



# YMCA

## Accessibility and Customer Service Policy



Stratford-Perth YMCA

Revised Date  
November 2014

*Building healthy communities*



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## 1 INTRODUCTION / OBJECTIVE

The Stratford-Perth YMCA is committed to Diversity and Social Inclusion and to meeting its obligation under Ontario's *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA), by providing accessible environments that respect the rights of every individual.

The purpose of the Accessible Customer Service Policy is to foster inclusive YMCA environments, and to ensure that any accessibility-related complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively through consistently applied procedures.

## 2 POLICY STATEMENT

The YMCA recognizes the dignity and worth of every individual and seeks to create socially inclusive environments in which everyone, including persons with disabilities, is able to participate fully. Building on a culture that embraces diversity and supports social inclusion, the YMCA is a shared experience for everyone to enjoy.

## 3 RELATED POLICIES / REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- Human Rights Policy – our obligation under Ontario's Human Rights Code

## 4 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in this policy:

**Accommodation** is a way, through reasonable efforts or measures, of preventing or minimizing barriers that impede a person with a disability from fully participating in the services offered.

**Example:**

Accommodation means permitting a member or program participant to use their personal assistive device, or to be accompanied by their support person, or their guide dog or service animal unless the animal is excluded by another law, in order to increase accessibility to YMCA programs.

**Assistive device** is any device that helps a person with a disability do everyday tasks and activities. Assistive devices include digital audio players, hearing aid, teletypewriter (TTY) for people unable to speak or hear by phone, mobility devices (such as scooters, walkers or crutches, or white canes, oxygen tanks), and speech generating devices. Note: Bell has a Relay Service from any phone for free (1-800-855-0511).



**Barrier** is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. This may include architectural or physical barriers, an information or communications barrier making it difficult for people to receive or send information, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, or a practice.

**Customer** is any person who uses the services of the YMCA.

**Disability** means:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness,
- 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.

**Service animal** is any animal being used by a person for reasons relating to his or her disability, and it is readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a physician or nurse.

**Support person** is another person who accompanies a person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or with access to programs and services offered by the YMCA.

## 5 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

### Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)

The AODA details specific requirements and standards for accessibility in Ontario. Standards include *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* which requires the YMCA to make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices, and procedures relating to the delivery of services are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

## 6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All managers and supervisors shall:

- Monitor and support staff in implementing the Accessible Customer Service Policy in their program or process area(s);



- Ensure that their program area(s) facilitate the use by persons with disabilities of their personal assistive devices, service animals, allow access for their support person, as outlined below, when accessing the program and moving through the building;
- Arrange training in accessibility standards for front-line staff and program volunteers interfacing with members or customers. Contact the the Vice President Human Resources for more information on training resources available;
- Ensure notice of temporary disruption is provided as outlined below;
- Respond to feedback including any accessibility-related issues or concerns as outlined below.

All staff, including program volunteers, shall:

- Participate in required training related to Accessibility Standards for Customer Service;
- Support the implementation of Accessibility Standards by providing service in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, including permitting the use of assistive devices, service animals and support persons as outlined below. Suggested practices and tips for providing customer service for persons with disabilities are available by contacting a supervisor;
- Forward any feedback from members or customers regarding accessibility to their immediate supervisor or manager for handling.

The Vice President Human Resources shall ensure that processes are put in place to:

- Identify training needs Association-wide;
- Ensure that mechanisms are put in place to support supervisors implementing Accessibility Standards for Customer Service or responding to accessibility-related concerns;
- Ensure that AODA reporting requirements on implementation of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service are completed and forwarded to the Ontario government;
- Ensure that YMCA's policies, practices, and procedures related to the AODA are available to any person upon request;
- Ensure that communications with persons with disabilities are done in a manner that takes into account their individual circumstances.

## **7 PROCEDURES FOR USE OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES, SERVICE ANIMALS, SUPPORT PERSONS**

### **7.1 Use of Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices while accessing or using YMCA programs or services in any premise owned, leased or operated by the YMCA. Possible barriers to the use of assistive devices will be removed where they can be.



## 7.2 Use of Service Animals

Service animals are permitted to accompany any person with a disability while accessing or using YMCA programs or services in any premise owned, leased or operated by the YMCA, except where animals are excluded by law.

Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, or may affect the health and safety of other customers, other measures will be explored in order to provide service to the person with a disability.

Where it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, the YMCA may request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability.

## 7.3 Use of Support Persons

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by their support person will be permitted to access and use a YMCA program or service with his or her support person.

In most cases, program fees shall be waived for the support person, provided that the support person remains beside the person with a disability when accessing and using a program or service, and while moving through the building or on YMCA property. However, where a YMCA program or registration fee is charged and a portion of revenues are payable to a third party, or where a fee includes or covers such costs as food or accommodation, the support person may be required to cover these costs. If any amount is payable by the support person, the YMCA shall ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, that is payable in respect of the support person.

The YMCA may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

## 8 NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTIONS

The YMCA is committed to informing stakeholders of any temporary disruption of service at any of its program sites. A temporary disruption means a short-term planned or unplanned disruption to facilities or services. Potential temporary disruptions may include evacuations or relocation due to fire, flood, or mechanical failures, power outage, elevator out of service, or programs moved or cancelled.

Onsite managers shall notify the public, including people with disabilities, of any temporary disruptions. Notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, how long it will likely last, and information about other facilities or services (if any) that are available. Notice



may be given by posting the information on the premises, on the YMCA website, voicemail messaging or by any other reasonable method.

## 9 FEEDBACK PROCESS

Feedback mechanisms provide the YMCA with opportunities to learn and improve.

A YMCA member including a participant, member, parent, donor, contractor or other member of the public is encouraged to bring forward a complaint or concern, or a compliment, or to make suggestions on ways to improve programs and services and their YMCA experience, by contacting their local YMCA General Manager, or Director directly.

## 10 RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The YMCA's policies, practices and procedures related to the AODA are available to the public upon request. Where a request is made for a document by a person with a disability, the YMCA shall provide the information contained in the document in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

In addition, the following are sources for information about Accessibility Standards in Ontario:

- To view the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, visit [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)
- To review requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act or for additional resources about accessibility, visit [www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass](http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass)
- More information about the customer service standard for accessibility is also available at [www.AccessON.ca/compliance](http://www.AccessON.ca/compliance)