



ST. JOSEPH'S CARE GROUP

# Accessibility – Customer Service

**POLICY**

**Number: AD 1-161**

**Manual:** Global Administrative Manual

**Approval Date:**

September 12, 2019

**Section in Manual:** General

**Approved by:**

Human Resources Services Committee

**Cross References:** AD 1-160

## Preamble

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) provides a way for Ontario to become barrier-free. The purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by:

- developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities, on or before January 1, 2025.
- providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, government and representatives of different sectors in the development of the standards.

Standards have been developed in the following areas:

- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service – Regulation 429/07.
- Integrated Accessibility Standards – Regulation 191/11.

Ontario's first accessibility standard, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07), came into effect on January 1, 2008. As an organization defined under the Act as part of the broader public sector, St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) became compliant with the customer service standard requirements as of January 1, 2010. SJCG is committed to improving accessibility to all people with disabilities by complying with both the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA.

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## **Policy Statement**

SJCG is committed to promoting and providing an environment that fosters respect, independence, dignity, integration, and equal opportunity for all people, including people with disabilities. This policy establishes the accessibility standards for customer service for SJCG in accordance with the AODA, 2005 Customer Service Standard Ontario Regulation 429/07.

SJCG shall provide training to staff, volunteers and students providing goods and services to persons with disabilities as prescribed by the AODA, 2005.

SJCG staff, volunteers and others providing goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities must abide by the requirements of accessibility standards established by the AODA, 2005.

## **Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities who require assistive devices are allowed to use such devices on the premises when accessing goods, services or facilities. In cases where the assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern (i.e. infection control risk, risk of harm to the device and/or individuals) or may not be permitted for other reasons, staff will arrange for alternate support to ensure the person with a disability can access our goods, services or facilities.

SJCG will ensure that staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices available that we provide that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods, services or facilities.

## **Communication**

SJCG will communicate with persons with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their disability. Recognizing the range of disabilities and the impact on effective communication which includes providing, sending, receiving and understanding information, SJCG employees, volunteers and others dealing with members of the public

on behalf of SJCG will ask individuals directly, where possible, how best to communicate with them.

## Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Individuals with disabilities, accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, are permitted to enter the premises and keep the animal with them, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from certain areas of the premises.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, SJCG staff may ask a person to provide documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability. A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

If service animals are prohibited by another law for any reason, SJCG will explain why the animal is excluded and discuss with the customer another way of providing goods, services or facilities. See policy AD 6-10, Animals in St. Joseph's Care Group for more detailed information.

## Support Persons

Individuals with disabilities, accompanied by a support person, are permitted to enter the premises together and to have access to each other while on the premises. In situations where a fee is charged for services we provide, SJCG provides advance notice of the amount payable, if any, in respect to the support person.

In certain cases, SJCG may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for the health or safety reasons of:

- the person with a disability
- others on the premises

Before making a decision, SJCG will:

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

If SJCG determines that a support person is required, any admission fees will be waived for the support person.

## Notice of Temporary Disruption

SJCG provides the public with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services, where it is known that the disruption limits an individual with a disability from accessing the facility or services. SJCG posts the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration of the disruption, and alternative facilities or services that may be available. The posting is in a conspicuous place on the premises or by other reasonable methods in the circumstances. When the disruption is anticipated, SJCG provides a reasonable amount of advance notice and when the disruption is unexpected, notice is provided as soon as possible.

## Training

SJCG will provide accessible customer service training to:

- all employees, volunteers and students
- anyone involved in developing our policies
- anyone who provides goods, services or facilities to customers on our behalf

Staff will be trained on accessible customer service within six months of beginning their duties.

Training will include:

- purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- SJCG's policies related to the customer service standard
- 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 equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing SJCG's goods, services or facilities

Notification of changes to policies, practices and procedures and any associated training requirements are distributed via GroupWise or Intranet communications as applicable.

## Feedback

SJCG welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify to identify barriers, improve access, and better respond to concerns. Feedback or requests for accessible formats and/or communication supports may be submitted by email; at [accessible.sjcg@tbh.net](mailto:accessible.sjcg@tbh.net) , by telephone at 807.768.4455,

or by mail at SJCG Communications, 580 Algoma Street North, Thunder Bay ON P7B 5G4.

Feedback is directed to the Chair of the Accessibility Steering Committee and/or designate who will coordinate with necessary resources as required, addressing the concerns of the person providing the feedback. Customers can expect to hear back in 2 business days.

SJCG will ensure the feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

## Notice of Availability of Documents

SJCG is pleased to make its documents available in alternate formats to meet accessibility needs. Requests can be made by email; at [accessible.sjcg@tbh.net](mailto:accessible.sjcg@tbh.net), by telephone at 807.768.4455, or by mail at SJCG Communications, 580 Algoma Street North, Thunder Bay ON P7B 5G4.

SJCG will provide this document in an accessible format or with communication support, on request. We will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. We will provide the accessible format in a timely manner, and at no additional cost.

## Definitions

### Dignity

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Dignity provides service in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.

### Independence

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Independence a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

## **Integration**

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Integration provide service in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless a different way is necessary to enable them to access goods, services or facilities.

## **Equal Opportunity**

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Equal opportunity provide service to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an equal opportunity to access your goods, services or facilities as what is given to others.

## **Disability**

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A disability is defined as:

- 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.

## **Barrier**

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A barrier is defined as anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical

barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

## References

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Regulation 429/07

SJCG Accessibility Guide – A helpful guide to assisting people with disabilities