**Accessible Customer Service Policy**

**Purpose:**

This policy describes Wayside House of Hamilton’s commitment to provide accessible service to all clients who access our organization.

**Policy:**

Wayside House strives at all times to provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same space and in a similar way as other clients.

**Procedures:**

1. **Providing goods and services to people with disabilities**
   1. **Communication** 
      1. We will communicate with people with disabilities in a way that takes into account their disability.
      2. We will train staff who communicate with clients on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
   2. **Telephone Services** 
      1. We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our clients. We will train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.
      2. We will offer to communicate with clients by telephone, relay service, through e-mail, in person or by another means suitable to meet the communication needs of the client.
   3. **Assistive Devices** 
      1. We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our services. We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by clients with disabilities while accessing our services as they are needed.
   4. **Billing**
      1. We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all clients. For this reason, invoices will be provided in the following formats upon request: hard copy, large print, e-mail or any other method required to meet the unique needs of the client.
2. **Use of Service Animals and Support Persons** 
   1. **Use of Service Animals** 
      1. Wayside House is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on all parts of our premises, with the exception of the kitchen [“Service Animal” as defined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005].
      2. We will ensure that all staff, students, 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.
      3. The CEO of the facility will be responsible for coming up with a workable alternative where a conflict arises between the interests of more than one individual.
      4. **Best Practice**
         1. If a client of Wayside House is allergic to a service animal that is required by another client, the client with the allergy will be asked to come after the individual has completed treatment or will be given the choice of attendance at an alternate treatment center that meets the client’s needs.
   2. **Use of Support Persons** 
      1. Wayside House is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person [“Support person” as defined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005]. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Wayside House premises with his 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.
      2. **Best Practice** 
         1. Where a client requires a support person, the support person will be permitted to accompany the client during all daytime programming. The support person will not be permitted to sleep in the centre overnight. Where assistance is required in the evenings, or in the absence of the support person, an interpreter or other means that meets the client’s needs, will be provided.
3. **Temporary Disruptions** 
   1. Wayside House 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 following:
      1. The reason for the disruption
      2. Anticipated duration
      3. Description of any alternate facilities or services available, if any, during this time period
   2. **Posting of Notice of Temporary Disruption** 
      1. This notice will be placed on all entrance doors to the facility. Wayside House will utilize a standard template to notify of temporary disruptions as per Appendix A. The notification will include a statement of regret.
4. **Training for Staff**
   1. **Individuals to Receive Training**
      1. Wayside House will provide training to all staff, students, 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 approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures. Individuals in the following positions will be training:
         1. Chief Executive Officer
         2. Clinical Supervisors
         3. Administrator
         4. Addictions Counsellors
         5. Case Managers/Outreach Workers
         6. Volunteers
         7. Placement students
   2. **Contents of Training**
      1. Training will include the following:
         1. The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service;

* + - 1. How to interact with and communicate with persons with various types of disability;
      2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person;
      3. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing Wayside House services;

* + - 1. Wayside House policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
  1. **Training for New Employees, Students and Volunteers** 
     1. Training will be provided as soon as possible for new employees, students or volunteers as a part of the regular training process.
  2. **Ongoing Training**
     1. Training will be provided on an ongoing basis in relation to changes that take place to the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

1. **Feedback Process** 
   1. The ultimate goal of Wayside House is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcomed and appreciated.
   2. Feedback regarding the way Wayside House provides service to clients with disabilities can be made by e-mail, in person, in writing, by telephone or in another method that takes into account the individual’s disability. All feedback will be directed to the CEO. Clients can expect to receive an initial response to the complaint within five (5) business days. Included in the initial response will be a timeframe for resolution of the issue.
   3. Complaints will be addressed according to complaint procedures already established in the Wayside House client complaint policy.
2. **Modifications to this or other Policies** 
   1. 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.
   2. Any policy of Wayside House that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.
3. **Questions about this Policy** 
   1. This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to the Chief Executive Officer.
4. **Provision of Documents**
   1. Documents describing these policies will be made available upon request.
   2. When documents are requested, they shall be provided in a format that takes into account the client’s disability.

**APPENDIX A**

**Notification of Disruptions**

Dear Clients and Visitors,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (description of the problem and anticipated duration).

We regret any inconvenience this may cause. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us as at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (contact number for centre).

Thank you,

Management