



# Access Independent Living Services

Promoting Acceptance and Tolerance Among All  
People

*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*

Customer Service Standard Handbook and Guide

Compliance – January 1, 2012

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## 1. Mission

Access Independent Living Services' mission is to ensure that adults with physical disabilities can live independently in the community and pursue their individual goals by providing innovative attendant support services.

## 2. Principles of Service

- We respect and encourage autonomy by offering a full range of services to support independent living by our consumers;
- We recognize and value the uniqueness of individuals by ensuring our services are self-directed according to individual needs;
- We provide flexible services that support individuals to live up to their full potential;
- We reduce physical barriers for our consumers;
- We promote acceptance and tolerance among people;
- We provide a safe environment for our consumers and staff;
- We behave with the utmost honesty and integrity and ensure our hiring practices support these values;
- We are accountable for meeting the needs of our consumers in a financially prudent manner, which does not compromise service quality; and
- We work collaboratively with other service providers and our community.

## 3. Definitions

Assistive Device – is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

Disability – the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

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

Service Animal – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

- It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Guide Dog – a highly trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

Service Dog – as reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562* a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- It is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or
- The person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

Support Person – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services.

## **4. Customer Service Standard Overview**

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

This policy applies to the:

- Provision of goods and services at premises owned and operated by Access Independent Living Services;
- Employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of Access Independent Living Services, including when the provision of goods and services occurs off the premises of Access Independent Living Services such as in: delivery services, call centers, vendors, drivers, catering and third party marketing agencies; and
- All persons who participate in the development of the Access Independent Living Services' policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

### **4.1. Customer Service Standard Requirements**

Every business and organization operating in Ontario that provides goods and services to the public or other organizations and has at least one employee has to comply by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. To meet these requirements of the Customer Service Standard, organizations must:

1. Establish policies and procedures on for providing goods or services to consumers and visitors with disabilities;
2. Provide training on how to serve consumers with disabilities to staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone else whose interests with the public or other third parties on the organization's behalf;
3. Establish a process for the organization to receive and respond to accessibility-related feedback from consumers and visitors.
4. Make Information about the feedback process readily available and accessible to the public;
5. Communicate with consumers and visitors with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability;



6. Allow consumers and visitors with disabilities to bring their service animal(s)/dog(s) onto any part of the premises open to the public, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law;
7. Let consumers and visitors with disabilities bring their support person(s) with them when accessing goods or services open to the public;
8. Let the public know when facilities, goods or services that people with disabilities use to access the organization's facilities, goods or services are temporary unavailable and provide an alternative plan of action to assist the person with a disability; and
9. Document all policies, practices and procedures to provide accessible customer service and notify the public that these documents are available upon request.

## 4.2. General Procedures

All goods and services provided by Access Independent Living Services shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity and support the Access Independent Living Services' mission and principles of service.

- Dignity: service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of others;
- Independence: service is provided in a way that allows a person with a disability to do things on their own, without unwelcomed help or interference from others;
- Integration and Equal Opportunity: service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with disability to access goods or services. Persons with disabilities should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service or receive a service at a lesser quality or standard.
- Support Mission and Principles of Service: service is delivered with/through integrity, accountability, and innovative practices and in collaboration with Access Independent Living Services service providers and partners within the community.

Access Independent Living Services strives to identify and eliminate barriers that may hinder or reduce the delivery and quality of service to a person with a disability before the barrier becomes an issue. If the barrier cannot be effectively



eliminated or reduced, Access Independent Living Services will employ its duty to accommodate to ensure a reasonable alternative or solution is reached.

### **4.3. Assistive Devices Procedures**

Access Independent Living Services is dedicated and to committed to servicing people with disabilities and ensuring that persons who use an assistive device will benefit from the same quality of customer service as those who do not use an assistive device. Staff will not touch someone's assistive device unless the person with the disability has given permission to do so.

There are a variety of assistive devices that support persons and staff will be trained with education and materials to properly assist or accommodate a person with a assistive device. Some examples of assistive devices include:

- Mobility aids (white canes, support canes, walkers, scooters and wheelchairs);
- Visual aids (notetakers with built-in speech output, braille watches and magnifying glasses);
- Hearing aids (cochlear implants, hearing aids); or
- Communication aids (synthesized speech communicators, personal digital assistants).

In situations where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services are delivered and adhere to the principles listed above.

### **4.4. Communication Procedures**

Access Independent Living Services will take a person's disability into account when communicating with the individual with a disability, including the two-way process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. Staff will accommodate customers and allow them to communicate through a method or device that is most preferred and/or beneficial to the person with the disability.

Access Independent Living Services will employ multiple practices to make sure communications between staff and customers is accessible, including:

- Considering the needs of people with disabilities during the planning stage and communication development in order to reduce and/or remove communication barriers;

- Using plain and easy to understand language to make a document or information easier to comprehend for people with disabilities;
- Offering information or documents in alternative formats upon request, including but not limited too:
  - Hand printed or typed information;
  - Braille;
  - Large Print;
  - Audio assistance; and
  - Other channels (e.g., email) that may be more accessible.

