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TITLE	Customer Service and Accessibility Standards - Full Policy	

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References

Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, Ontario Regulation 429/07
Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 414/12 (IASR)
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
Ontario's Human Rights Code
Blind Persons' Rights Act, 1990.

Statement of Commitment

Contact Hamilton for Children's and Developmental Services ("Contact Hamilton") is committed to providing an accessible environment for all clients, employees, job applicants, stakeholders, and visitors who may enter our premises, access our information, or use our services. As an organization, Contact Hamilton respects and complies with the requirements of the AODA and its associated regulations. Contact Hamilton strives to provide an accessible and welcoming environment for everyone by

identifying and removing barriers in our workplace, and ensuring that new barriers are not created. Contact Hamilton ensures that persons with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities. Contact Hamilton is committed to meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and integrative manner that respects their dignity and independence.

Definitions

Assistive devices:

Any devices used to help with daily living tasks such as auxiliary aids, communication aides, cognition aids, personal mobility aids, and medical aids. Some examples of assistive devices include, wheelchairs, scooter, screen readers, sign language interpreter, oxygen tank, monocular, hearing aid, cane/crutches, TTY (teletypewriter), artificial limb, white cane and speech generating device.

Guide dog:

A dog trained as a guide for a blind person that has completed a training program at a designated training facility set out in the *Guide Dogs* regulation.

Service animal:

An animal that is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

- The animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reason's related to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators, such as the vest of harness worn by the animal: or
- The person provides documentation from a designated regulated health professional as permitted by Integrated Accessibility Standards regulation, confirming that the person required the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support person:

A person who accompanies them in order to assist them in a variety of ways, for example: by aiding with communication such as an intervenor, sign language interpreter or a personal support worker providing physical assistance. The support

person could be a paid professional, a volunteer, a friend or a family member. Support persons do not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

Policy

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of Contact Hamilton for Children's and Developmental Services ("Contact Hamilton").

Contact Hamilton makes every reasonable effort to welcome all members of the community to our facilities and **provide service that respects the diversity, dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity of people**, including those with disabilities and those requiring supports:

- **Dignity** - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
- **Independence** - a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- **Integration** - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other consumers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services. It is also when a person with a disability is allowed to do their job in the same manner as other staff member unless an alternate measure is necessary.
- **Equal opportunity** - service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access Contact Hamilton's services equal to that given to others. Employment opportunities are also provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they can adequately perform their required duties.

- **Social Inclusion** – all individuals have the right to be included in the social fabric of their community and contribute to the best of their ability

Contact Hamilton staff and volunteers will adhere to these values by:

- Ensuring that all clients, stakeholders and visitors (herein referred to a “customer”) receive the same value and quality of service
- Allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk
- Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner
- Taking into account individual needs when providing goods and services
- Communicating in a manner that is respectful and considers the person’s abilities and disability

Contact Hamilton will follow the organization’s *OC-00-50 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*.

Contact Hamilton will ensure that the public and employee sections of the facility are accessible, and that the facilities accessibility elements, including the wheelchair accessible door, are functioning. Recognizable accessibility signage, such as wheelchair accessibility will be posted at the entrance at a appropriate height for all employees and customers.

Contact Hamilton will consider the impacts on people with disabilities when planning a new initiative or when purchasing new equipment or technology.

Contact Hamilton employees and volunteers will inform the Executive Director of any physical barriers, architectural barriers, information / communication barriers, technological barriers, or a policy or practice that pose barriers for people with disabilities.

- The Executive Director will address these barriers in a timely manner as resources allow, and will inform the Board of Contact Hamilton of any identified barriers as well as recommended solutions.

The Executive Director will file an Accessibility Compliance report with the AODA (“Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act”) in compliance with the prescribed guidelines.

Accessible Customer Service

Use of Assistive Devices

Contact Hamilton will welcome people who use their personal assistive devices to access our services. Only in cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility limitations might be an issue will other reasonable measures be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, open flames and oxygen tanks cannot be near one another. Therefore, the accommodation of a customer with an oxygen tank may involve ensuring the customer is in a location that would be considered safe for both the customer and Contact Hamilton employees.

Where requested, Contact Hamilton will make reasonable efforts to ensure that assistive measures are made available, such as staff assistance, sign language interpretation, and oral interpretation.

Guide Dogs and Service Animals

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal is welcome to access all Contact Hamilton premises that are open to the public. Contact Hamilton’s *Pets in the Workplace* policy does not apply to guide dogs or service animals.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a guide dog or service animal, Contact Hamilton may request verification. Verification may include:

- a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada
- a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school
- a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability

Contact Hamilton will **not** ask the nature of the person's disability or the purpose of the animal.

The person who is accompanied by a guide dog or service animal is responsible for maintaining control of the animal at all times. If a service animal becomes out of control, causing a clear threat to the health or safety of others, and the animal's behaviour is not corrected by the owner, employees should notify HR, who may ask them to remove their service animal from the premises.

A person may have a scheduled appointment, or they may visit the Contact Hamilton office without a scheduled appointment. In both cases, if the person requires the use of a guide dog or service animal, they will be accommodated.

- With respect to **scheduled visits** involving a guide dog or service animal – the staff person will note in the Reception Calendar that a service animal will be on site and will identify the date, time / duration, and location of the appointment.
- With respect to **unscheduled visits** involving a guide dog or service animal – the Onsite Responder will note the appointment involving a service animal in the Reception Calendar, and the time / duration and location of the appointment. The Onsite Responder will also send an email advising of the presence of a service animal (noting day, time / duration, and location). Where an employee who is onsite already or is going to be onsite has concerns about the presence of the guide dog or service animal, they will contact HR at hr@contacthamilton.ca to identify their needs and concerns, and a supportive plan will be negotiated.

