AODA –Commitment Policy

Intent

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of ensuring accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

The purpose of this policy is to fulfill requirements set out in regulation 429/07 (Accessibility Standards for Customer Service) and regulation 191/11 (Integrated Accessibility Standards) to establish a policy for Mission Services of Hamilton that governs the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities, and that demonstrates Mission Services' commitment to removing and preventing barriers so that people with disabilities can fully participate in the community.

This policy applies to all full-time, part-time, relief and contract employees, as well as volunteers and students with Mission Services of Hamilton.

Statement of Commitment

Mission Services is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. Mission Services is committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

Mission Services believes in integration, and is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities. Mission Services will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting accessibility requirements under Ontario's accessibility laws.

Guidelines

Provision of Goods and Services to People with Disabilities (Customer Service Standards)

Mission Services will make all efforts to ensure that goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The provision of goods and services to people with disabilities will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the goods and services. People with disabilities will be given an opportunity, equal to that given to others, to obtain, use, and benefit from the goods and services.

Mission Services' employees, when communicating with a person with a disability, shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. Accessible communication formats will be available upon request, and service users will be advised that accessible communication formats are available.

In the case of fundraising events and associated fees or ticket prices, the event information will be clear and easily accessible. This pertains to signage, documentation, and posters, on the organization's web-site and social media platforms, or any other form of communication.

When providing goods and services to a person with a disability, all employees will:

- Ask how they can be of help
- Offer a variety of methods of communication
- Be aware of the nature and scope of services that can be offered

Use of Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices to access goods and services. Other measures to enable service users in accessing goods and services should be developed if the assistive device presents a safety concern, or where accessibility might be an issue.

Assistive devices include (but are not limited to) communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids.

If employees have questions about specific program requirements they should speak to their manager.

Use of Service Animals

All service users with disabilities are able to be accompanied by a service animal unless prohibited by law. If prohibited by law, an employee should consider reasonable measures that could be taken to ensure the service user is still able to access goods and services.

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 their disability, for example, if the service animal is wearing a vest or harness stating so. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to a disability, the individual must be prepared to show documentation in accordance with Ontario legislation from one of the following registered health professionals:

a) Audiologist or speech-language pathologist
b) Chiropractor
c) Nurse
d) Occupational therapist
e) Optometrist
f) Physician or surgeon
g) Physiotherapist
h) Psychologist
i) Psychotherapist or mental health therapist

Given the fact that Mission Services' emergency shelters are communal living environments, and in the context of health and safety, Mission Services must adhere with the legislated requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Therefore, a person may be asked to provide proof that their service animal is a "bona fide" service animal upon accessing emergency shelters.

Mission Services will ensure that employees are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

Use of Support Persons

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Mission Services with their support person.

A support person is any person, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend, who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods and services.

Before discussing confidential information in front of the support person, employees will seek the consent of the person with the disability for the support person to have access to this confidential information. In some cases, the support person will need to remain because they assist the person with the disability with their communication. When a support person remains with the person with the disability, the support person may be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

In the case of fundraising events and associated fees or ticket prices, the support person will not be required to pay for admission.

In the event that a service user is bringing into a program with them a support person who identifies as the gender that the space is not set up to serve, the individual is still able to bring this support person with them as long as they are willing to speak to management about guidelines for the support person to follow while accessing the space.

Notwithstanding the above, in the case of Inasmuch House, if the support person is also the abuser of the service user, then that support person will not be allowed entry onto the property or premises of Mission Services.

Notice of Service Disruptions

Mission Services will attempt to prevent service disruptions by ensuring regular maintenance of publicly accessible spaces, however, it is possible that from time to time there will be disruptions to services.

In the event of a service disruption, Mission Services will notify the public of the service disruption by posting signs near the area of disruption, and posting about the disruption on the organization's website and social media sites (if applicable). Notices will include the reason for service disruption, the duration of service disruption and any alternatives available. In the event of a service disruption, alternative services will be provided wherever available, and Mission Services will fix the service disruption in a timely manner.

Employees should report any service disruptions to their managers as soon as possible.

Services Users and Donor Feedback

Comments relating to our programs and services with regard to customer service are welcomed and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way Mission Services provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, by e-mail or otherwise.

Employees will provide accessible formats or communication support for questionnaires, surveys, or comments, if requested. When communicating with an individual with a disability who is providing feedback, employees shall do so in a manner that takes into account the individual's disability.

Senior leadership at Mission Services will take primary responsibility for overseeing the accessibility of feedback from service users, employees, and members of the public.

All feedback will be reviewed by the director for the specific program.

If the feedback is a complaint or a concern, then the Service Users Concern Policy should be consulted.

Training

Mission Services will provide training for all volunteers, employees, and summer students upon hire, and in connection with any changes to our policies, practices, and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Mission Services will provide training in the following areas to all new employees, volunteers and students:

1. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA)
2. Obligations under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation
3. Instructions on how to interact and communicate with customers with various types of disabilities
4. Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who: use assistive devices; require the assistance of a service animal; or require the use of a support person
5. Instruction on how to use equipment or devices that are available at your premises or that may help service users, employees, and donors with disabilities
6. Instructions on what to do if a service user with a disability is having difficult accessing goods or services; and
7. Policies, procedures and practices surrounding the legislation

Training will be provided in a format that is accessible, upon request. This means that training delivery methods may vary among individuals.

The People, Culture and Communication department will keep a record of all individuals who have received this training, including the dates when the training was provided.

Availability of Policies and Plans

Mission Services shall, upon request, provide a copy of any policy or plan to a service user. When providing a document to a person with a disability, the document, or information contained in the document, will be provided in a format that takes into account the person's disability, and is agreed upon by that individual as being accessible.

Copies of this policy can also be viewed at www.mission-services.com