

Assisting Ontarian's with Disabilities Act (AODA) - Customer Service Policy

Intent

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standards included in the Integrated Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. It applies to the provision of services to the public or other agencies.

All services provided by Marathon Family Health Team shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Requirements under the AODA, regulation 429/07

Organizations Must:

- Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing services to people with disabilities.
- Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your services and about any other measures your organization offers (assistive devices, services, or methods) to enable them to access your services.
- Use reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
- Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
- Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf.
- Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of services.
- Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.



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- Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing services in premises open to the public or third parties.
- Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access your services are temporarily disrupted.
- Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the information about your feedback process readily available to the public.

This Policy Shall:

1. Provide a Statement from Marathon Family Health Team regarding our commitment to compliance with the AODA regulation 429/07;
2. Determine the Application of this Policy;
3. Provide Definitions for use within this Policy;
4. Identify potential Exclusions;
5. Provide Marathon Family Health Team documentation of this Policy;
6. Detail Expectations for Management Employees;
7. Determine Responsibilities for Review and Amendments;
8. Provide information regarding Client Feedback
9. Provide information regarding Service Animals, and Support Persons;
10. Identify policy and procedures regarding Notice of any Service Disruption;
11. Identify policy and procedures regarding Notice of any Unexpected Disruption in Service;
12. Determine employee Training Requirements in relation to this Policy;
13. Provide Acceptable Terms for Use When Talking About Disabilities;
14. Provide Best Practices and Procedures for Providing Accessible Client Service;
15. Provide links for more information regarding this Policy;
16. Discuss the repercussions associated with any Non-Compliance to this Policy.

1. Statement

The Marathon Family Health Team shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles;

- The services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of services to persons with disabilities, and others, 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 services.



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- Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the services.
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of services.

The Marathon Family Health Team employees and Independent Contractors when communicating with a person with a disability shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

2. Application

This policy shall apply to every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of Marathon Family Health Team, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

3. Definitions

Accessibility Coordinator - The person appointed by the Marathon Family Health Team as Accessibility Coordinator.

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 patients 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*.



Employees - Any person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Marathon Family Health Team, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

Guide Dog – Is 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 – an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:
the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

- A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
- A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
- A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario;
- A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
- A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario;
- A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
- A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
- A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario; or
- A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

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 – 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 services.

4. Exclusions

This Accessibility Client Service Standards Policy shall not apply during any period where the Marathon Family Health Team has declared a “State of Emergency” as defined under the Emergency Management Act.

5. Documentation

The Marathon Family Health Team shall, upon request, supply a copy of the policies, practices and procedures required under *the Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Client Service to any person*.

6. Management Employee Expectations

To implement this policy, management employees shall:

- Establish practices and procedures;
- Evaluate practices and procedures;
- Revise practices and procedures as required.

7. Review and Amendments

The Accessibility Coordinator shall be responsible for the review process and any subsequent amendments to this policy document. Review and amendments shall take place on an ongoing basis, and at a maximum interval of every two years.

8. Customer Feedback

Feedback from our clients provides the Marathon Family Health Team with opportunities to learn and improve. The Marathon Family Health Team recognizes the right of our clients to make a complaint, compliment or make suggestions on ways to improve our services.

To assist the Marathon Family Health Team in ensuring that the delivery of goods and service to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the client is invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, in person, e-mail, or telephone, addressed to:

Joanne Berube, Director
22 Peninsula Road, P.O. Box #399
Marathon, Ontario P0T 2E0
Phone: (807) 229-1541 Ext. 235
Fax: (807) 229-2672
E-mail: jberube@mfht.org



The Accessibility Coordinator will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of feedback and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints.

9. The Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

Service Animals:

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. "No pet" policies do not apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs. Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the persons with disabilities, and other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.

Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the patient for reasons relating to his or her disability, Marathon Family Health Team may request verification from the patient.

Care and Control of the Animal:

The patient who is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times. When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting, or other harmful behavior) an employee may ask the persons with disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods or services. In this event, other reasonable arrangements to provide goods or services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.

If a health and safety concern presents itself for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, Marathon Family Health Team will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

Support Persons

If a patient with a disability is accompanied by a support person, Marathon Family Health Team will ensure that the patient is not prevented from having access to the support person.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the patient, prior to any conversation.



10. Service Disruption - Notice

It is possible that from time to time there will be disruptions in service (e.g. an entrance way that is under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, or technology that is temporarily unavailable).

In the event that a disruption in service is planned, and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

People with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transit or arranging a ride. By providing notice, you can save that person an unnecessary trip.

Notice will be provided on the MFHT website, over the phone, or in writing.

11. Unexpected Disruption in Service - Notice

In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, notice may be provided in a variety of ways, and will be done as quickly as possible.

In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by service interruption shall be informed of any alternative methods.

12. Training Requirements

Training will be provided to:

- Every person who is an employee of, or a volunteer with, the provider
- Every person who participates in developing the provider's policies

Training Provisions

Regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- A review of the requirements of the Customer Service Standards.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - require the use of a support person.
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.





- Marathon Family Health Team's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible service to patients with disabilities.

Training Schedule:

Marathon Family Health Team will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to all new employees. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures, policies, and/or practices.

13. Acceptable Terms for Use When Talking About Disabilities

¹Words can influence and reinforce the public's perception of people with disabilities. They can create either a positive view of people with disabilities or an indifferent, negative depiction.

Here are some general tips that can help make your communication and interactions with or about people with all types of disabilities more successful.

