

GOOD SHEPHERD POLICY MANUAL

DEPARTMENT: ADMINISTRATION

NUMBER: ADM-09

TOPIC: Accessibility of Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

PURPOSE: To establish the responsibilities of Good Shepherd and its employees and volunteers when providing goods and service to clients and visitors.

POLICY: All employees and volunteers of Good Shepherd must show just regard for the dignity of all who come to us seeking assistance and support. All employees and volunteers accept and respond to the uniqueness of all people and be open to evaluation, new ideas and to adapt to the needs of people with disabilities. All employees and volunteers receive training on how to meet the accessibility needs of clients and visitors as required by our mission and the requirements for people with disabilities as outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

1.0 PROCEDURE

1.1 DEFINITIONS

Assistive Device: An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating or lifting. It helps the person to maintain their independence at home, at work and in the community.

Barrier: Any policy, practice or procedure, or part of the built environment, that prevents someone with a disability from participating fully in Good Shepherd programs or services because of a disability.

Barriers can come in many forms. Below are listed seven key areas where barriers can be found, with examples of each one.

- **Architectural:** width of doors, design of building
- **Environment:** poor signage, low lighting, noise, odours
- **Attitudes:** assumptions based on age, ethnic background, socio-economic status, etc.
- **Finances:** people cannot afford services
- **Employment:** shortages in critical areas/roles (e.g. RN/RPNs), English is second language
- **Communication:** lack of translation materials (other languages/formats), necessary information not provided
- **Transportation:** individuals cannot get to the services/to work (e.g. limited public transit)

Disability: a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement, that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, may include but not be limited to diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a 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 wheelchair or other remedial appliance device.

b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability

c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language

d) 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

Reasonable Efforts: The Customer Service Standard requires organizations to make reasonable efforts to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Reasonable efforts are defined as providing the best possible service within the context of: available resources, balancing the needs of people with disabilities with others who may encounter barriers to access and with the community at large, the health and safety of staff and volunteers, the security of property and existing laws and contracts.

Support Person: A support person is an individual hired or chosen to accompany a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods or services.

Service Animal: Any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability; or where the person provides a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that they require the animal for reasons relating to their disability; and proof of vaccination; and a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

1.4 Providing goods and services to people with disabilities

Good Shepherd is committed to excellence in serving all clients and visitors including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

1.4.1 Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

1.4.2 Telephone services

We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. We will train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.

We will offer to communicate with customers by SMS/text, email, TTY, relay services or fax if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

1.4.3 Assistive devices

We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. We will ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by clients with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

We will also ensure that staff know how to use the following assistive devices available on our premises for clients and visitors: TTY and Bell Relay Service (1-800-855-0511).

1.4.4 Billing

We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers. For this reason, invoices will be provided in the following formats upon request: hard copy, large print and email. We will answer any questions clients may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone or email.

1.5 Use of service animals

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

1.6 Use of support persons

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter good Shepherd's premises with their support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises. Fees will not be charged to support persons for admission to services or to access our premises.

1.7 Notice of temporary disruption

Good Shepherd will provide customers 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.

1.8 Training for staff

Good Shepherd will provide training to all employees, (including, full-time, part time, relief and contract staff), volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

1.9 Feedback process

Feedback regarding the way Good Shepherd provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by email, verbally, suggestion box where available or feedback form. Other accessible formats and communication supports can be arranged upon request. Feedback forms are located at all Good Shepherd locations and on our website. All feedback will be directed to the Director of Continuous Quality Improvement. Clients and visitors can expect to hear back within 10 business days.

1.10 Requests for Accommodation under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*

The Good Shepherd will continue to meet the standards set by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* (“Code”). Where a request for accommodation is made, the Good Shepherd will strive to provide accommodation in a way that most respects the dignity of the person. We recognize that people with disabilities may require individualized accommodation and that each person’s needs are unique. Reasonable accommodation will be provided up to the point of “undue hardship” as defined in the Code.

1.11 Modifications to this or other policies

We are committed to developing client service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities.

All policies of the Good Shepherd shall be developed and/or reviewed with an assessment of how the policy impacts people with disabilities while preserving the dignity of all persons.

1.12 Accessibility Planning

1.12.1 Identification of Barriers to Accessibility

Clients co-workers, volunteers and visitors are welcome throughout the year to refer issues for consideration to the Director of Continuous Quality Improvement. A feedback form is available in the forms folder on the policy drive, and is posted on the website.

The Director of Continuous Quality Improvement will gather input regarding accessibility barriers from programs each October.

1.12.2 Accessibility Plan Development

An accessibility plan will be developed from the input identified in 1.12.1 above. The plan will include identified barriers, and actions planned/taken (including timelines) to remove barriers.

The Director of Continuous Quality Improvement will provide a report each February to the Directors Team identifying the areas it has addressed during the previous year.

2.0 REFERENCE SOURCES

- 2.1** Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- 2.2** www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario
- 2.3** <http://www.accesson.ca/ado/splash.htm>

APPROVED BY: Staff Director’s Meeting
EFFECTIVE DATE: December 31, 2011
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SUPERCEDES: August 19, 2022