

**Category:** General Agency

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**Subject:** Accessible Customer Service Policy

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## **ILCWR'S ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

Ontario Regulation 429/07

### 1.0 Requirements

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005, the Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service requires every provider of goods and services to establish policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities.

### 2.0 Policy Statement

The Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region (ILCWR) believes that our vision of *Together, Freedom Through Access and Choice* is a movement towards equality. To facilitate this, ILCWR is committed to providing goods and services that are accessible to all.

The mission of ILCWR is to support persons with disabilities by:

- facilitating individual growth towards greater independence
- creating opportunities to make informed choices
- assisting in the removal of barriers to full participation in the community
- improving the capacity of caregivers to assist and support them
- helping to increase the community's acceptance and integration of them

### 3.0 Our Commitment

In fulfilling our mission and in accordance with the Customer Service Regulation 429/07 (CSR) of the AODA, ILCWR will ensure that policies, practices and procedures on how we will provide goods or services to people with disabilities are consistent with the core principles of the Customer Service Regulations (CSR) which include: dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. These core principles mirror the values of ILCWR. We further

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believe that these policies and practices are the baseline for compliance.

#### 4.0 Providing Goods and Services to people with disabilities

ILCWR is committed to excellence in serving all consumers and the general public in a manner that considers the varying needs and abilities of persons with disabilities. This commitment includes:

##### 4.1 Communication

When communicating with a person with a disability, ILCWR staff will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. The individual with a disability may request an accommodation and/or alternate formats to facilitate their interaction with the organization. All staff and volunteers will work with the individual with a disability to provide a timely and appropriate accommodation and/or alternate format.

*Note: alternative formats are available upon request only. ILCWR will ask in advance of meetings or events if accommodations are required.*

##### 4.2 Telephone Services

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

ILCWR will offer to communicate with the public: in-person, by email, letter mail, TTY, relay services, website, or telephone.

##### 4.3 Assistive Devices

Definition: For the purposes of this policy, 'assistive devices' are defined as any piece of equipment or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

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

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accessing our services.

We will also ensure that all staff becomes acquainted with how to use the following assistive devices available on our premises (at ILCWR's Head Office and three Supportive Housing Projects) for customers:

- hands-free doors
- hands-free elevator
- hands-free phone
- TTY
- Bell Relay service
- Process for ordering alternative formats

## 5.0 Use of Service Animals

Definition: *Service Animal*

For the purposes of this policy, a 'service animal' is defined as either:

- i) A 'guide dog' as defined in section 1 of the Blind Persons Rights' Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.B.7; or
- ii) An animal used by a person with a disability, including but not limited to a dog, if:
  - a. It is readily apparent that such animal is used by the person for reasons related to his or her disability; or
  - b. If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires such animal for reasons relating to his or her disability.

ILCWR is 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.

While ILCWR will take the use of service animals in good faith, if it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, we reserve the right to request proof in the form of an identification card from the Service Animal Training School, or a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability.

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Should a service animal be excluded due to another law or special circumstances arise ILCWR will take responsibility for arranging alternative accommodation around providing service to the person who uses the service animal and also the animal itself.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept in control at all times.

## 6.0 Use of Support Persons

### *Support Persons*

For the purpose of this policy, a 'support person' is defined as, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid professional, a volunteer, a family member or friend of a person with a disability.

ILCWR is committed to welcoming people 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 our premises.

If, in the presence of a support person, personal information is being discussed, staff must ensure that the individual consents to the support person being present. Consent can be given verbally or in writing.

Fees will not be charged for a support person to attend most ILCWR events. On occasions where ILCWR consumers must pay to attend a dinner, seminar or event and the support person (attendant, friend or family member) is joining as a *guest* and participating or dining then a fee may be charged.

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## 7.0 Notice of temporary disruption

*Definition:* For the purposes of this policy, a 'service disruption' is defined as planned or unplanned unavailability of facilities or services operated by ILCWR including but not limited to washroom facilities, elevators and websites.

ILCWR will provide the public 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 be available in a variety of formats and will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

If there is ample warning of the disruption the notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on the premises. As well as left as a message on the telephone message service and/or our website. In the event that the disruption is unplanned ILCWR will give as much notice as possible. This may not include a phone or website message.

## 8.0 Training for staff

ILCWR will provide training to all employees, 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. Individuals in the following positions will be trained:

- Office staff
- Supervisors
- Attendants
- Volunteers
- Board of Directors
- consultants

This training will occur in one of the following formats:

- during their mandatory orientation at the commencement of their duties

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- ongoing or updated online training, handouts, workshops, refresher training or other formats

Training will include but is not limited to the following:

1. The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
2. How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
3. How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
4. How to use the assistive devices available on ILCWR's premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities
5. What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing ILCWR's goods and services
6. ILCWR's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard

Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to people with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures. ILCWR will keep records of the training provided including dates the training is provided and the number of persons trained.

### 9.0 Feedback process

ILCWR values feedback from the community. Any comments or complaints from a member of the public about the manner in which ILCWR provides services to persons with disabilities may be submitted by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format, through TTY or through other methods. All feedback will be directed to the Public Awareness & Education Coordinator.

The author of the feedback will be provided with a response in the format in which the feedback was received within 10 business days. The response will

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outline the actions taken to resolve the concern, if any.

To maintain transparency, the feedback process will be readily available to the public. Our feedback procedure and forms will be available on our website.

### 10.0 Modifications to this or other policies

We are committed to developing customer 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.

Any policy of ILCWR that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

### 11.0 Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to people with disabilities. If anyone has a question about this policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to the Public Awareness & Education Coordinator of ILCWR.