

Accessibility for People with Disabilities Customer Service Policy

Policy Statement

Immigrants Working Centre (IWC) is committed to the providing materials and services in a manner that promotes full accessibility for newcomers to Canada and other service users to achieve their full potential in an environment that fosters dignity, independence and integration.

This policy applies to IWC staff, volunteers and similar parties who deal with the public.

IWC will use reasonable efforts to ensure its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the spirit and requirements of the Customer Service Standard.

Such an environment is one in which:

- Positive actions are taken to assure accessibility, and a welcoming and barrier- free setting for service delivery.
- Positive actions are taken to assure that materials and services for customers with disabilities are integrated wherever possible.
- Positive actions are taken to assure that customers with disabilities receive the same high standard of service that we strive to provide to all customers.

These positive actions include:

- Providing materials and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of customers with disabilities.

- Providing materials and services to customers with disabilities that are integrated with those provided to customers who do not have disabilities, unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable customers with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from IWC's materials or services.
- Applying an equity approach for customers with disabilities to ensure access and service experiences are equal to that of persons with disabilities.
- Encouraging customers with disabilities to communicate their needs for accommodation or assistance if it is not readily apparent how those needs can be met.
- Offer alternative communication formats to customers with disabilities that will meet the needs of the customer in a timely manner to the extent possible
- Provide documents in alternative formats that will meet the needs of the customer in a timely manner to the extent possible.
- Offer alternatives to telephone communication as required and available if this type of communication is not suitable for customer's needs.
- Make every effort to ensure that the access, use and benefit of goods or services are not compromised for customers with disabilities who require assistive devices, or who are accompanied by a service animal, or support person. It is the responsibility of the customer using the service animal to ensure that the service animal is kept in control at all times.
- Permit customers with assistive devices, where possible, to use their own assistive devices when visiting IWC's premises for the purposes of obtaining, using or benefiting from the Centre's materials or services.

Architectural barriers to access at the 8 Main Street Site:

If there is a physical, technological or other type of barrier that prevents the use of an assistive device on IWC's premises, IWC will first endeavor to remove that barrier. If IWC is not able to remove the barrier, the customer may be asked how he/she can be accommodated and what alternative methods of service would be more accessible to him/her. Best efforts will be made to provide an alternative means of accessibility to the customer.

In the case of the architectural barrier to access at the 8 Main Street Site, best efforts will be made to provide services at an alternative IWC location that is most convenient for the service user.

Temporary Disruption to Facilities or Services

In the event that a temporary service disruption occurs that would limit a customer with a disability from gaining access to IWC's facilities, materials or services, IWC will make the disruption known to customers in the following ways:

- A notice of the service disruption on premises in the area where the service disruption has occurred will be posted. Signs will specifically state the nature of the disruption, the area(s) affected by disruption, the anticipated length of the disruption, the anticipated time for the resumption of services and a description of any alternate service arrangements made during the disruption period.
- Notice of the service disruption may be by way of posted signs, recorded message, posting on the website or other reasonable means dependent on the circumstances.

Staff Training

IWC will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf. Training will also be provided to people involved in the development of policies, plans, practices and procedures related to the provision of our materials and services.

Training will include:

- An overview of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer services standard
- IWC's Accessibility for People with Disabilities Customer Service Policy
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities, including those using as assistive device or the assistance of a service animal or support system
- How to use any assistive devices located on-site, or seek alternatives whenever possible when assistive devices are not available.

Definitions

Accessible means capable of being entered or reached, approachable; easy to get at; obtainable; able to be understood or appreciated.

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

Barrier refers to anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society, including the workplace, because of his or her disability. Barriers can be physical, architectural, informational or communicative, attitudinal, technological, or in practice or policy. *Dignity* refers to respecting and treating every person including persons with a disability as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer.

Disability refers to:

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*

Service animal refers to an animal that has been trained and certified to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities and includes any animal, 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 or recognized health provider confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

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

Legislative Framework

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is a Provincial act aimed at creating a more accessible Ontario by identifying, developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities. A standard for customer service has been established under the Act to ensure that goods and services are, where at all possible, equally accessible to every Ontarian.

Approved: April 16, 2013

Reviewed: June 29, 2021