

OTTAWA INUIT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, the Ontario government enacted the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) which outlines a clear goal and timeframe to make Ontario accessible by 2025. The Act lays the framework for the development of province-wide mandatory standards on accessibility in all areas of daily life.

DEFINITIONS:

The following definitions are included in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*:

“disability” means,

- (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 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 or 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) a mental disorder, or
- (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*; (“handicap”)

POLICY:

The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC) is committed to providing high quality programs and services to Inuit children and their families including those with disabilities. We strive to give children and their parents the same opportunity to access our services and benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as others clients. Our goal is to provide services to clients with disabilities with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity at the forefront.

- i. **Dignity:** Persons with a disability are treated as clients who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other client.

- ii. **Independence:** Persons with a disability are supported in maintaining their independence in accessing services at OICC.
- iii. **Integration:** Integrated services are those that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other clients. When integration does not meet the needs of the client or barriers to accessibility exist, alternative ways to serve the client should be explored.
- iv. **Equal Opportunity:** People with disabilities should have the same opportunity to benefit from OICC services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.

PROCEDURE:

a. Confidentiality

It is understood by the OICC that information about a person's disability is personal and private and must be treated confidentially. It is not necessary to ask for proof of a disability.

b. Communication

The OICC will communicate with people with disabilities with respect and sensitivity at all times using a variety of methods that suit individual clients and their disabilities. Clients with disabilities will be consulted as to the most effective ways to communicate. Alternative methods of communication will be provided as requested by a client or their support person.

c. Use of Assistive Devices

Assistive devices are pieces of equipment that a person with a disability uses to help him/her with daily living e.g. wheelchair, hearing aid, cane, walker or oxygen tank. Any client of the OICC requiring the use of an assistive device will be accommodated and supported in doing so.

If physical accessibility to an OICC building is an issue due to the need for an assistive device (e.g. wheelchair or walker) staff will make arrangements to provide service to the client in an alternative accessible space. In situations where an assistive device presents a safety concern to others, other measures will be taken to provide services.

For example, an oxygen tank cannot be near an open flame. In this case, the client would be offered services elsewhere should a quilliq be used in that space.

The OICC will ensure that relevant staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be on site or that clients use while accessing programs and services at the centre.

d. Use of Service Animals

There are different types of service animals who support people with various types of disabilities. Any client of the OICC requiring the use of a service animal will be accommodated and supported in doing so. Service animals will be allowed in areas of OICC buildings that are open to the public. Service animals will not be permitted in food preparation areas. All service animals must have proof of up to date vaccinations as required by the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. Documentation from a regulated health professional may be requested if staff cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal. In the event an OICC child or staff is allergic to a service animal, the situation will be discussed on a case by case basis and a solution found based on which individual's health and well-being is more compromised by the situation.

e. Support Persons

Support persons help people with disabilities perform daily tasks that they cannot do themselves e.g. eating meals, using the washroom, etc. Support persons will be welcomed to the centre and will be considered essential to the client receiving services. Support persons will not be excluded from service delivery to the client at any time. In certain cases, the OICC may require that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons. Before determining if a support person is required, the OICC will consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs, consider health or safety reason based on available evidence, and determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or other on the premises.

f. Notice of Temporary Disruptions

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for clients with disabilities, the OICC will make every attempt to notify the client(s). A notice will be posted in the main entrances of the applicable building as well as notice provided to the client (s) verbally, electronically or in person. The notice will include the following information:

- The facility or service that is unavailable

- The reason for the disruption
- The anticipated duration of the disruption
- Alternative services or facilities if available

g. Feedback Process

The OICC gathers feedback on a regular basis from all clients and welcomes such feedback from clients with disabilities. Feedback from clients with disabilities will be gathered using a variety of measures: in person, by telephone, in writing or by email. Feedback processes will be provided in accessible forms using communication supports, on request. All feedback will be directed to the OICC manager of relevant services delivered and brought to the Executive Director if necessary. Complaints from clients with disabilities will be managed following OICC Client Complaint Policy and as such will hear back from the OICC within 5 business days. Beginning January 1, 2016 all feedback processes such as surveys will be made accessible upon request.

h. Staff Training:

All OICC staff will be trained during their orientation period on providing accessible services to people with disabilities. Training will be based on the on-line training resource provided by the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure

(<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/accessibility/customerservice/trainingResourcesAODA/tableOfContents.aspx>) Ongoing training will be provided as the need arises.

A record of all training will be maintained including details about the training, who attended, date, duration of the training and signature of staff.

Staff will receive information and training on the following:

- The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*;
- The requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Reg 429/08)*;
- A review of the OICC's Accessibility Policy;
- Effective and respectful communication with persons with disabilities;
- How to effectively communicate and interact respectfully with people with disabilities who use assistive devices, services animals or a support person;
- How to use any assistive device that are kept at the centre or brought to assist persons with disabilities to access services e.g. wheelchair; and

- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the centre and/or services.

i. Accessible Emergency Information

All emergency and safety information will be made accessible upon request e.g. evacuation plans. Customized emergency information will be provided upon request to employees who have disabilities.

j. Notice of Availability

The OICC will post all documents related to accessible customer service on the OICC website at www.ottawainuitchildren.com. If persons with disabilities require an alternative method of attaining these documents, their needs will be accommodated.

k. Review and Monitoring of Accessibility Policy

OICC is committed to the continued improvement of access to all OICC locations and services for all those with disabilities; and, the provision of quality service to those with disabilities.

The policy will be reviewed and monitored by the OICC Board of Directors on an annual basis to identify and remove barriers identified and will reinforce OICC's commitment to remove barriers under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

l. Modifications to this or other policies

Any policy, practice or procedure of the OICC that does not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.