

Subject: Accessible Customer Service**Section Code:** C**Date of Issue:** November, 25 2014**Date of Review:****Approved By:** Steve Sherrer**Date of Revision:****Date of Approval:** December, 2014**Applicable To:** All Staff, Volunteers,
Students

PURPOSE:

AbleLiving Services is committed to providing exceptional customer service to clients, funders, stakeholders and the wider community. This means not just meeting but exceeding the expectations of our customers including those with a disability. This policy seeks to:

1. Provide all staff, volunteers, and students of AbleLiving Services with a set policies and processes to guide the provision of accessible customer service to all clients, stakeholders, and colleagues, including customers with disabilities.
2. Ensure that the requirements as set out by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA), 2005, are being met in accordance with the Customer Service Standard, Ontario Regulation 429/07; and to address the following:
 - a. The provision of goods and services to customers with disabilities
 - b. The use of assistive devices
 - c. The use of guide dogs and other service animals
 - d. The use of a support person
 - e. Notice of service disruption
 - f. Customer feedback process
 - g. Training
 - h. Notice of availability and format of required documents
3. To provide staff, volunteers and students with information to both recognize and respond to the needs of customers with disabilities in a way that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunities.
4. To reference the process related to the Accessibility Plan as required by CARF Accreditation Standards.

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POLICY:

5. Our policy and practices will respect the four key principles of:
 - a. **Dignity** – by providing service in a manner that maintains the customer’s self-respect and the respect of others;
 - b. **Independence** – by ensuring customers are able to do things for themselves providing it is safe to do so; and without unnecessary help or interference from others;
 - c. **Integration** – by providing service in a manner that allows the customer with a disability to benefit from the same service, in the same place and in the same way or similar way as others;
 - d. **Equal Opportunities** – by providing the same chances, options, benefits and results to customers with disabilities as to others.

6. Disability as defined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). 2005, and the Ontario Human Rights Code:
 - a. *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, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, 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 wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;*
 - b. *A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;*
 - c. *A learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;*
 - d. *A mental disorder;*
 - e. *An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.*

7. This definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities and disabilities with effects that may come and go.

PROCEDURE

8. **The Use of Assistive Devices**
 - a. An assistive device is any device that is used, designed, made or adapted to assist people in performing particular tasks. Assistive devices enable customers with disabilities to do everyday tasks such as moving, communicating, reading or lifting.

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- b. There are a wide range of assistive devices available at AbleLiving Services. Some assist with mobility, dexterity, speech, vision, hearing, communication and information. Other devices assist individuals in organizing or remembering.
 - c. Employees, volunteers and students are provided with orientation as to what devices are available for customers with disabilities at the various AbleLiving locations and must make sure they inform customers with disabilities of the existence of such devices.
 - d. In-service training is provided on an ongoing basis for employees, students and volunteers to ensure the correct handling and use of such devices.
 - e. Customers with disabilities may be able to use their own assistive devices AbleLiving. Where an assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access to services e.g. offering the service in a different area of the building or at a different location that meets the needs of the customer with the disability.
 - f. For further information regarding assistive devices employees, volunteers and students are required to speak directly to their supervisor, review program specific policies and the Accessible Customer Service Handbook.
9. **The Use of Guide Dogs and Other Service Animals**
- a. Service animals are used by people with many different kinds of disabilities. These may include, but are not limited to, a person with vision or hearing loss, a person who experiences seizures, or a person with autism.
 - b. Service animals are generally identifiable by a vest or collar, but not always. If you cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, you can ask the individual to provide documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms the service animal is required for reasons relating to their disability.
 - c. A customer with a disability that is accompanied by a guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises at AbleLiving that are open to the public, unless otherwise excluded by law.
 - d. The customer that is accompanied by the guide dog, service dog or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times, however water must be provided to the animal upon request by the customer. Some AbleLiving Services or Programs may include in the Service Contract additional care for animals. See the client's Service Contract for such details.
10. **Support Person:**
- a. Customers with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person to access services. A support person is someone hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, and

medical care, access to goods and services or participation in social or recreational activities. A support person may be a personal care worker, volunteer, friend or family member and may be paid or unpaid.

