



Human Resources Policies & Procedures

HR Policy 4.05: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

Approval Date: June 2019
Next Review Date: June 2024

Policy Statement:

Links2Care will ensure that its services are accessible to people with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities are treated with respect, dignity and equality.

Links2Care will also ensure that its employees are knowledgeable and properly trained in providing accessible customer service to stakeholders.

A. Policy

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation was created to ensure that goods and services provided in Ontario are accessible to people with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities are treated with respect, dignity and equality.

To achieve this mandate Links2Care will make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties adhere to the following guiding principles as set out in **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: Ontario Regulation 429/07**:

- The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must 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 or services.
- Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

B. Purpose

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 has as its stated purpose: *To achieve accessibilities for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.*

Links2Care must meet the requirements of accessibility standards established by the Regulation. This policy establishes the accessibility standards for customer service for the organization, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07. The standards outlined in this policy were fully implemented January 1, 2012.

C. Scope

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service apply to every designated public sector organization and to every other person or organization that provides goods or services to members of the public or other third parties and that has at least one employee in Ontario.

This policy applies to Links2Care employees who deal with the public or other third parties as well as persons involved in developing Links2Care policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, whether they do so as employees, volunteers, agents or otherwise.

D. Procedure

1. Communications

Links2Care supports an accessible Ontario where the independence and integration of those with disabilities is promoted. When communicating with a person with a disability, individuals working on behalf of Links2Care shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability and will make reasonable efforts to have the person with a disability understand both the content and intent of its communications.

2. Use of Assistive Devices

Links2Care is committed to servicing people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. Links2Care will ensure that employees are trained on or about any assistive devices made available by Links2Care and realize that persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices to access goods and services.

3. Use of Service Animals

Links2Care is committed to welcoming people with disabilities and their service animals on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties and will permit the person to keep the service animal with them. Anyone with a service animal must keep the animal with him/her at all times unless it is unlawful to do so at which time the animal would be kept in a safe place for the short-term duration. Links2Care will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies have been trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

If the service animal is excluded by law from Links2Care premises, Links2Care shall ensure that measures are available to permit persons with disabilities to access Links2Care goods and services through other means.

4. Use of Support Persons

Links2Care is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Links2Care's premises with their support person on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on Links2Care premises.

In the event that a fee is charged in relation to a support person's presence on Links2Care premises, advanced notice of the fee will be provided (e.g. if an admission fee to a special event is required).

On occasion, persons with disabilities require the assistance of a support person to protect their health and safety as well as the health and safety of others. If necessary, Links2Care may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on Links2Care premises for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of the person with the disability or others on the premises.

5. Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

In order to obtain, use or benefit from Links2Care's services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services of Links2Care. If there is a temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, Links2Care shall give notice of the disruption to the public where possible.

The notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available. Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by Links2Care, by posting on Links2Care's website, or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

6. Training

Links2Care will ensure appropriate levels of training to all employees, volunteers, students, agents and others who deal with the public on behalf of Links2Care as well as those who are involved in the development and approvals of policies, practices and procedures dealing with the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties.

This training will be provided to all staff as soon as practicable in keeping with the requirements of the Regulation. Records of training will be kept that include the dates on which training occurred and the number and names of persons trained. Training will include the following topics:

- The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005;
- The requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service;
- 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 at Links2Care offices and otherwise made available by Links2Care for persons with disabilities;
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing Links2Care's goods and services;
- Links2Care's policies, practices and procedures relating to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties.

Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to policies, practices and procedures dealing with the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties.

7. Feedback Process

The ultimate goal of Links2Care is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on Links2Care services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way Links2Care provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by delivering an electronic text by email or other reasonable methods.

Notice and Format of the Availability of the Accessible Customer Service Documents

Links2Care shall prepare information describing its policies, practices and procedures and, upon request, shall give a copy of its policies, practices and procedures to any person. Further, Links2Care shall notify persons to whom it provides services that the information required under the Regulation is available upon request.

Links2Care shall provide information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

8. Modifications to this or other policies

Links2Care is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. Any Links2Care policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

E. Glossary of Terms

The following definitions are set out in the AODA legislation or regulation unless otherwise noted.

Barrier: anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. May be physical, architectural, information or communications, attitudinal, technological, or a policy or a practice; ("obstacle").

Disability:

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 a 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*; ("handicap").

Guide dog: a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations; *Blind Persons' Rights Act 1990 s1 (1)*.

Service animal: an animal acting as 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; 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.

Support person: another person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Agent: any person or organization that provides goods or services on behalf of Links2Care. This includes, but may not be not limited to service providers.

Third Party: a generic legal term for any individual who does not have a direct connection with a legal transaction with Links2Care but who might be affected by it, for example, a participant in a meeting that is held at Links2Care, or a person who visits a Links2Care office who is a

representative of an Agent of Links2Care, but is not a direct employee of Links2Care or the Agent. It can also mean other customers, such as other businesses Links2Care provides services to.

Cross Policy References:

HR Policy 2.01: Recruitment and Selection

HR Policy 6.02: Technology Use and Social Media