

Accessibility Policy (OP 5)

Version: 2

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A. Purpose and Background

York Support Services Network (YSSN) is committed to identifying, eliminating and preventing barriers to accessibility in the provision of services to its clients in accordance with the requirements outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (the “Customer Service Standard”) under the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA.)

B. Scope

This policy applies to all YSSN employees, students, volunteers and any other people who interact with the public, including clients and family members, on behalf of YSSN.

C. Definitions

Disability – The AODA’s definition of “disability” is consistent with the *Human Rights Code*. Section 2 of the AODA defines “disability” as:

- (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 co-ordination, 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”).

In addition, note that the legal definition of disability includes visible, non-visible and episodic disabilities.

Assistive Devices – Devices that assist persons with disabilities carry out activities or access services covered by the Customer Service Standard. Assistive devices may include, but are not limited to: wheelchairs, screen readers, recording machines, hearing devices, canes and communication boards

Barrier – Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice. (s. 2, AODA)

Dignity – Treating persons with disabilities as customers and clients who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer

Independence – The freedom from control or influence of others or the freedom to carry out activities in the person’s own way

Integration – Enabling persons with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers

Service Animals – Animals, most often dogs, used by persons by persons with disabilities to assist with sight, hearing or cognitive functions

Support Persons – Persons relied on by persons with disabilities for assistance with certain services or activities.

D. Procedure(s)

The Accessibility Policy is available internally on YSSN’s Policy software and on the YSSN website. Accessible formats of this policy will be made available upon request.

The Accessibility Plan identifies and outlines resolutions to barriers that may be experienced while accessing services at any of our office locations. The Accessibility Plan is reviewed annually by the Board and is posted on YSSN’s website. Accessible formats of this plan will be made available upon request.

York Support Services Network is committed to carrying out its responsibilities outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 in the following areas:

Personal Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities are entitled to use their own personal assistive devices while accessing services provided by YSSN.

Communication

YSSN will consider how disabilities affect the manner in which the person expresses, receives or processes communications. YSSN will ensure that persons with disabilities are enabled to communicate effectively when accessing YSSN services. Such accommodations may include the use of:

- TTY (Telephone Teletype);
- Amplification systems;
- Pen and Paper;
- Typed messages;
- Adjusted speaking styles;
- American Sign Language;
- Gestures;

- Plain-language documents;
- Large-print documents;
- Text-based electronic communications;
- Accessible website technology; and
- Communication Boards

Service Animals

Persons with disabilities who use service animals will be permitted to attend at YSSN facilities. If it is not apparent that animal is not being used for the person's disability, a certificate confirming that the animal has been trained by a professional service animal institution may be requested.

If the use of a service animal affects the health or safety of another person, YSSN will analyze all options for allowing the person's use of the service animal. Such options may include:

- Creating distance between the two individuals;
- Eliminating in-person contact;
- Modifying service schedules; and
- Using air purifiers

Support Persons

Persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person will be permitted to access YSSN services with their support person. If discussing confidential information, YSSN must obtain the person's consent that such information be privy to the support person in order for the support person to be present.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

i. Planned Disruptions

YSSN will provide notice of a planned disruption of any location, technology or method that its clients must use in order to access YSSN services. In the event of planned or scheduled disruptions notice should be provided at least 48 hours in advance and should include information about:

- the reason for the disruption;
- how long the disruption is expected to last; and
- what alternative facilities or services exist, if any.

All YSSN representatives will endeavor to provide notice directly to clients (for example by telephone or e-mail depending upon the person's disability), and through posted announcements.

ii. Unexpected Disruptions

YSSN will provide notice of unexpected disruptions of any location, technology or method that its clients must use in order to access YSSN services. In the event of unexpected disruptions notice should be provided as soon as possible and should include information about:

- the reason for the disruption;
- how long the disruption is expected to last; and
- what alternative facilities or services exist, if any.

All YSSN representatives will endeavor to provide notice directly to clients (for example by telephone or e-mail depending upon the person's disability), and through posted announcements.

Training of Staff

All YSSN employees, students, volunteers and other people who interact with the public on YSSN's behalf will receive training on providing customer service to persons with disabilities. In addition, training will be completed by all YSSN representatives (including management and senior level employees) involved in the development of policies, practices and procedures on providing YSSN services.

The training will cover the following:

1. Review of the purposes of the AODA and requirements of the Customer Service Standard
2. Instruction on how to interact and communication with persons with various types of disabilities
3. Instruction on how to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of service animals or support persons
4. Instruction on how to use equipment or devices provided by YSSN that assists persons with disabilities to access YSSN services
5. Instruction on what steps to take if a person with disabilities is having difficulty accessing YSSN services

Training will be delivered via webinar at <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/serve-ability/01.aspx>

Training will be completed:

- By January 1, 2012 for existing YSSN representatives
- Within 1 month for representatives joining YSSN after January 1, 2012

Training will be recorded via a Certificate of Completion with original housed within the Human Resources Personnel file with electronic copies distributed to employees and their supervisors.

Feedback Process

Clients, families and visitors are encouraged to provide YSSN with feedback on the YSSN's provision of services to persons with disabilities. Feedback may be communicated by:

1. Telephone
2. Email
3. Mail

Comments regarding York Support Services Network's **Accessibility Policy** or **Accessibility Plan** will be addressed in accordance with YSSN's **Complaint Resolution Strategy**. All comments will be acknowledged within 2 business days of the feedback.

Document Accessibility

This policy as well as any other policies, practices and procedures will be available on YSSN's website in formats accessible to persons with disabilities. Such documents may also be provided to clients, families and visitors in hard copy, large-print, Braille and audio CD upon request.

YSSN will post notice that such documents are available on its website in formats accessible to persons with disabilities.

E. Responsibilities

It is the expectation that all YSSN employees, students, volunteers and any other people who interact with the public on behalf of YSSN ensure that the provision of services to its clients are in accordance with the requirements outlined in Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

F. References

Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
Complaint Resolution Strategy - CRS - Procedure (OP 01)
<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/serve-ability/01.aspx>
YSSN Accessibility Plan