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- b. Where confidentiality is important due to the nature of the services being provided by AbleLiving Services, the support person will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.
- c. In the event that a support person is accompanying the customer with disabilities to an event, service or activity where a fee will be charged, the customer who is accompanied by the support person should be notified in advance as to whether the support person will be charged the fee.
- d. In the event that the organization requires a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health and safety reasons, the following will be considered:
 - a. Consultation with the person with a disability to understand their needs.
 - b. Consider health and safety reasons based on available information.
 - c. Determine if there is no other way to protect the health and safety of the person or others on the premises. In such a situation, the admission fee or fare for support persons must be waived.

11. Disruption of Service:

- 11.1 Service disruptions may occur due to a variety of reasons. In the event of any temporary disruption to facilities or services that customers with disabilities rely on to access the services of AbleLiving, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in an unplanned temporary disruption, advance notice may not be possible.
- 11.2 When a disruption occurs notice of the disruption should be provided in the most applicable manner, such as:
 - a. posting of a notice in conspicuous places around the location, including at the point of disruption e.g. elevator door, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption;
 - b. on the website;
 - c. contact the customer directly;
 - d. verbally notify the customer when he/she is making the appointment if knowledge of the disruption is known in advance; or
 - e. using any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances that are suitable based on the customer's disability.

- 11.3 In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information must be included unless it is not readily available:
- a. services that are disrupted or unavailable;
 - b. reason for the disruption;
 - c. anticipated duration; and
 - d. a description of alternative services or options (e.g. meeting in another room).

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12. **Feedback Process:**

- 12.1 AbleLiving Services will provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the service provided to them. Information about the feedback process can be found in the Client Handbook that is provided to each client upon admission.
- 12.2 Customers can submit feedback using a number of methods including speaking directly to a staff member.
- 12.3 Feedback can be provided in person, by telephone, on-line, in writing, in a survey or by any other method that accommodates the customer.
- 12.4 Customers that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback from the staff member, Director or designate, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that are submitted.
- 12.5 Employees, volunteers and students are encouraged to review the program policies and practices specific to their service area or speak to their supervisor regarding how to handle customer service feedback.
- 12.6 Employees, volunteers and students may also refer residents to the **Conflict Resolution/Due Process**, and **Client Appeal Process** outlined in the Client Handbook. These processes provide clients with an outline of their right to complain if they are not satisfied with the customer service they are receiving. This process follows the following steps:
- a. the client should first attempt to resolve the issue using the Client Resolution/ Due Process by bringing the complaint forward to a staff member;
 - b. if the issue is not resolved at the first step the client should contact the Coordinator/Manager for further assistance;
 - c. if the issue is not resolved at the second step the resident should contact the Director;

- d. if the issue is not resolved at the third step the resident should contact the Chief Executive Officer in writing;
- e. if the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the CEO will inform the client of how to access the appeal process and forward the matter to an independent Client Appeal Committee.
- f. if the issue remains unresolved, the client will be advised to contact the Health Service Appeal and Review Board. Contact information can be accessed in the Client Handbook page 10.

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13. Training:

13.1 Training regarding Accessible Customer Service is provided to all employees, volunteers and students of St. Peter's Residence in a variety of training formats including the Accessible Customer Service Handbook provided to all employees, volunteers and students; and/or during face-face training sessions; and/or in on-line format.

13.2 Training will include the following:

- a. A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07;
- b. Instructions on how to interact and communicate with customers with various types of disabilities;
- c. Instructions on how to interact with customers with disabilities who use assistive devices; require the assistance of a guide dog or service animal; or require the use of a support person (including the handling of fees);
- d. Instructions on how to use equipment or devices available at AbleLiving locations;
- e. Instructions on what to do if a customer with a disability is having difficulty accessing the services of AbleLiving; and
- f. Organizational policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of Accessible Customer Service.
- g. A record of employee training will be maintained by the Human Resources Department.
- h. A record of volunteer and student training will be maintained by the Volunteer Coordinator.

14. Notice of Availability and Format of Documents:

- 14.1 AbleLiving Services will notify customers that the documents related to the Customer Service Standard will be made available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability.
- 14.2 Notification of these documents will be provided during the intake process and be posted in a conspicuous places within the various AbleLiving locations as well as on the website, and by any other reasonable method necessary that accommodates the disability.
15. **Multi-Year Accessibility Plan:**
 - 15.1 AbleLiving Services has developed a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to identify, address and remove barriers for customers with disabilities.

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16. For further information see AbleLiving Services' Accessibility Plan.

Related References:

Program Policies and Procedures
Client Handbook
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan