

Policy: 3-01	Title: Accessibility/Customer Service Statement
Section: Health and Safety/Accessibility	Date: March 2017

The government of Ontario created the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) with the goal of developing standards that would improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the province.

Ontario Regulation 429/07 – *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service* first came into force on January 1, 2008. The regulation requires all businesses including not for profit agencies to be in compliance.

Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region (WCSWR) offers its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. WCSWR will give people with disabilities opportunity to use our services and allow them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients as outlined below:

- Communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.
- Train employees how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities and become familiar with assistive devices.
- Employees and volunteers are required to complete annual AODA training.
- As required by Ontario Regulation 429/07, WCSWR will keep records of the training provided.
- Provide fully accessible telephone service to our clients and train employees to communicate with clients over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.
- Offer to communicate with clients by e-mail and TTY, if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.
- The need for accessible devices will be reviewed on an individual basis in order to meet specific needs.

Employees will be trained to use the following assistive devices available on our premises for clients:

- Accessible doors
- Telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD)

Should additional assistive devices be required, employees will be trained on the use of these devices.

WCSWR will provide AODA policies upon request in a format that takes into account the person’s disability in a timely manner.

WCSWR’s website provides notice that the accessibility documents are available as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Use of Service Animals

- WCSWR welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.
- All employees and volunteers will be trained in how to interact with people accompanied by a service animal.
- WCSWR reserves the right to request an official letter or certificate from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.
- A person who is using a service animal must have the animal in his/her presence at all times or make sure the animal is properly secured (such as in a cage). No animal may freely roam the agency's premises.
- A person who is using a service animal is responsible for the animal's well-being and care, including but not limited to, the animal's hygiene and necessities such as food and water.
- Should an employee or another client have an allergy to a service animal, the agency will provide accommodation.
- The service animal is not to be treated as a pet, i.e. petted, unless approved by the owner or handler.
- All applicable public safety laws, including exclusionary guidelines apply.

Use of Therapy Animals

- WCSWR reserves the right to request verification that the person requires the animal for therapeutic reasons from a regulated health professional.
- The above guidelines for Service Animals apply to Therapy Animals.

Support Person

- WCSWR welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person.
- Fees will not be charged for support persons providing services to our clients on our premises.
- Support persons will be asked to sign a statement of confidentiality which will become part of the client's file.
- Support persons are not eligible for WCSWR's services while providing support. Exceptions may occur if the support person is a client of the Outreach program. If such a situation occurs, the Outreach Manager and Residential Manager will decide if the support person may continue to help another client.
- If WCSWR becomes aware that the support person is an abuser of a current client, WCSWR will not allow them access to our premises. Employees must verify by checking the client data base.
- Support persons do not have independent access within the shelter; they must accompany the client.
- A person with disabilities who requires a support person has the right to decide how much, if any, personal information is shared with the support person.
- WCSWR will assess the feasibility of assisting the client in the absence of the support person.
- At any time, a person with disabilities may refrain from using the support worker.

Temporary Disruption

- WCSWR will provide notice of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. The notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Feedback Process

Feedback regarding the way WCSWR provides services to people with disabilities can be made by telephone, in writing, in person or through electronic means. All feedback will be directed to the Human Resources Specialist who will respond within 5 business days.

Modifications to This or Other Policies

Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities.

Any violation of this policy will be handled through standard disciplinary procedures.