animal under the standard, it must either be readily apparent (i.e., wearing a harness, saddle bags, and a sign identifying the animal as a service animal), that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a

disability must be prepared to show a letter from a doctor or nurse confirming that it is required for reasons relating to his or her disability.

**Support Person** is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide goods and services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods and services.

#### **COMPLIANCE:**

Failure to comply with this Policy and any associated Procedures may result in appropriate disciplinary measures.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE:**

An extensive and in-depth review of SWPH commitment to AODA, its Policies, Processes and Practices has been conducted. Updates as well as implementation of materials, processes and practices is underway.

#### **RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

[ADMIN-HS-1.2 - Assistive Devices – Customer Service Standards](#)

[ADMIN-HS-1.3 - Availability of Customer Service Documents](#)

[ADMIN-QP-1.18 - Providing Feedback – Customer Service Standards](#)

Accessibility Customer Service Feedback Form

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\) \[1\]](#)

[O. Reg. 429/07 ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE \[2\]](#)

[O. Reg. 430/07 EXEMPTION FROM REPORTING REQUIREMENTS](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 \(ODA\)](#)

#### **REVIEWED BY/CONSULTED WITH:**

Monica Nusink – August 25, 2022