

	POLICY NUMBER:	OC-00-25
	ADOPTED:	November 1, 2009
	APPROVED BY:	Executive Director
	LAST REVIEWED:	August 22, 2024
	NEXT REVIEW:	July 1, 2026
CATEGORY	00 Organizational Culture	
TITLE	Customer Service and Accessibility Standards - Full Policy	

References

Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, Ontario Regulation 429/07

Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 414/12

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Definitions

- **Assistive devices** are any devices used to help with daily living tasks such as auxiliary aids, communication aides, cognition aids, personal mobility aids, and medical aids. Assistive devices include a broad range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, crutches, oxygen tanks, hearing aids, portable chalk boards and electronic communication devices that people may bring to the premises.
- **Support persons** assist people 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.
- **Service animal** is an animal that is used for support. Such use is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a physician or nurse.

Policy

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

Contact Hamilton will provide an environment that reflects and values the following customer service values:

- **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 provide an environment that is accessible and will provide services that are accessible to people of all abilities.

Contact Hamilton will provide people of all abilities with the same opportunity to access to our services. Contact Hamilton is committed to providing services that are free of barriers and biases.

Contact Hamilton is committed to welcoming and serving people with needs that require the use of assistive devices, those who require a support person, and those who require the use of a service animal.

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

Contact Hamilton will ensure that an individualized accommodation plan and workplace emergency response plan are put in place to meet the unique needs of any staff members with disabilities.

Contact Hamilton will 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.

- Contact Hamilton will ensure that wheelchair accessibility signage is maintained and visible. All signage will have recognizable symbols and be at an appropriate height.
- The Operations Manager will ensure that the facilities' accessibility elements, including the wheelchair accessible door, are functioning, and will ensure staff are knowledgeable on how to operate these accessibility elements.
- The Operations Manager will ensure any parts of the facilities that are not open to the public are marked "Employees Only".
- Contact Hamilton's HR team will ensure that the facility is accessible to employees with disabilities.
- When services that are normally provided to a person with a disability are temporarily unavailable, the Operations Manager will post a notice at all

entrances to Contact Hamilton and on the website. The notice will include the reason for the disruption, its 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.

Contact Hamilton will welcome people who use their personal assistive devices to access our services. 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.

Contact Hamilton will encourage and support people to bring their service animals into the Contact Hamilton facilities. To be considered a service animal under the Accessibility Standard, it must either be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a disability must provide a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that it is required because of his or her disability.

- When serving a person who has a service animal, Contact Hamilton must be prepared to respond to special situations, such as other clients, staff or service providers having an allergy or great fear of animals, by discussing the situation with all and making reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

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.

Contact Hamilton will ensure communication is in a manner that is respectful and considers the person's abilities and disability.

- 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.
- 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.
- Publications and website information will be provided in plain language whenever possible.
- Contact Hamilton uses Bell Relay system for people with hearing impairments.

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*
- *New Employee Orientation Framework Policy HRE-03-62*
- *Employee Code of Conduct Policy OC-00-20*

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

- *Abuse Policy (PL)*
- *Accessible Customer Service Policy (PL)*
- *Complaints Policy (PL)*
- *Eligibility*
- *Statement of Rights for People Seeking Service*
- *Supporting People with Disabilities – Suggestions and Considerations*

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.

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

Contact Hamilton will encourage people to provide feedback on the service provided, including the complaints process.

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.

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