## **4.5. Service Animals Procedures**

A Access Independent Living Services staff will welcome consumers, members and visitors with disabilities who are accompanied by a accredited service animal. A service animal may accompany a consumer, member or visitor or any third party with a disability to all parts of the premises that are open to the public. Service animals may be used for, but not limited to, the following disabilities: vision loss, physical disability, hearing loss, autism and epilepsy. Although service animals are most commonly dogs, other service animals could include, but are not limited to, ferrets and monkeys. Staff will be trained to ensure that they interact with the person with a disability and their service animal with dignity, respect and mindfulness of the duty in which the service animal has been employed to fulfill. "No pet" policies do not apply to animals that service persons with disabilities.

To be considered a service animal under the Customer Service Standard, it must be readily apparent that the animal is being used to assist a person with a disability. If it is not apparent, staff may request formal documentation to prove that the animal provides service to the person with a disability, validation maybe include:

- A letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- A valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or
- A certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

The customer that is accompanied by a service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all time while on Access Independent Living Services' premises. If the service animal is causing a disturbance for other consumers, members, or visitors, or is considered a safety threat, the person with the service animal may be requested to leave the premises. Access Independent Living Services will only ask a person with a service animal to leave as a last resort,



and before doing so will make every effort to accommodate given circumstances and/or remedy the situation.

## **4.6. Support Persons Procedures**

Access Independent Living Services will welcome people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is allowed to enter the premises with his or her 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 premises.

A consumer or visitor with a disability, accompanied by a support person, will pay regular admission (when applicable) to special events administered or sponsored by Access Independent Living Services and fees will not be charged to the support person, as complementary admission will be granted to a single support person. Additional requests are addressed on a case-by-case basis and will be resolved based on reasonability and duty to accommodate.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the customer.

There may be times where seating and availability prevent the customer and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations Access Independent Living Services will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

## **4.7. Disruptions in Services Procedures**

Access Independent Living Services is aware that temporary disruptions of services (daily functions – elevators, physical operations; office closures; training, etc.) and programs may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within Access Independent Living Services' control or knowledge. As a response, a reasonable effort to provide advance notice of the disruption to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available, will be produced by Access Independent Living Services. In some circumstances, such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

When disruptions occur Access Independent Living Services will provide notice by:

- Posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the Access Independent Living Services website;



- Contacting customers with appointments;
- Verbally notifying customers when they are making a reservation or appointment; or
- By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

## **4.8. Feedback Process Procedures**

Access Independent Living Services welcomes and appreciates feedback from customers to ensure that the necessary steps and procedures are in place and implemented to ensure persons with disabilities are efficiently and effectively accommodated.

Consumers, members and visitors with disabilities can offer their feedback on the accessibility of goods and services in the following ways (contact information is provided below):

- Written feedback via E-mail and mail;
- Oral feedback via telephone conversation or telephone message; or
- In person feedback to Access Independent Living Services staff or management via written, oral or on-site feedback form.

The consumer or visitor is required to provide their name and contact information (phone, e-mail). Once feedback is received, the following actions are taken to respond:

- The feedback is directed to the appropriate person for action;
- The feedback is assessed for appropriate action. (Note: the customer service standard does not require a response to be provided for all feedback);
- Visitors who provide feedback and request a response can expect a response within five to ten business days.

The feedback process is outlined on Access Independent Living Services' website and will be explained by Access Independent Living Services' staff or management upon request via the formats listed above (e.g., e-mail, phone, in-person) and in additional formats if required (requester must specify).



Channels to relay feedback to:

- Phone: (416) 780-1650
- Fax: (416) 780-0961
- Email: [nimmyc@accessils.ca](mailto:nimmyc@accessils.ca)
- Mail

Access Independent Living Services head office is located at:  
50 Ashwarren Rd.  
Toronto, ON  
M3J 1Z5

## 4.9. Training Procedures

The training content, required by the Customer Service Standard, includes the following:

- The history of the legislation and the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and 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 or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- How to use the assistive devices available on the Access Independent Living Services' premise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities;
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing Access Independent Living Services' goods and services;
- Access Independent Living Services procedures relating to the Customer Service Standard; and
- On-going training in connection with any changes to Access Independent Living Services procedures governing the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities.

Access Independent Living Services provides training to all employees and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies and procedures on providing goods and services to customers with disabilities. Access Independent Living Services ensures that third parties and others who deal with the public on Access Independent Living Services' behalf have the required AODA training.



Current board, leadership team (managers/directors), staff and volunteers have been trained and have satisfied the training requirements listed above. All new staff, managers and volunteers will also receive training as part of their on-boarding employment process.

## **4.10. Document Requirement Procedures**

- Notices are posted, informing the public that the documents required by the Customer Service Standard are available upon request and will be provided in a format that takes a person's disability into account.
- Records that document staff training will be maintained and include the following information:
  - Names of staff trained;
  - Name of the trainer(s);
  - Date of training; and
  - Content
- Access Independent Living Services will continue to report AODA compliance progress and completion to the Ontario Government.
- Changes to the Accessible Customer Service Plan, procedures, practices or programs will be communicated on a regular basis.

## **5. Related Documents/Resources**

- [\*Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001\*](#)
- [\*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005\*](#)
- [\*Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service\*](#)
- [\*Ontario Regulation 191/11 – Integrated Accessibility Standards\*](#)
- [\*Ontario Regulation 31/05 under the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2011\*](#)
- [\*Dog Owner's Liability Act\*](#)