

## Organization-Wide Policy

<b>Policy Title: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service</b>	Date Approved: <a href="#">January 18, 2012</a>
Policy Number: HR 4-09	Revision/Review:
<b>Category: Human Resources</b>	Number of Pages 1 of 4

### Purpose

Pathways (PW) supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities and is committed to providing accessible constituent services for all. This policy has been prepared to ensure that all Pathways programs and services are accessible to everyone in the community in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

### Policy

Pathways is committed to excellence in serving all constituents including persons with disabilities and will carry out its functions and responsibilities to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- a) Goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities
- b) The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities is integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from Pathways' goods or services.
- c) Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain use or benefit from goods and services.
- d) Pathways encourages open two-way communication and expects persons with disabilities to communicate their need for accommodation or assistance.

### Scope

This policy relates to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). The regulation "Accessibility Standards for Customer Service" (also referred to as the accessible customer service regulation or the customer service standard) comes into force on January 1, 2012 for not-for-profit organizations at which time they are required to be compliant.

This Policy applies to all Employees, Board Trustees, other volunteers while on PW premises, including off site locations, or while engaging in PW business, activities or social events.

### Definitions

#### Disability:

- a) any degree or combination 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 impairment, deafness or hearing loss, loss of speech or impediment, or physical reliance on a service 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
- 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*.

**Accessible:** capable of being entered or reached, approachable; easy to get at; capable of being influenced, obtainable; able to be understood or appreciated.

**Assistive Device:** a device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the customer Service Standard.

**Barrier:** anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his/her disability.

**Dignity:** respecting and treating every person including persons with a disability as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other constituent.

**Goods and Services:** goods and services provided by Pathways to the public or other organizations in Ontario.

**Independence:** freedom from control or influence of others, freedom to make your own choices.

**Service Animals:** animals that are used by a person with a disability to provide assistance to them. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who are blind, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety.

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

## **Procedures**

### **1. Communication:**

Pathways is committed to communicating with persons with disabilities in ways that take into consideration their disability. This means that staff will communicate in a means that enables persons with disabilities to communicate effectively for purposes of using, receiving and requesting PW services and facilities.

- a) Pathways will train staff and volunteers in how to interact and communicate with constituents with disabilities guided by the principles of dignity, independence and equality.
- b) Constituents with disabilities will be offered alternative communication formats that will meet their needs as promptly as feasible.
- c) Documents will be provided to constituents in an alternative format such as large print or a text only electronic file that can be read by a computer as promptly as possible.
- d) If telephone communication is not suitable for a constituent's needs, alternative forms of communication will be offered.
- e) In the event that a planned temporary service disruption occurs that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to Pathways goods or services, Pathway will make the disruption known to constituents via messages posted on the Pathway web site at [www.pathwaysyorkregion.com](http://www.pathwaysyorkregion.com) and/or notices posted in the building/office regarding disruption of access to meeting rooms or other facilities.

## **NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTIONS**

In the event that a planned temporary service disruption occurs that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to Pathways goods or services, Pathway will make the disruption known to constituents via messages posted on the Pathway web site at [www.pathwaysyorkregion.com](http://www.pathwaysyorkregion.com) and/or notices posted in the building/office regarding disruption of access to meeting rooms or other facilities.

Notices will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, alternate means of accessing services if applicable, and a description of the alternative services.

If an unexpected disruption occurs, Pathways will make every effort to accommodate persons with disabilities by providing goods and services by alternative means.

## 2. Use of Assistive Devices, Service Animals and Support Persons

Pathways will ensure that the access, use and benefit of goods or services are not compromised for persons with disabilities who require assistive devices, or who are accompanied by a service animal or support person.

### *Assistive Devices*

Pathways is committed to serving persons with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from its goods and services. Pathways will ensure that staff know how to use assistive devices available in their various locations for customers and inform customers of the assistive devices that are available.

### *Service Animals*

Service animals, such as, but not limited to Canine Vision Dog Guides, Hearing Ear Dog Guides, Seizure Response Dog Guides, and other certified service animals shall be permitted entry to all Pathway facilities that are open to the public. On rare occasions, a manager/supervisor may determine that a support person is required, or that a service animal cannot enter an area of the premises consistent with other laws. In these instances, managers will suggest appropriate alternatives and provide assistance.

### *Support Persons*

Pathways welcomes constituents with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on Pathways' premises.

Any meetings, events, and workshops sponsored by Pathways or by third parties support persons shall be permitted entry to all Pathways facilities and meeting rooms that are open to the public, except when there are fees applied against participants by a third party and the support person was not pre-registered and/or no vacancy exists. If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to a third party, the support person is permitted to attend the event at their own cost.

## 3. Training

Pathways is committed to providing appropriate and relevant AODA Customer Service Standards training in to all employees and to volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of Pathways, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of constituent service policies, practices and procedures.

This training will be provided as part of new employee and volunteer orientation and on an ongoing basis to ensure that all staff stay current with any policy or procedural changes as it relates to the AODA Customer Service Standards.

## 4. Feedback

Pathway welcomes all feedback regarding our Accessibility Standard for Customer Service policy and procedure and/or how we can better meet the needs of our constituents with disabilities. Feedback can be made in person, by telephone, through email, or by other means as required. Feedback in person, by telephone or through email should be directed to:

HR Specialist  
Pathways for Children, Youth and Families of York Region Inc.  
80F Centurian Drive  
Suite 206  
Markham, Ontario L3R 8C1(905)475-6694 ext 307  
[April.methot@pathwaysyorkregion.org](mailto:April.methot@pathwaysyorkregion.org)

#### 5. Format and Communication of Policies

Pathways develops and updates policies, procedures and practices in such a manner as to respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, as well as integration and equality of opportunity. Upon request and within a reasonable amount of time, Pathways will provide policy and procedure documents it produces in an alternative print format or a text only electronic file that can be read by a computer.

#### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the AODA Committee which will provide recommendations to the Executive Director to ensure that this policy continues to deliver accessible services to our constituents with disabilities.