



Because children depend on all of us

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005 (AODA)

Standard for Customer Service Policy

PURPOSE

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is Provincial legislation that allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them. The goal is to create standards to improve accessibility across the province. The AODA is the foundation on which standards will be built to improve accessibility across the province.

The first standard developed under AODA is the Customer Service standard and is contained in the Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled "Accessibility Standard for Customer Service". It applies to all organizations, both public and private, that provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other organizations in Ontario (third parties) and that have one or more employees. The Regulation applies to designated public sector organizations on and after January 1, 2010 and to other providers of goods and services, such as Children's Aid Societies, on and after January 1, 2012.

The Customer Service standard details specific requirements for all service providers regarding the provision of goods and services for persons with disabilities.

APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers including Board Members, foster and care providers as well as community care givers, students, and every other person or organization that interacts with the public on behalf of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAS of Toronto).

POLICY

The CAS of Toronto is committed to providing persons with disabilities with equal opportunities and standards of goods and services in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. These goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

PRINCIPLES

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that:

1. Persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the services at the CAS of Toronto.
2. Services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
3. Services allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other persons.
4. Communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes the person's disability into account.
5. Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access CAS of Toronto services unless superseded by other legislation.

DEFINITIONS

Disability

The definition of "disability" under the AODA is as follows:

- (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, muteness or speech impediment, hearing impairment 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.

The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go.

Examples:

- A person has a disability that over time may increase with severity.
- A person has a disability that is not visible.
- A person has a disability that causes him/her to experience periods when the condition does not have an effect on his/her daily routine and other periods when it does.

Without limiting the requirements or expectation for accessibility, specific consideration shall be given to the following:

Barrier

Barrier, as defined by the AODA, means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his/her disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, attitudinal barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.

Assistive Devices

Assistive devices are technical aids, communication devices, or medical aids modified or customized, that are used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of persons with disabilities in seeing, hearing, speaking, mobility, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, working or self care.

Examples of assistive devices include wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, amplification devices that boost sound for listeners, hearing aids, oxygen tanks, electronic notebooks, laptop computers, speech generative devices, etc.

Service Animals

As defined by the AODA, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability;

- a. "If it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his/her disability; or
- b. If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability."

Service animals include, but are not limited to "guide dogs". A guide dog as defined in the Blind Person's Rights Act means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations under the Blind Person's Rights Act.

Support Person

A support person is an individual chosen or hired to accompany a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. Examples of a support person may include attendants, note takers, interveners, translators, etc.

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES:

The CAS of Toronto provides goods and services in the following ways to persons with disabilities:

Assistive Devices

The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from CAS of Toronto services is recognized unless otherwise prohibited due to health and safety or privacy issues.

When applicable, assistive devices owned and operated by the CAS of Toronto will be made available for use by persons with disabilities.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his/her assistive device is operated in a

safe and controlled manner at all times.

2. Service Animals

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal onto the parts of our premises that are open to the public unless excluded by law.

A service animal will not be permitted:

- Where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. An exception is for service dogs to allow them where food is normally served, sold or offered for sale.
- As otherwise disallowed by law; i.e., laws restricting certain animal breeds.

If the service animal is excluded by law, the CAS of Toronto will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from CAS of Toronto services.

Persons with disabilities are responsible for ensuring for the care and supervision of their service animal. If a service animal is unruly or disruptive an employee may ask the person with a disability to remove the service animal from the area. Other reasonable arrangements to provide services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with a disability.

Should an employee experience an allergy, fear or trepidation of the service animal other reasonable arrangements to provide service shall be explored with the employee.

3. Support Persons

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person. The absence of a support person cannot unreasonably delay the provision of child protective services.

Where a support person is accompanying a person with a disability, for the purposes of assisting in a discussion that may involve confidential information, the Society's usual procedures for signing consents regarding disclosure of information and confidentiality will apply.

Admission Fees will not be charged for support persons for admission in any capacity, unless those persons are procuring services for which a fee is normally charged. Authorization for expenditure for any costs associated with a support person required by the Society must be secured in advance. In the case where a fee will be charged for admission of a support person the fee will be communicated in advance and posted in a conspicuous place such as through the Society's website (<http://www.torontocas.ca>), newsletters, notices, brochures, or other public methods.

Temporary Disruptions to Service

The CAS of Toronto will provide notice in the event of an expected or unexpected disruption in the facilities, or goods or services usually used by people with disabilities.

Employees are to notify their supervisor/manager of any expected or unexpected circumstances that may impact service delivery.

A notice regarding a temporary disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. This notice will be provided in accessible formats where appropriate and feasible. The notice will be posted in on the agency's website (<http://www.torontocas.ca>), and in conspicuous locations on our premises.

This policy may not apply during any period of "Declared Emergency" as defined under the Emergency

Management and Civil Protection Act. In the event that the City of Toronto declares an emergency, any reduction or suspension of services would be dictated by the nature and scale of the emergency and the resources allocated.

TRAINING

The CAS of Toronto ensures training is provided to all employees, volunteers, foster parents and others who deal with the public on behalf of the Society, and all those who are involved in the development of service policies, practices and procedures.

The training includes:

- The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 and the requirements under 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 assistive devices, if any, available on the Society's premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of services to persons with disabilities.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Society's services.

The Child Welfare Institute maintains training records including dates when training is provided, the name and number of employees who received training. Training will be monitored to ensure when changes are made, employees and others who interact with persons with disabilities are updated and trained if appropriate. Training is provided to each person as soon as practicable after he/she is assigned applicable duties.

COMMUNICATION

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto communicates with persons with disabilities in a respectful manner that takes into account the person's disability. The Society provides accessible telephone service to persons with a disability to ensure that every person who communicates with the Society is able to do so in a way that is meaningful and purposeful to the individual. The Society offers Talk to You (TTY) services if telephone communication is not suitable to a person with a disability related to communication needs.

FEEDBACK

The Society maintains a feedback process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which the Society provides goods or services to people with disabilities. Feedback may be provided in the manner deemed most convenient to them such as in person, by telephone, in writing or by delivering an electronic text by E-mail or on diskette or otherwise.

Feedback may be submitted to the Manager, Staffing and Recruitment, Human Resources or designate at 416-924-4640 Extension 2300, sending an E-mail to HR@TorontoCAS.ca or by making an appointment with the Manager to provide feedback in person.

For individuals who have left contact information and if contact has been requested, the Manager, Staffing and Recruitment, Human Resources or designate will respond to the request within 10 business days. The Manager, Staffing and Recruitment, Human Resources or designate will document and track all feedback/comments.

The Manager, Staffing and Recruitment ,Human Resources or designate will also answer questions about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by the Society taking into account the Society's policies and procedures regarding confidentiality.

All feedback will be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if necessary for possible action that can be taken to improve Society services. The response to feedback will be in a format that is accessible to the person with a disability.

A document describing the feedback process will be available, upon request to any person. A feedback questionnaire will be made available by a variety of means.

Information regarding the Society's feedback process may be found on the Society's website (<http://www.torontocas.ca>).

COPIES OF THIS POLICY

This policy and any other document related to the delivery of services shall be made available, upon request, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy will be made available on the Society's website.

Effective date: January 1, 2012