



**Section: Corporate Services**  
**Subject: Accessible Customer Service Policy**

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Group Health Centre is committed to preventing, identifying and removing barriers that impede the ability of people with disabilities to access care and services. This includes patients, families, staff, physicians, volunteers and members of Group Health Centre's community.

In June, 2005 the Ontario government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The purpose of this enhanced Act is to develop, implement and enforce standards of accessibility for all Ontarians. Group Health Centre's Accessible Customer Service Policy is consistent with the AODA and the organization is committed to incorporating changes and meeting all applicable deadlines outlined by the act.

### **Intent**

Group Health Centre is committed to providing quality services that are accessible to all. In doing so, we strive to provide services in a way that respects the principles of:

#### *Independence*

- Allowing people with disabilities to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others

#### *Dignity*

- Providing services in a way that allows people with disabilities to maintain self-respect and the respect of others

#### *Integration*

- Allowing people with disabilities to benefit from the same service, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as others

#### *Equality of Opportunity*

- Offering people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the Group Health Centre's services

### **Definitions**

#### Assistive Device

An 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



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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 of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

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

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 Animal

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

- i. it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- ii. if the person provides documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

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:



- i. it is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or
- ii. the person who requires the dog can provide documentation from a regulated health professional 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.

## **General Principles**

### **Commitment**

Group Health Centre will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices, and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- i. Ensuring everyone is treated fairly and consistently;
- ii. Allowing individuals with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- iii. Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to the same services and programs, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- iv. Taking into account individual needs; and
- v. Communicating in a manner that takes into account the individual's disability.

### **Assistive Devices**

Group Health Centre is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to access our services. A person with a disability may use his or her own assistive device to access Group Health Centre services, unless this device poses a risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or to others. If a person with a disability cannot use his or her own assistive device because of health and/or safety risks, Group Health Centre will take reasonable measures to assist this person to access services. Group Health Centre will ensure that its' staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by persons with disabilities while accessing services.

Employees or volunteers requiring accommodation should contact Human Resources for additional information.



## **Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs**

An individual with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to applicable premises unless otherwise excluded by law.

Group Health Centre acknowledges the vital relationship between a person with a disability and his or her service animal. Service animals are allowed to accompany people with disabilities on all parts of the Group Health Centre premises that are open to the public and other third parties, except where food is prepared and in utility rooms. The person accompanied by the service animal will keep the animal with him or her at all times, and will be responsible for the service animal's care, supervision, and control while on the Group Health Center premises.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the individual for reasons relating to his or her disability, Group Health Centre may request verification. Verification may include:

- i. documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

## **Support Persons**

If an individual with a disability is accompanied by a support person, Group Health Centre will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter applicable premises together. 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 Group Health Centre premises.

In certain cases, Group Health Centre may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health and safety reasons of:

- i. the person with a disability
- ii. others on the premises

Before making a decision, Group Health Centre will:

- i. consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs
- ii. consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence
- iii. determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises

If Group Health Centre determines that a support person is required, the admission fee or fare, if applicable, for the support person will be waived.



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In situations where confidential information might be discussed in the presence of a support person at Group Health Centre, consent will be obtained from the individual prior to any conversation (see Appendix A). In addition, the support person will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix B) to keep the confidential information disclosed by Group Health Centre in strict confidence.

In situations where current practice may create a perceived barrier, such as recruitment, training and testing, Group Health Centre will consider other methods or options, when appropriate.

### **Information and Communication**

Group Health Centre is committed to ensuring that our information, policies, programs and practices are available in formats that take into account the individual's disability. Group Health Centre will provide information in alternate forms upon request. This may include but is not limited to telephoning members to convey information normally provided in written notices, providing a large print version of documents, and one-on-one meetings to review important documents.

### **Notice of Service Disruptions**

In the case of a disruption in facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities on the premises of the organization, Group Health Centre will notify the public with a notice including details such as the reason, duration, and alternative services available. The type of notice will depend on the circumstances. The notification may be given by posting a written notice in common areas or by posting a communication on the Group Health Centre's website.

### **Feedback**

Group Health Centre welcomes and appreciates feedback regarding this Policy and its implementation as well the manner in which it provides services to persons with disabilities.

Feedback may be provided in any of the following ways:

- i. In person at Group Health Centre's premises. Feedback should be provided directly to Human Resources.
- ii. By telephone at (705) 759-1234 ext. 5513
- iii. In writing to: Group Health Centre, attention Human Resources
- iv. Electronically to [accessibility@ghc.on.ca](mailto:accessibility@ghc.on.ca)

Group Health Centre will make reasonable efforts to resolve complaints within three (3) business days of the receipt. Persons who wish to be contacted about their complaint will be contacted by a Manager or

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designate. Feedback will be used to improve the way Group Health Centre provides services to people with disabilities.

Group Health Centre will ensure our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

### **Training**

Group Health Centre will provide training on Ontario's accessibility laws and the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. Training regarding how to provide accessible customer service will be provided to:

- i. All employees and volunteers (paid and unpaid, full-time, part-time and contract positions);
- ii. Any person who participates in developing Group Health Centre policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of services to patients and clients; and
- iii. Any person who have interaction or provide services to patients or clients on behalf of Group Health Centre.

All customer service training for employees, volunteers, or others will meet the requirements of the AODA and will include the following:

- i. The purpose of the AODA and the requirements of the customer service standard;
- ii. How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- iii. How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- iv. How to use the assistive devices available on the Group Health Centre premises or otherwise, that may help with the provision of services to persons with disabilities;
- v. How to use equipment or devices made available by Group Health Centre that may help with the provision of services to a person with a disability; and
- vi. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing Group Health Centre services.

Training may be provided through workshops, online training, written guides or any other method determined by the Manager or designate. All Group Health Centre employees and volunteers will be required to read and understand all policies, practices, and procedures relating to the customer service



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standard. Records of the training provided, including a summary of the content of the training, the dates on which the training is provided and the number of employees to whom the training is provided shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.

Group Health Centre will ensure that new employees and volunteers receive training within one (1) month of the commencement of their employment.



**APPENDIX A:**

**Group Health Centre's Consent for Presence of Support Person**

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to the sharing of confidential information by  
(Client Name)

Group Health Centre related to my health and healthcare services provided in the presence of my support person.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/dd/yy)

**APPENDIX B:**

**Declaration of Confidentiality**

My support person, \_\_\_\_\_, consents to safeguarding the confidentiality of the information shared.

I undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of information shared between Group Health Centre and \_\_\_\_\_ for whom I am a support person.  
(Client Name)

I have been advised of any and all risks that may occur during my presence as support person, and as a result, I consent to my presence during the procedure and/or test performed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Support Person Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(mm/dd/yy)