



CORPORATE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Reviewed:	
Program	November 2011
MCC	N/A
SMT	November 25, 2011

SECTION: BOARD OF HEALTH **POLICY NO.:** BH – 02 -12

SUBJECT: **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy**

APPROVED BY: Board of Health **DATE:** December 13, 2011

SUPERSEDES: NEW

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline parameters and guidelines which address integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity, in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), and all regulations pursuant to the Act.
- 1.2 The Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) is committed to being responsive to the diverse needs of all its residents by striving to provide services that are free of barriers and biases. The TBDHU strives to ensure that the key principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity are reflected and valued in our working environment.

2. POLICY

- 2.1 The TBDHU strives at all times to provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.
- 2.2 The TBDHU is committed to giving the public with disabilities the same opportunity to access our programs and services, and allow them to benefit from the same services in the same place and in a similar way as other clients.
- 2.3 The TBDHU is committed to excellence in serving all members of the public and in working effectively with partners and community groups including people with disabilities.
- 2.4 The TBDHU is committed to carrying out its responsibilities to service people with disabilities in the areas of guide dogs and service animals, support persons, assistive devices, disruption of services, training of staff, feedback process and alternative communication methods.

3. PROCEDURE

Guide Dogs and Service Animals

- 3.1 Guide dogs and service animals are permitted to accompany people with disabilities on TBDHU property and in areas of its buildings that are accessible to the public and other third parties unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. If the guide dog or service animal is excluded by law, TBDHU will look to other available measures to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from TBDHU's services.
- 3.2 Service Animals are working animals. TBDHU staff are not to distract or disrupt any service animal by touching, petting or talking to the animal.
- 3.3 When planning events and activities, TBDHU staff will make every reasonable effort to choose sites and locations where service animals are not excluded by law.

Support Persons

- 3.4 People with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person while participating in our programs, services, events or activities. At no time will people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on TBDHU properties or while attending TBDHU events or activities.
- 3.5 Where privacy is a concern, TBDHU staff will ask the person with a disability whether he or she would like his or her support person present.
- 3.6 When planning events, support persons will not be charged admission fees for TBDHU events.

Assistive Devices

- 3.7 People with disabilities may require assistive devices to access TBDHU programs, services, events or activities. Where necessary, they are allowed to use such devices. TBDHU staff should not touch or handle an assistive device without permission.
- 3.8 Where a client requests a device, staff will work with the program manager or another designated person to facilitate this request.
- 3.9 The following assistive device(s) will be available at our 999 Balmoral Street property for clients that request them:
 - Wheelchair
 - Emergency oxygen

Disruption of Services

- 3.10 Notices will be provided to the public when there is a planned or unexpected disruption of access to TBDHU facilities or services that may be used by people with disabilities.

These facilities, services or systems could include:

- Elevators
- Accessible washrooms and clinic rooms
- Ramps
- Mechanical doors

- 3.11 This notice will include the nature of the disruption, the reason for it, its expected duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The Disruption of Service Notification Form (Attachment 8.1) can be found on the TBDHU's document management system (Docushare).

- 3.12 On TBDHU properties, the notice will be placed in writing at all building entrances, all reception desks, and at the disrupted facility or service site. The notice will be placed at a height that will allow a person using a wheelchair to read it.

- 3.13 Notices of planned and unexpected disruptions will also be posted on the TBDHU website and/or announced publicly as soon as the disruption and pertinent details are available.

Training

- 3.14 TBDHU will provide appropriate training to all employees, students, volunteers and Board of Health members noting that the legislation requires training for: every person who participates in the development of TBDHU policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of programs or services; all staff who deal with the public; and third parties acting on behalf of the TBDHU.

- 3.15 Training will be provided for all current staff within the required timelines for implementation of the legislation. Training will be provided for new staff during the staff orientation process recognizing the need for training to occur as soon as practical after the assignment of applicable duties.

