

Accessibility Standards Policy

SECTION 3 – GUIDING OUR WORK

THIS POLICY/DOCUMENT APPLIES TO: All YWCA Hamilton Employees

1. Policy Statement

In fulfilling our mission, YWCA Hamilton is committed to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities by always striving to improve accessibility. We believe in giving people with disabilities equal opportunities with the same quality programming and access to our goods and services by allowing all people to benefit in a similar way. The purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* is to reduce barriers and create more accessible and inclusive environments for people with disabilities. YWCA Hamilton is committed to deliver our programs and services with respect and in an accessible and inclusive manner. We will ensure compliance with the accessibility legislation by making all reasonable efforts to identify, remove and prevent barriers that might interfere with a person's ability to access our facilities and utilize our programs and services. The following standards have been made under the AODA:

- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)
- Integrated Accessibility Standards (Ontario Regulation 191-11)

2. Employee Training

YWCA Hamilton will provide timely training to all employees, students and volunteers including the board of directors on accessible customer service. This training will include information on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities. For example, we will train staff to communicate with clients over the telephone in a clear and concise way using meaningful language understood by the person with a disability. YWCA Hamilton will also provide training on the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities. This training will be provided as a part of each employee, student or volunteer's orientation.

3. Information and Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. YWCA Hamilton, upon request will provide information and communication in more accessible formats. For example, making documents available with larger print for people with vision impairments. We will assist all people with disabilities to help them communicate in ways that meet their needs. As practical, by January 1st, 2021 we will ensure our internet website and web content is in an accessible format in conformity to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level A.





Upon request, we can also provide accessible invoices to all of our clients and members. Invoices can be provided in the following formats: e-mail, large print. We will answer any questions clients and members may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone or email.

YWCA Hamilton provides a range of services, which includes group and individual sessions and education and information sessions. Every effort will be made to provide these services in forums and formats that meet the needs of people with disabilities.

4. Feedback Process

YWCA Hamilton makes it a priority to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving clients and members with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated. Feedback about the delivery of our services to persons with disabilities assists us to continuously improve the services we provide. If customers with disabilities prefer to give their feedback using an alternate methods they may request it. Customers with disabilities can provide feedback and complaints in a variety of ways, including the following:

- in person
- by telephone
- in writing
- by email
- through our complaints process
- via our website

5. Assistive Devices

We are committed to serving people with disabilities, who use assistive devices that enables them to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. Customers with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices and where appropriate, our staff will be trained on how to respectfully assist people and how to use the various assistive devices that people may require while accessing our services.

6. Service Animals

We welcome people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties, unless the animal is excluded by law, such as in food preparation areas. A service animal is defined as a therapeutic animal used to help people with disabilities to be more independent. YWCA Hamilton will identify any public areas where a service animal for health protection are denied and in these circumstances the organization will make appropriate arrangements such as alternative meeting areas or provide assistance to the person. All staff, students and volunteers are properly trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.



Under the law service animals are not a pet, the animal is a working animal and must be treated in a way that respects its role and must not be excluded under no-pet policies. The customer service standard offers many ways to authenticate a service animal. If the service animal is not easily identifiable, staff can request a letter and this can be provided by a regulated health professional to confirm that a service animal is required. Under no circumstances are staff, volunteers or students permitted to ask questions about the nature of a person's disability. To ensure the Health & Safety of all employees, volunteers, students, members, and clients, service animals must have all current vaccinations up-to-date and documented proof of such must be provided.

YWCA Hamilton recognizes the profound affect that service animals have on the lives of people with disabilities and we welcome service animals as required by law. In unique situations, the presence of a service animal may present a significant risk for other people (i.e. severe allergies), for such reasons these procedures must be followed to protect the Health & Safety of all people.

Procedures for requesting to have a service animal in residences (i.e.) Group Homes, Transitional Living

- A request to acquire approval must be made to the Program Supervisor prior to the arrival of a service animal in any residence. The Program Manager must consult with the Director of Operations
- Provide a letter from a regulated health professional to validate the authenticity of the service animal
- Provide a letter from a regulated health professional confirming the need for a service animal
- Provide documentation confirming all vaccinations for the service animal are up-to-date
- The service animal is not permitted until acknowledgment of approval is received

7. Support Persons

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter YWCA Hamilton premises with his or her 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 our premises. As well, if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability, fees will be waived for the support person (if one exists). In situations where confidential matters will be discussed, the person being supported must first be asked for permission to share their personal information and the support person may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

8. Service Disruption

Notice to the public will be provided whenever there is a problem with our facilities, equipment or services that people with disabilities rely on. YWCA Hamilton will provide clients and members with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.



This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises.

More Information on Customer Service

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to clients and members with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to the service user's direct contact (i.e. support worker their counsellor) or the supervisor/manager/program manager.

Related Policies/Procedures/Documents:

- YWCA Hamilton Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Policy
- YWCA Hamilton Accessibility (AODA) Training

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