

Accessible Customer Service Policy

Intent

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

All goods and services provided by Larch Street Kids Child Care Centre Inc. shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Policy Statement

The following is the Larch Street Kids Child Care Centre Inc. policy on providing service to people with disabilities. Note that the policy may be revised as other standards are introduced under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

Scope

- This policy applies to the provision of goods and services at premises owned and operated by Larch Street Kids.
- This policy applies to all members of the Larch Street Kids organization including employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of Larch Street Kids. These include salespersons, drivers, vendors, event operators, call centers and third party marketing agents.
- The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs, service animals and service dogs only applies to the provision of goods and services that take place at premises owned and operated by Larch Street Kids.
- This policy shall also apply to all persons who participate in the development of the Larch Street Kids' policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

Definitions

Assistive Device: is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

Disability: the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

- 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 coordination, 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;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Guide Dog: is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in *Ontario Regulation 58* under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

Service Animal: as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

- It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his/her disability; or
- If the person provides a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Service Dog: as reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562*, a dog, other than a guide dog for the blind, is a service dog if:

- It is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or
- The person who requires the dog can provide, on request, a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires a service dog.

Support Person: as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services.

General Principles

In accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, this policy addresses the following:

- A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities
- B. The Use of Assistive Devices
- C. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs
- D. The Use of Support Persons
- E. Notice of Service Disruptions
- F. Customer Feedback
- G. Training
- H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

Larch Street Kids will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- Ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality;
- Allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services, as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- Using alternative methods, when possible, to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- Taking into account individual needs when providing goods and services; and
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

B. The Use of Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices, as requested, when accessing goods or services provided by Larch Street Kids.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, open flames and oxygen tanks cannot be near one another. Therefore, the accommodation of a customer with an oxygen tank

may involve ensuring the customer is in a location that would be considered safe for both the customer and business. Or, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the customer.

C. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by a guide dog or service dog will be allowed access to food service areas that are open to the public, unless otherwise excluded by law.

Other types of service animals are not permitted into service areas due to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*.

Exclusion Guidelines:

If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law, see below, Larch Street Kids will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

Applicable Laws:

Food Safety and Quality Act 2001, Ontario Regulation 31/05: Animals not intended for slaughter or to be euthanized are not allowed in any area or room of a meat plant. It also makes an exception for service dogs to allow them in those areas of a meat plant where food is served, sold or offered for sale to customers and in those areas that do not contain animals or animal parts and are not used for the receiving, processing, packaging, labelling, shipping, handling or storing of animals or parts of animals.

The Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60: normally does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. It does allow guide dogs and service dogs to go into places where food is served, sold or offered for sale. However, other types of service animals are not included in this exception.

Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: if there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pit-bulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

Care and Control of the Animal:

The customer that is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all time.

Allergies:

If a health and safety concern presents itself, for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, Larch Street Kids will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

D. The Use of Support Persons

If a customer with a disability is accompanied by a support person, Larch Street Kids will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person.

There may be times where seating and availability prevent the customer and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations, Larch Street Kids will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the customer, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.



E. Notice of Service Disruptions

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of Larch Street Kids. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customers with disabilities rely on to access or use Larch Street Kids' goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notifications will Include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted, the following information will be included, unless it is not readily available or known:

- Goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable
- Reason for the disruption
- Anticipated duration
- A description of alternative services or options

Notifications Options:

When disruptions occur, Larch Street Kids will provide notice by:

- Posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at main entrances and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the Larch Street Kids website;
- Contacting customers with appointments;
- Verbally notifying customers when they are making a reservation or appointment; or
- By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

F. Customer Feedback

Larch Street Kids shall provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to customers with disabilities. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all customers and notice of the process will be made available by the above methods. Feedback forms along with alternative methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email), will be available upon request. **Should the need arise, alternative means of providing feedback will be provided.**

Submitting Feedback:

Customers can submit feedback to:

Sherrri Cole, Executive Director

Phone: (705) 688-8600

Email: scole.lsk@eastlink.ca

Website: www.larchstreetkids.com

Mail: Larch Street Kids Child Care Centre – C/O Sherrri Cole - 124 Cedar St, Suite 107 – Sudbury, ON – P3E 1B4

Customers who wish to provide feedback by completing an onsite customer feedback form or verbally can do so to any Larch Street Kids employee.

Customers that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.



G. Training

Training will be provided to:

- All members of the Larch Street Kids organization including employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of Larch Street Kids. These include salespersons, drivers, vendors, event operators, call centers and third party marketing agents; and;
- Those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions:

As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - o Use assistive devices;
 - o Require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - o Require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- Larch Street Kids' policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

Training Schedule:

Larch Street Kids will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or act on our behalf on the date of hire. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

Record of Training:

Larch Street Kids will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

Larch Street Kids shall notify customers that the documents related to the *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service* are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place owned and operated by Larch Street Kids, the Larch Street Kids' website and/or any other reasonable method.