- 3.16 Training will include:

- A review of the purpose of the Act and requirements of the Regulation
- Review of policies, procedures, practices and how we communicate these to the public and how TBDHU provides programs and services to people with disabilities
- Best practices on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- Instructions on how to interact with people with a disability who use assistive devices, service animals or a support person
- How to assist people with a disability if they are having difficulty accessing TBDHU services
- Instructions on how to use equipment or assistive devices available at the TBDHU will be provided by the applicable manager

- 3.17 All staff will receive training on an ongoing basis when additional standards are released. Additional training will be provided for staff working in certain programs or team areas as identified by the program manager.
- 3.18 Any amendments due to changes in legislation or where new programs are developed will require amendments to training and additional mandatory training sessions.
- 3.19 All training will be tracked by human resources.
- 3.20 In circumstances where the TBDHU is contracting services of an individual/organization to perform work on its behalf that will require the contracted service provider to be in direct contact with the public, the TBDHU will require:
- Evidence that the employees deployed in our service by the contracted service provider have the accessibility training required under the customer service standard of the Act; or
 - That the employees of the contracted service provider who work in our premises be required to attend a training opportunity organized by TBDHU.
- 3.21 Any person who attends the mandatory training session on the AODA Standards will be required to complete an Affirmation regarding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (Attachment 8.2) which will be maintained in their personnel file.

Feedback Process

- 3.22 TBDHU will have a mechanism to allow its clients to provide feedback on the accessibility of TBDHU programs, services, events and activities.
- 3.23 Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public through signage and a public handout available at any reception desk.
- 3.24 Clients can provide feedback about the way TBDHU provides programs and services to people with disabilities through any of the following:
- Obtaining a Client Feedback Form (Attachment 8.3) and envelope from any reception desk at any TBDHU location, completing it and then returning it to any reception desk.
 - Phoning the TBDHU and asking to speak with the communications manager. The communications manager or designate will complete the Client Feedback Form on the client's behalf.
 - Writing and mailing or emailing a letter addressed to the communications manager
 - Downloading the Client Feedback Form (attachment 8.3) from the TBDHU website and mailing it to the communications manager
 - Sending an email to the communications manager
- 3.25 All feedback submitted from the public will be documented by the communications manager and provided to the appropriate manager who will determine the appropriate course of action.

- 3.26 When requested or appropriate, clients can expect a response within 3 business days of the date the feedback was submitted. Information about our process and availability of documents will be readily available to the public on the TBDHU website, in person, by telephone, in writing or email.
- 3.27 The communications manager is responsible for providing a summary of all feedback to senior management, annually.

Alternative Communication Methods

- 3.28 When TBDHU staff communicates with individuals who have a disability, they will do so in a manner which takes into account the person's disability.
- 3.29 Plain language will be used when developing documents, advertising and promotional materials targeting the general public.
- 3.30 The TBDHU will make every effort to ensure that our website is accessible by all clients including those with disabilities.
- 3.31 People with disabilities may request information, forms or other documents be provided in an alternate format. Where the TBDHU is unable to provide the requested format, an explanation will be provided to the individual and the TBDHU will work with the individual to find a suitable alternative. Alternative formats to consider may include:
- Large print for people with low vision (including adjustable sized print for electronic materials)
 - Braille used by some people who are blind or deaf-blind
 - Audio formats such as digital recordings or CDs
 - Videos that may be helpful to people with certain learning disabilities
 - Verbally read materials by a staff member to a person with a disability
 - Easy-read, simplified summaries of materials for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities
- 3.32 Staff who are required to communicate with clients over the telephone will be trained to communicate clearly or slowly with clients in plain language.
- 3.33 Where telephone communication is not suitable to an individual's communication needs, employees will offer to communicate with clients by email or Bell relay service assuming that that the client in question has the appropriate equipment to be able to use Bell relay service.
- 3.34 Upon request and where possible, the TBDHU will consider real-time captioning services, sign language interpreters or deaf-blind interpreters so that people may participate effectively in conferences/seminars/events. Availability of these services will be identified on conference, seminar or event promotional materials.
- 3.35 TBDHU staff will provide reasonable assistance to better serve clients who may have a disability. To better serve clients who are hard of hearing, the TBDHU will provide a pen and paper should the individual wish to write down the reason for their visit.

3.36 The TBDHU will provide accessible invoices to all of our clients. For this reason invoices will be provided in the following formats upon request:

- Hard copy in regular or large print (where possible)
- E-mail

3.37 Staff will answer any questions clients may have about the content of the invoice or records in person, by telephone or e-mail.

4. SCOPE

4.1 This policy applies to all persons employed by TBDHU including employees, students, volunteers, Board of Health members, and in some cases, agency partners who deal with the public, or third parties acting on the behalf of the TBDHU.

5. RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 **Managers** are responsible for ensuring that accessibility procedures are developed, implemented and evaluated in their program areas in accordance with applicable legislation.

