

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy

Date Approved: February 2011

Review Date: February 2014

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- demonstrate the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's commitment to providing services to our students, parents/guardians, the public, and our staff that are free of barriers and biases;
- ensure that key principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity are reflected and valued in our learning and working environment; and
- demonstrate our belief in the strength diversity brings to our communities.

Guiding Principles:

1. The Board will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that all policies, practices and procedures from the date of this policy forward are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity to all with particular attention for persons with disabilities.
2. The Board will welcome all members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing our staff and volunteers to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of persons with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of assistive devices and service animals.
3. To ensure greater awareness and responsiveness to the needs of a person with disabilities, the Board will provide appropriate training for all staff who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of the Board.
4. Training as identified in No. 3 will be provided to all staff and, when appropriate, to volunteers. As new staff are hired, the training will become a component of their orientation training and will be provided within a reasonable timeframe.
5. The Board will ensure that its policies and procedures related to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* are made available to the public and also ensure there is capacity to provide communication about these policies and procedures in a format that takes into account a person's disability.
6. When services that are normally provided to a person with a disability are temporarily unavailable such as access to an elevator, a disruption of service notice will be posted at the site and on the Board's or the specific school's website.

7. In order to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the Board will develop a process for receiving and responding to feedback. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public and will allow people to provide feedback using a number of methods.
8. So that adherence to this policy can be achieved efficiently and effectively, the Board and all its managers and school-based administrators will take into account the impact on persons with disabilities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems or planning a new initiative.
9. The Board will create a feedback process that will review the implementation of this policy with the Board's various constituency groups. Examples include Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Federations, unions, citizens' groups and methods would include use of electronic means such as websites.
10. The Board will also establish a process for consulting with frontline staff and volunteers who have a role in implementing the expectations and procedures established under this policy to review its effectiveness.

Intended Outcomes:

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will provide an environment in all of its facilities that builds independence, dignity and respect for our students, parents/guardians, the public and our staff.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will provide people with disabilities the same opportunity of access to our services in a similar way as these services are available to all others we serve.

Responsibility: **Executive Council**

Definitions:

- Customer : is any person who uses the services of the school board.
- Assistive Device : is any device used by people with disabilities to help with their daily living. Assistive devices include a range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, electronic communication devices.
- Service Animal : is an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a medical practitioner.
- Support Person : is a person who assists or interprets for a person with a disability as they access the services of the Board. A support person is distinct from an employee who supports a student in the system.
- Third Party Contractor: is any person or organization acting on behalf of or as an agent of the Board (e.g., bus operators; audiologists; orientation and mobility specialists).
- Accommodations: : is a means, through reasonable efforts, of preventing and removing barriers that impede individuals with disabilities from participating fully in the services of the Board.

Barriers to Accessibility: means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of the services of the Board. This includes, but is not limited to:

Architectural barriers:

- may result from the design of the building, shape of rooms, size of doorways, or width of hallways, et cetera.

Physical barriers:

- refers to objects added to the environment, such as doors, windows, elevators, furniture, bathroom hardware, et cetera.

Information or communication barriers:

- barriers which make it difficult for people to receive or send information. For example, a person with a visual disability may not be able to read print materials, read signs, locate landmarks, or see a hazard. A person with an intellectual disability may not understand information that is not expressed in plain language.

Attitudinal barriers:

- refers to persons who do not know how to communicate with people with disabilities, or persons who display discriminatory behaviours.

Technology barriers:

- refers to devices such as computers, telephones, inadequate or inappropriate assistive technologies.

Systemic barriers:

- can result from an organization's policies, practices and protocols if they restrict persons with disabilities.

Action Required:

- Establish policies, procedures and practices for the provision of services to people with disabilities.
- Use reasonable efforts to ensure that all of the Board's policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles laid out in the Customer Service standard, (*Regulation 429/07*). These principles are dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity.
- Establish a set of procedures that deal with measures that facilitate access by people with disabilities to the services and facilities of the Board, such as:
 - Use of assistive devices;
 - Use of a support person;
 - Use of a service animal;
 - Notification of disruption of service; and
 - Feedback on access to services.

- Provide a training program that includes the following components:
 - A review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard;
 - How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
 - How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, service animal, or a support person;
 - How to use equipment or assistive devices available or that can reasonably be made available on school or board premises, that may help to provide services to people with disabilities;
 - What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing school or Board services; and
 - The Board's customer service policy and directives, governing the provision of services to people with disabilities.

Progress Indicators:

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will provide services to our students, parents/guardians, the public, and our staff that are free of barriers and biases, as monitored through the process of receiving and responding to feedback from the public and various constituency groups.

References:

Legislation: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
 Ontario Human Rights Code

Pillar Policy: Equity

Policies: Accessibility (Barrier Free) Pathways
 Accommodation of Personnel
 Code of Conduct
 Employee Support Program
 Harassment

Directives: Code of Conduct
 Respectful Working and Learning Environments
 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy Directives:

- Monitoring and Feedback on Accessible Customer Service
- Notification of Disruption of Service
- Use of Service Animals by the General Public
- Use of Support Person by the General Public
- Use of Assistive Devices by the General Public