Administration

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy or its related procedures, please contact:

Sherri Cole, Executive Director

Phone: (705) 688-8600

Email: scole.lsk@eastlink.ca

Website: www.larchstreetkids.com

Mail: Larch Street Kids Child Care Centre – C/O Sherri Cole - 124 Cedar St, Suite 107 – Sudbury, ON – P3E 1B4



The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The policy and its related procedures will be reviewed as required in the event of legislative changes

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act became law on June 13, 2005.

Under the act, Ontario is making the province accessible by 2025 through accessibility standards. These standards are the mandatory rules that business and organizations will have to follow in:

- Customer Service
- Transportation
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- The Built Environment

Accessibility standards, which will be phased in over time, are developed by people from the business and disability communities. The **first standard** – for **customer service** – is now law.

Public sector organizations need to comply with the standard by January 1, 2010. Private sector and **non-profit organizations need to comply by January 1, 2012.**

Accessibility standard for customer service for organizations with 20 or more employees:

-Accessible customer service is not about ramps or automatic door openers. It's about understanding that people with disabilities have different needs.

-To provide accessible customer service, organizations need to:

Step 1: Create and put in place a plan that:

- Considers a person's disability when communicating with them.
- Allows assistive devices in your workplace, like wheelchairs, walkers and oxygen tanks.
- Allows service animals.
- Welcomes support persons.
- Advises customers when accessible services aren't available.
- Invites customers to provide feedback.

Step 2: Train staff on accessible customer service.

Step 3: Put their plan in writing; let customers know how to find their plan (website); offer their plan in accessible formats (large print) if requested.

Step 4: Report their progress online.

Consider a person's disability when communicating with them. Accessible customer service is often about finding ways around barriers faced by your customers. Ensuring staff know what's expected of them when they communicate with customers with disabilities will help you deliver accessible customer service.

LSK will:

- Consider how people with various disabilities communicate.
- Ask your customers how you can best communicate with them.
- Ask yourself: how can I make communications accessible? Every situation is different and depends on the individual's needs.
- Get more details on various ways to communicate.

Ex: a dance studio offers their class schedule in paper format at the front desk. When a customer with low vision asks for the schedule in Braille, the manager explains that although it is not available in Braille, it is available in an accessible format on the studio's website. This works for the customer because she has a screen reader at home that reads what is displayed on the website.

Another customer, who has a learning disability, is having difficulty understanding a particular part of the schedule and simply asks the manager to read that part to him aloud.

Allow Assistive Devices

An assistive device is any piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help them with daily living. Some examples include: a wheelchair, screen reader, listening device or cane.

LSK will:

- Ask how to accommodate a customer with their assistive device.
- Offer helpful measures such as signing attendance boards or carrying school bags to lockers.
- Be aware of any potential dangers on the premises and inform the customer and offer an alternative option. For example, an open flame could be dangerous for someone with an oxygen tank.

Allow Service Animals

Guide dogs are not the only type of service animal. Other kinds of animals can be trained to help people with disabilities too. Welcome service animals into your workplace or business. If a service animal is excluded by law, provide another way for the person to access your goods and services.

LSK will:

- Identify the areas of the premises open to service animals.
- If service animals are excluded by law, provide an alternative area for the customer to receive services.

Welcome Support Persons

A support person does not have to be a paid support worker. He/she can be a family member or a friend. Support persons help someone with a disability perform daily tasks. Often people who have a support person are not able to do things by themselves (eat meals, use the washroom or change their clothes). Without support, that person may be unable to access your organization. Welcome support persons to your workplace or business. If an admission fee for a support person exists, it must be waived.

LSK will:

- Permit support persons in all areas as the person with the disability.
- Waive any admission fees for the support person.

Let Customers Know When Accessible Services Aren't Available

Sometimes accessibility features or services require repair or are just temporarily out of service (elevator or accessible washroom). When this happens, let your customers know by posting notice.

LSK will:

- Make a list of the facilities and services people with disabilities rely on.
- Prepare a notice in advance which will include: the reason for the disruption, how long the service will be unavailable for and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.
- Post the notice in a place where people are most likely to see it (entrance door, website, high-traffic area).

Invite Customers to Provide Feedback

A good way to learn about barriers that exist in your workplace is to collect comments from your customers with disabilities. Invite customers to give feedback on how you provide accessible customer service. Let customers know how to do this.

LSK will:

- Receive feedback (in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, or through the organization's website).
- Acknowledge customers who provide formal feedback along with action taken.
- Provide alternate means of providing feedback, if necessary.