- It is the responsibility of all staff to check the Reception calendar before arriving to the Contact Hamilton main office site especially if they have allergies or fears, to determine if there are any scheduled appointments involving service animals.

Support Persons

Contact Hamilton is committed to welcoming people who are accompanied by a support person. They are in fact, encouraged to do so if it would result in a more positive experience and the provision of better service. A support person may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the disclosure of personal information.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

Contact Hamilton makes all reasonable efforts to provide notice of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customers with disabilities rely on to access or use goods or services. In some circumstances, notice may not be possible.

When disruptions occur without notice, Contact Hamilton informs customers by:

- posting a notice at all entrances to Contact Hamilton, at the point of disruption, and on the website (by the Operations Manager).
- informing customers verbally upon arrival; and
- contacting any customers with appointments onsite (by the applicable staff person) to advise them of the disruption and alternative facilities or services available.

The following information is provided regarding the disruption, unless it is not readily available or known:

- Goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable;
- Reason for the disruption;
- Expected duration; and
- A description of alternative facilities or services, if available. All efforts will be made to accommodate the person through an alternate means or location, when

services are temporarily unavailable. Directions and maps (if necessary) will be provided for finding alternate accessible locations.

Training

Training is provided to employees, volunteers, and any other person who provides goods, services, or facilities on behalf of the company. Training is provided on the accessibility standards found in the *IASR* and on the *Human Rights Code* that is appropriate for the duties they complete while at work. Contact Hamilton employees and volunteers will receive appropriate training from their program on how to work with people with disabilities. Please refer to *OC-00-26 Supporting People with Disabilities* for additional information.

Training specific to the customer service standards covers the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *AODA*;
- A review of the requirements of the customer service standards;
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or a support person;
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at the company's premises or that the company provides that may help people with disabilities;
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the company's services; and
- Policies, procedures, and practices of the company pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

Training will be provided to all employees and volunteers upon the commencement of their duties. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

Contact Hamilton keeps a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training. Where required, retraining is provided to ensure compliance with the company's policies and procedures.

Policy Availability

Upon request, Contact Hamilton will provide the following organizational policies to individuals in a format that takes into consideration their needs and abilities:

- *Accessible Customer Service Policy OC-00-25*
- *Handling Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy OC-00-60*
- *Employee Code of Conduct Policy OC-00-20*

The above policies are also available on the Contact Hamilton website.

Accessible Information and Communication

Contact Hamilton provides or arranges for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities upon request.

Contact Hamilton strives to provide information and communications to all in a format or manner that meets their needs. Where required, Contact Hamilton will tailor their method of communication to meet an individual's needs, and flexibly provide services such as in-person, or virtually. Publications and website information will be provided in plain language whenever possible.

Employees and volunteers will ensure that any requested documents made available to people with disabilities, are either in a format that considers the person's disability, or supports are provided to ensure the person is able to understand and use the documents. This might include large print, email or another format.

Contact Hamilton uses Bell Relay system for people with hearing impairments.

Contact Hamilton has made the following documents available in 'plain language':

- *Accessible Customer Service Policy OC-22-25a*
- *Abuse Policy (for DSOHNR) 10-13A*
- *Handling Complaints about Contact Hamilton (for DSOHNR) 10-19A*
- *Handling Complaints about Agencies (for DSOHNR) 10-19B*
- *Standard Information – Eligibility Auxiliary (for DSOHNR) 20-90A1*
- *Statement of Rights for People Seeking Service (for DSOHNR) 10-12a*

Contact Hamilton also ensures that its website and web content meet the standards required by the *IASR* to enable accessible information and communications online.

Feedback

Contact Hamilton has established a feedback process to provide the public with the opportunity to provide feedback, including complaints, on how services and facilities are provided to customers with disabilities. Please see *OC-00-65 Consumer and Stakeholder Experience* and *OC-00-60 Handling Compliments, Complaints, and Feedback*. Contact

Accessible Employment

Contact Hamilton is committed to providing employment and volunteer opportunities to individuals with disabilities that meet the required qualifications.

Accommodation is available throughout an employee's employment with Contact Hamilton, as well as from the beginning of the recruitment process for job seekers. For more information on the accommodation process, please see *OC-00-55 Accommodation*.

The accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are considered in all aspects of the employment relationship, including during performance management processes, career development or advancement opportunities. As part of these processes, Contact Hamilton consults individual accommodation plans where they exist.

Contact Hamilton ensures that new employees are aware of the policies and supports available for employees with disabilities as soon as reasonably possible after beginning employment and that all employees are informed of any updates to existing policies. Contact Hamilton has the following policies to support employees with disabilities:

- Accommodation Policy OC-00-55;
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy OC-00-50
- Ergonomic Program HS-12-122;
- Staff Allergy HS-12-165;
- Psychological Health and Safety Policy HS-12-190

Upon request, Contact Hamilton provides or arranges for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for employees with disabilities regarding information needed to perform their job and other information that is generally available to all employees in the workplace. Individualized workplace emergency response plans also provided to an employee with a disability where necessary. An employee who requires workplace information in an accessible format or with communication supports should contact HR via HR@contacthamilton.ca. Contact Hamilton consults the employee making the request to determine the best way to provide the accessible format or communication support.

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