

SERVING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (AODA) POLICY HRA10-02

POLICY

The goal of the ***Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Regulation 429/07*** is to create a more accessible Ontario, by identifying, and to the extent possible, preventing, and eliminating barriers experienced by persons with a disability. A standard for customer service has been established under the Act to ensure goods and services are, where at all possible, equally accessible to every member of the public.

Wellkin Child & Youth Mental Wellness is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for our clients. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Wellkin meets the requirements and standards of the AODA and promotes its underlying core principles, described below. This policy specifically addresses:

1. Communication
2. Use of assistive devices
3. Customer feedback
4. Notice of Availability and Format of Documents
5. Notice of temporary disruptions
6. Service animals and Support persons

The Policy applies to all persons who, on behalf of Wellkin, deal with members of the public or other third parties. This includes employees, students, volunteers, Board members and all other representatives acting on behalf of the Organization.

Each manager/supervisor is responsible in ensuring all employees, students and volunteers are trained in the application under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and employees are expected to conduct themselves within the spirit and intent of this policy. Board members will also be trained in the application under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

DEFINITIONS

Barrier

As defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, or a policy or a practice.

Accessibility Report

The report required to be filed pursuant to Section 14 of the Act.

All policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to reflect Wellkin's most current practice.

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Assistive Device

Any device used to assist a person in performing a particular task or to aid that person in activities of daily living.

Disability

1. 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, brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheel chair or other remedial appliance or device;
2. A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
3. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved with understanding or using symbols or spoken language, a mental disorder; or
4. An injury or disability for which benefits are claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety Insurance Act, 1997* ["handicap" (sic)].

Service Animal

An animal is a Service Animal for a person with a disability, if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support Person

A Support Person is a person who accompanies a person with a disability to assist with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Core Principles

Wellkin will endeavor to ensure that the Policy and related practices and procedures are consistent with the following four (4) core principles:

1. Dignity

Persons with a disability must be treated as valued customers as deserving of service as any other customer.

2. Equality of Opportunity

Persons with a disability should be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from our goods and services.

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3. Integration

Wherever possible, persons with a disability should benefit from our goods and services in the same place and in the same or similar manner as any other customer. In circumstances where integration does not serve the needs of the person with a disability, goods and services will, to the extent possible, be provided in another way that takes into account the person's individual needs.

4. Independence

Goods and services must be provided in a way that respects the independence of persons with a disability. To this end, we will always be willing to assist a person with a disability but will not do so without the express permission of the person.

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Accessible Mediums of Communication

Wellkin strives to communicate with members of the public in a manner that is accessible to disabled persons by way of posting its Accessibility Standards for Customer Service on its website at www.wellkin.ca.

Communicating with Persons with a Disability

Wellkin strives to communicate with persons with a disability in a manner that takes into account the disability. Approaches for communication are set out in our accessibility training program.

Assistive Devices

Persons with a disability are permitted, where possible, to use their own Assistive Device when on Wellkin premises for the purposes of obtaining, using or benefiting from our services.

1. If there is a physical, technological or other type of barrier that prevents the use of an Assistive Device on our premises, we will first endeavour to remove that barrier.
2. If we are not able to remove the barrier, we will ask the person how they can be accommodated and what alternative methods of service would be more accessible to them. We will make best efforts to provide an alternative means of assistance to the person with a disability.
3. Employees will receive training on various Assistive Devices that may be used by persons with a disability while accessing our goods and services.

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Service Animals

Persons with a disability may enter premises owned and/or operated by Wellkin accompanied by a Service Animal, and keep the Service Animal with them, if the public has access to such premises and the Service Animal is not otherwise excluded by law.

1. If a Service Animal must be excluded, we will explain to our client why this is the case and explore alternative ways to meet the customer's needs.
2. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a Service Animal, the employee may ask the person with a disability for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his/her disability.
3. Employees will receive training on how to interact with persons with a disability accompanied by a Service Animal.

Support Persons

A person with a disability may enter premises owned and/or operated by Wellkin with a Support Person and have access to the Support Person while on the premises.

1. Wellkin may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a Support Person where it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.
2. Employees will receive training on how to interact with persons with a disability who are accompanied by a Support Person.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

Wellkin will notify clients if there is a planned or unexpected disruption of a facility or service or a temporary problem that will impact access by persons with a disability. A notice will be posted at the entrance of the applicable premises.

The notice will include the following information:

1. That a facility or service is unavailable.
2. The anticipated duration of the disruption.
3. The reason for the disruption.

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4. Alternative facilities or services, if available.

TRAINING AND RECORDS

Wellkin will provide training, and ongoing training as required under the Act, to all persons to whom this Policy applies as well as to those persons charged with developing this Policy and related procedures and practices.

Content of Training

1. A review of the purpose of the Act and requirements of the Standard.
2. A review of the Policy.
3. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
4. How to interact with persons with a disability who use an Assistive Device or require the assistance of a Service Animal or Support Person.
5. How to use equipment or devices made available on our premises to assist persons with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services.
6. What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our premises and/or services.

Timing of Training

Training will be provided to all persons to whom this Policy applies as soon as practicable after they are assigned the applicable duties.