5.2 All **employees** are responsible for being familiar with and following the procedures that are in place and attend any necessary accessibility awareness training sessions.

5.3 **Human Resources** is responsible for ensuring that newly hired employees have reviewed this policy, and that it is understood by each new employee during their documentation process.

5.4 **Human Resources**, in conjunction with the **program manager**, is responsible for ensuring all staff receive any necessary accessibility awareness training required.

5.5 The **Communications Manager** is responsible for receiving and tracking client feedback, ensuring client feedback is addressed by the appropriate manager in a timely manner, and providing senior management with an annual summary of client feedback.

6. DEFINITIONS

6.1 **“Assistive Devices”**: Auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. wheelchairs or emergency oxygen).

6.2 **“Contracted Service Provider”**: A person or business that is hired by the TBDHU to provide a specific service.

6.2 **“Disabilities”**: As per the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, a “disability” means:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without 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 a 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 the benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”)

6.3 **“Persons with Disabilities”**: Individuals who are afflicted with a disability as defined under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

6.4 **“Service Animals”**: Any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

6.5 **“Support Persons”**: Any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs or with access to programs, services, activities or events.

7. REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

7.1 *Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005.*

7.2 *Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990.*

7.3 *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.*

8. ATTACHMENTS

8.1 Disruption in Service Notification Form

8.2 Affirmation Regarding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

8.3 Client Feedback Form

ATTACHMENT 8.1

DISRUPTION IN SERVICE NOTIFICATION FORM



Disruption in Service Notification Form

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit will provide as much advance notice as possible for any planned or unplanned disruptions in service or in the availability of accessibility programs. This notice will remain posted until all services are restored. We will provide notice or restore services on the TBDHU website or by radio broadcast.

The _____ will be out of service from
Service/Technology Piece

_____ hrs until _____ hrs for/due to
dd/mm/yy time dd/mm/yy time

- Routine scheduled maintenance
- Emergency maintenance
- Other: _____

Alternative options:

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. If you have any questions or concerns please direct them to Facility and Fleet Coordinator at:

**Thunder Bay District Health Unit
999 Balmoral Street
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6E7**

Thank you for your understanding and patience. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

ATTACHMENT 8.2

AFFIRMATION REGARDING THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT



**Affirmation Regarding the Accessibility for
Ontarians with Disabilities Act**

I have read the Thunder Bay District Health Unit's policies and procedures related to accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities and acknowledge the following:

- Health Unit staff will provide services to people with disabilities in an equitable manner which respects their dignity and independence.
- Provision of programs and services to people with disabilities will be integrated unless an alternate measure is required.
- Service animals are permitted in areas of our premises which are accessible to the public.
- Support persons may accompany and assist people with disabilities when accessing services.
- People with disabilities may use assistive devices when accessing our programs and services.
- Staff and members of the public may provide feedback related to issues of accessibility.

I have received formal training about:

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- How to use the equipment or assistive devices currently available on Health Unit premises, or other ways that may help with the provision of programs and services to people with disabilities.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Health Unit's programs, services, events and activities.
- The Health Unit's policies, procedures and practices relating to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

ATTACHMENT 8.3

CLIENT FEEDBACK FORM



Client Feedback Form

Thunder Bay District Health Unit is committed to meeting and surpassing the service expectations of all its clients, including people with disabilities. Comments about how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

As a client, you can provide feedback in any of the following ways:

- Requesting a Client Feedback Form from any reception area at any Health Unit location, completing it, and then returning it.
- Calling the Health Unit and asking to speak with someone in communications who will complete the Client Feedback Form on your behalf.
- Writing and mailing a letter to:
**Manager of Communications
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
999 Balmoral Street
Thunder Bay, On P7B 6E7**
- Downloading the Client Feedback Form from the Health Unit's website and mailing it to the address above.
- Sending an email to Carol.Bold@tbdhu.com.



Client Feedback Form

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with feedback about our programs and services. We are committed to serving you in a way that best meets your needs.

Please return this form (in the envelope provided) to a staff member at the main reception desk or mail to:

**Manager of Communications
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
999 Balmoral Street
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6E7**

Date: _____

Name (optional): _____

Telephone (optional): _____

Email address (optional): _____

Comment/suggestion:

Please note:

If you chose to provide us with your contact information, we will follow-up with you within 3 business days.