- Use *disability* or *disabled*, not *handicap* or *handicapped*.
- Never use terms such as *retarded*, *dumb*, *psycho*, *moron* or *crippled*. These words are very demeaning and disrespectful to people with disabilities.
- Remember to put people first. It is proper to say person with a disability, rather than disabled person.
- If you don't know someone or if you are not familiar with the disability, it's better to wait until the individual describes his/her situation to you, rather than to make your own assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.

14. Best Practices and Procedures

Accessible Client Service follows four basic principles:

1. Dignity
2. Independence
3. Integration
4. Equal Opportunity

What can I do to help people with disabilities access our services?

- Ask how you can help
- Offer a variety of methods of communication
- Understand the nature and scope of the service you offer

¹ http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/how/howto_choose.htm



Providing Customer Service for Persons with Disabilities

Physical – Physical disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through muscle weakness, tremors, and paralysis. Physical disabilities can be congenital such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendonitis. A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to:

- Perform manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key or grip a door knob
- Move around independently
- Control the speed or coordination of movements
- Reach, pull or manipulate objects
- Have strength or endurance

Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

- Speak normally and directly to your customer. Don't speak to someone who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things. Ask before you help.
- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, don't touch, move or lean on them.
- Provide your client information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.)
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter
- If a counter is too high or wide, step around it to provide service or direct the client to the accessible counter labeled "Side Reception".
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.
- Be Patient. Clients will identify their needs to you.

Hearing – Hearing loss can cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words. A person who is deaf, deafened or hard-of hearing may be unable to:

- Use a public telephone
- Understand speech in noisy environments
- Pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers



Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. Remember, clients who are deaf or hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating.

- Attract the client's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand
- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout. Speak clearly
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth
- Deaf people may use a sign language interpreter to communicate- always direct your attention to the Deaf person –not the interpreter
- Any personal health matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information
- Don't touch service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

Deaf - Blindness – Deaf – Blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. The result for a person who is deaf-blind is significant difficulty accessing information and performing daily activities. Deaf-blindness interferes with communication, learning, orientation and mobility. People who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, Braille, telephone devices, communication boards and any combination thereof.

Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an Intervener who relay information and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides.

Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A client who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them
- Do not touch or address the service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times



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- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it's an emergency
- Understand that communication can take some time- be patient.
- Direct your attention to your client, not the Intervener.

Vision – Vision disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind; many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.

Vision loss may result in:

- Difficulty reading or seeing faces
- Difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar places
- Inability to differentiate colors or distances
- A narrow field of vision
- The need for bright light, or contrast
- Night blindness

Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

Vision disabilities may restrict your clients' abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability, while others may use a guide dog and/or white cane.

- Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact
- If the person uses a service animal- do not touch or approach the animal- it is working.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, location as necessary
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.
- Never touch your client without asking permission, unless it is an emergency
- Don't leave your client in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location
- Don't walk away without saying good-bye

Intellectual - Intellectual disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors such as Downs Syndrome, exposure to environmental toxins, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disorders.



A person with an intellectual disorder may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken and written information
- Conceptual information
- Perception of sensory information
- Memory

Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things that most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or use body language.

As much as possible, treat your clients with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate your treating them with respect.

Do not assume what a person can or cannot do.

- Use clear, simple language
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information
- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions
- Be patient and verify your understanding
- If you can't understand what is being said, don't pretend. Just ask again
- Provide one piece of information at a time
- Speak directly to your client, not to their companion or attendant

Speech – Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak.

Typical disabilities include problems with:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- Stuttering or slurring



Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

Some people have problems communicating. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

- Where possible, communicate in a quiet environment
- Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Ask them to repeat as necessary, or to write their message.
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'
- Verify your understanding
- Patience, respect and willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools

Learning - Learning disabilities include a range of disorders that affect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding and processing. People with a learning disability may have average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways.

Learning disabilities may result in difficulties with:

- Reading
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Way finding
- Processing information.

Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

Learning disabilities are generally invisible and ability to function varies greatly. Respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling in forms, etc. with courtesy.

Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.

Mental Health – Mental Health disabilities include a range of disorders, however there are three main types of mental health disability:

- Anxiety
- Mood
- Behavioral

People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated, act aggressively, be perceived as pushy or abrupt, be unable to make a decision, start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Best practices and procedures for Client Service:

- Treat each person as an individual. Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations
- Stay calm and courteous, even if the client exhibits unusual behavior, focus on the service they need and how you can help.

Smell – Smell disabilities can involve the inability to sense smells or a hypersensitivity to odors and smells. A person with a smelling disability may have allergies to certain odors, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.

Touch – Touch/ Tactile disabilities can affect a person’s ability to sense texture, temperature, vibration or pressure. Touch sensations may be reduced or heightened resulting in a hypersensitivity to touch, temperature, or the opposite, numbness and the inability to feel touch sensations.

Taste - Taste disabilities can limit the experience of the four primary taste sensations; sweet, bitter, salty and sour. A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify spoiled food or noxious substances.

Other - Other disabilities may result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses and diseases including ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDs, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement.

Disabilities are not always visible or easy to distinguish.

15. For More Information

To review the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Ontario Regulation 429/07 in its entirety, please visit:

[Ontario Regulation 429/07](#)



For additional information visit the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) website at:

<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/mcss>

For more information regarding preferred language when dealing with people with disabilities, please visit:

[MCSS: Talk About Disabilities - Choose the Right Word](#)

Non-Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Acknowledgement & Agreement

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read and understand the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy of the Marathon Family Health Team. I agree to adhere to this policy. I understand that if I violate the rules of this policy, I may face legal, punitive, or corrective action, up to and including termination of employment and/or criminal prosecution.

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received and passed Customer Service Training with regard to Ontario Accessibility Standards.

- MPAG Employee
- MFHT Employee

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

Issued: September 13, 2016, M. Bouchard