Documenting Training

Records of the training provided, including the training protocol, the dates on which the training is provided and the number of individuals to whom the training is provided shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

FEEDBACK PROCEDURE

Receiving Feedback

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Wellkin welcomes and appreciates feedback regarding this Policy and its implementation. Feedback can be provided in the following ways:

1. In person, at:
Wellkin Child & Youth Mental Wellness
912 Dundas Street, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 1H1.
2. By telephone at [519] 539-0463 ext. 225.
3. In writing to: Director of Human Resources & Administration

Responding to Feedback

Wellkin has a feedback protocol to enable it to receive and respond to comments, including complaints. The feedback protocol is available upon request.

DOCUMENTATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE

This Policy, and related practices and protocols, shall be made available to any member of the public upon request.

1. Notification of same shall be posted on the Agency website and at a conspicuous place at the location to which this Policy applies.

FORMAT OF DOCUMENTS

Wellkin will provide documents, or the information contained in documents required to be provided under the Standard, to a person with a disability in a format that takes the person's disability into account.

TIPS FOR GUIDING A CLIENT WITH VISION LOSS

The following are instructions and tips on guiding a client with vision loss.

1. Ask first if your client wishes to be guided.
2. If the answer is "yes", offer your arm. Ask which arm is better. Walk at a normal pace. The person will walk about a step behind. Announce handrails, doors (to the right/left, push/pull to open etc.) and describe the surrounding areas (such as what is in an aisle, shelves and sections).

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3. If you are guiding towards the stairs let the client know if they have to walk up or down;
 - 3.1 Approach the stairs head on, not at an angle and come to a full stop in front of the stairs;
 - 3.2 Lead or guide your customer to the rail side to allow them to take hold of it;
 - 3.3 Let them find the first step and then start to climb or descend the stairs;
 - 3.4 Try to be one step ahead and announce the last step.
4. If you are going through a narrow doorway, passage etc., the guide goes first, after explaining the circumstances and describing the area.
5. Upon entering a room, offer to describe the dimensions and the location of people and furniture.
6. If the person wishes to sit, offer to guide them and place their hand on the back of the chair.
7. Keep the person informed when others approach or leave.
8. If you must leave the individual alone, do not leave them standing in the middle of the room, with nothing to hold onto. If they are not seated, guide them to a door, wall, or piece of furniture to stand next to. This will help the person to stay spatially oriented.
9. If the client is accompanied by a guide dog, stand to the right of your customer, as the guide dog is usually at the owner's left side. When guiding a customer with a dog, offer your left arm, but if the person you are guiding prefers to hold your right arm, that is okay too.
10. When the customer has a guide dog, offer to open the door first, before doing so. The customer may be using the door's location as a reference point, or they may prefer to do it without assistance to protect the dog's paws.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HELPING SOMEONE WITH AN ASSISTIVE DEVICE

Many customers with disabilities will have their own personal assistive devices. Do not touch or handle an assistive device without permission.

Examples of personal assistive devices:

1. Wheelchairs
2. Scooters

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3. Walker
4. Amplification devices that boost sound for listeners who are hard-of-hearing without reducing background noise
5. Hearing aids
6. Oxygen tanks
7. Electronic notebooks or laptop computers
8. Personal data managers
9. Communication boards used to communicate using symbols, words or pictures
10. Speech-generating devices that “speak” when a symbol, word or picture is pressed

MOVING PERSONAL ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Staff members having obtained permission to move a person in a wheelchair:

1. Wait for and follow the person’s instructions.
2. Confirm that your customer is ready to move.
3. Describe what you are going to do before you do it.
4. Avoid uneven ground and objects that create bumpy and unsafe ride.
5. Practice consideration and safety.
6. Do not leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
7. Do not move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your client’s reach.
8. Respect your client’s personal space. Do not lean over them or on their assistive device.

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9. Let your client know about accessible features in the immediate environment, such as automatic doors, accessible washrooms, among other things.
10. Accessible Client Service is not about ramps or automatic door openers. It is about understanding that people with disabilities may have different needs.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORDS AND PUTTING THE PERSON FIRST

Some Suggestions:

Use These Words	Do Not Use These Words
✓ Disability	➤ Handicap, handicapped, invalid or impediment
✓ “Person[s] with a..” or “people with a..”	➤ The disabled
✓ Intellectual disability or developmental disability	➤ Mental retardation, mentally retarded, retarded, mentally challenged, idiot, imbecile, moron, simple, mongoloid
✓ “Person living with...” or “person born with...”	➤ Suffering, afflicted, victim, stricken
✓ Blind, partial vision, low vision, vision loss – be specific	➤ Visually impaired, the blind
✓ Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, hearing loss – be specific	➤ Deaf [avoid generalizing. Try to find preferred term from the “do” list]
✓ Person who does not speak	➤ Deaf, mute, dumb
✓ Person in a wheelchair	➤ Confined, bound, stick
✓ Person with a mobility or physical disability	➤ Crippled, cripple, lame, physically challenged
✓ Mental health disability	➤ Insane, lunatic, maniac, mental, neurotic, psychotic, psycho, deviant, crazy.

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