



POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL		Subject: INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS POLICY		
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Date Approved: JANUARY 1, 2013	Effective Date: JANUARY 1, 2013	Date Reviewed: JUNE 2018	Date Revised:	Next Review Date: JUNE 2019

POLICY

This policy is intended to reinforce CHOICES’ commitment to providing accessible services as per the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and any and all changes and updates.

RATIONALE

This policy relates to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11). [REVOKED: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Reg. 429/07) and Exemption from Reporting Requirements (O. Reg. 430/07)].

This policy applies to all Board Trustees, other volunteers and all employees.

CHOICES is committed to providing accessible service for its constituents. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that is based upon the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity to all constituents. The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible. Persons with disabilities will benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other constituents.

DEFINITIONS

Disability:

- a) any degree or combination 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 impairment, deafness or hearing loss, loss of speech or impediment, or physical reliance on a service 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

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- d) a mental disorder
- 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*.

Accessible: capable of being entered or reached, approachable; easy to get at; capable of being influenced, obtainable; able to be understood or appreciated.

Assistive Device: a device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the Customer Service Standard.

Dignity: respecting and treating every person, including persons with a disability, as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other constituent.

Goods and Services: goods and services provided by CHOICES to the public or other organizations in Ontario.

Independence: freedom from control or influence of others, freedom to make your own choices.

Service Animals: animals that are used by a person with a disability. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who are blind, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety.

Support Person: an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Principles:

CHOICES is committed to excellence in serving all constituents including persons with disabilities and will carry out its functions and responsibilities to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- a) Goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b) The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities is integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from CHOICES’ goods or services.
- c) Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain use or benefit from goods and services.
- d) To ensure the best possible constituent service, CHOICES encourages open two-way

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communication and expects persons with disabilities to communicate their need for accommodation or assistance.

PROCEDURES

1. Communication:

CHOICES is committed to communicating with persons with disabilities in ways that take into consideration their disability.

- a) CHOICES staff and volunteers will be trained in how to interact and communicate with constituents with disabilities guided by the principles of dignity, independence and equality.
- b) Constituents with disabilities will be offered alternative communication formats that will meet their needs as promptly as feasible.
- c) Documents will be provided to constituents in an alternative format such as large print or a text only electronic file that can be read by a computer.
- d) If telephone communication is not suitable for a constituent's needs, alternative forms of communication will be offered.
- e) In the event that a planned temporary service disruption occurs that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to CHOICES goods or services, CHOICES will make the disruption known to constituents via messages posted on the CHOICES web-site and/or notices posted in the building/office regarding disruption of access to meeting rooms or other facilities.

Notices will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, alternate means of accessing services if applicable, and a description of the alternative services.

If an unexpected disruption occurs, CHOICES will make every effort to accommodate persons with disabilities by providing goods and services by alternative means, e.g. using an alternative time and place for providing goods and services or other assistive measures.

2. Use of Assistive Devices, Service Animals and Support Persons

CHOICES will ensure that the access, use and benefit of goods or services are not compromised for persons with disabilities who require assistive devices, or who are accompanied by a service animal or support person.

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Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities shall be permitted to obtain, use or benefit from goods or services through the use of their own assistive devices. Exceptions may occur in situations where CHOICES has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises. In these situations, if a person with a disability is hindered from accessing goods or services, CHOICES will accommodate the constituent by providing an alternative where possible.

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Service Animals

Service animals, such as, but not limited to Canine Vision Dog Guides, Hearing Ear Dog Guides, Seizure Response Dog Guides, and other certified service animals shall be permitted entry to all CHOICES facilities that are open to the public. Service animals are not permitted where food preparation is being undertaken or, as otherwise disallowed by law. In the rare case where a service animal is to be denied access to a facility or meeting room, other accommodations may be afforded, such as teleconference, delivery of goods or service at an alternate time or location or other assistive measures available to deliver a good or service to ensure equality of outcome.

Support Persons

CHOICES welcomes constituents with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on CHOICES premises.

CHOICES holds meetings, events, and workshops sponsored by CHOICES or by third parties. For such events, support persons shall be permitted entry to all CHOICES facilities and meeting rooms that are open to the public, except when there are fees applied against participants by a third party and the support person was not pre-registered and/or no vacancy exists.

If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to a third party, the support person is permitted to attend the event at their own cost. Cost for services (e.g. food, lodging etc.) will be the responsibility of the support person.

If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to CHOICES, the support person is permitted to attend at no cost for admission. Cost for other services (e.g. food, lodging etc.) will be the responsibility of the support person.

3. Training

CHOICES will provide AODA customer service training to all employees and to volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of constituent service policies, practices and procedures.

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This training will be provided as part of new employee and volunteer orientation and on an ongoing basis to ensure that staff stay current with any policy or procedural changes as it relates to the AODA Customer Service Standard.

NOTE: As of July 1, 2016, the requirement is that **all members of an organization** must be trained on accessible customer service and how to interact with people with different disabilities.

4. **Feedback**

CHOICES seeks to meet the needs of our constituents while paying attention to the unique requirements of our constituents with disabilities. Comments regarding how well those requirements are being met are welcomed.

Feedback regarding the way CHOICES provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made through our web site feedback page through email, in person or by other means as required. Feedback sent through the web site will be directed to the Executive Director or Director, Support Services.

Feedback in person, by telephone or through email should be directed to:

Chief Executive Officer OR Director, Service Delivery
CHOICES
59 Kirby Avenue
Dundas, ON L9H 6P3
Email: choices@choicesgroup.org
Phone: 905-628-6147

Feedback will be used to improve service. In addition, the author of the feedback will be provided with a response in the format in which the feedback was received. The feedback may outline actions deemed appropriate, if any.

5. **Format and Communication of CHOICES Policies**

CHOICES develops and updates policies, procedures and practices in such a manner as to respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, as well as integration and equality of opportunity. Upon request and within a reasonable amount of time, CHOICES will provide policy and procedure documents it produces in an alternative print format or a text only electronic file that can be read by a computer.

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QUALITY MEASURES

AODA 2005

FOCUS Accreditation Standards: Domain #4 – Accessibility, Domain #11.20

Reg. 299-10; 3(1), 24(3(i))

ASSOCIATED FORMS

External Concerns or Complaints Form

Three Step Complaints Guide

Plain Language Three Steps Complaint Guide

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

QUA-ADM-104 – Public Concerns & Complaints

QUA-ADM-105 – The Three Step Complaints Process

QUA-ADM- 403 – The Three Step Complaints Process Plain Language

QUA-ADM-106 – Legislative Compliance

REFERENCES

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

AODA online: <http://aodaonline.com/?gclid=ClA80rPa884CFQGQaQodwPQFvA>