



Accessibility - Customer Service

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Espanola Regional Hospital and Health Centre (ERHHC) recognizes our corporate and ethical obligations outlined within the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA). The purpose of the Act is *to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.*

This policy applies to all ERHHC personnel who interact with the public, whether they do so as employees, volunteers, agents or otherwise.

Guiding Principles:

In keeping with the principles set out in the AODA, the ERHHC is committed to providing access to those in need, in a respectful manner that focuses on the unique needs of each individual.

Thus, ERHHC will make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties adhere to the following guiding principles as set out in Ontario Regulation 429/07:

- a) The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b) The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- c) Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

Communication:

When communicating with a person with a disability, personnel will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability and will make reasonable efforts to ensure that information is transferred and understood. A simple "can I help you" approach will form the basis of the approach. ERHHC personnel are encouraged to look for signs of comprehension, or confusion, during the exchange of information, providing clarity in a respectful way as required.

Use of Assistive Devices:

ERHHC recognizes the importance of the use of assistive devices for persons with some disabilities and the positive contribution the devices may have on mobility and access. ERHHC will train staff in the use of devices provided by ERHHC (for example – walkers and wheelchairs). In addition, ERHHC realizes that persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices while accessing services and so ERHHC encourages this practice as well.

Use of Service Animals:

ERHHC recognizes that some people with disabilities utilize service animals as a method of assistance to their mobility. Service animals are permitted in non-patient care areas of ERHHC's hospital sites. Patient care areas are not open to this practice, for infection control reasons. ERHHC staff recognize that service animals are not pets and will treat these animals accordingly. In the patient care areas of ERHHC, persons requiring alternate assistance, due the exclusion of service animals, or if the service animal is excluded by law from the Hospital's premises, staff will provide alternate guidance on an as-required basis, sensitive to the needs of the individual person's disabilities.

Use of Support Persons:

ERHHC understands that a person with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter the premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be reasonably prevented from having access to his or her support person while under care at ERHHC. (Some procedural situations may require the supporting individual to temporarily be excluded).

Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

- a) If there is a temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part that are essential to the access to services of persons with disabilities, ERHHC shall provide publically displayed notice of the disruption.
- b) The notice of the disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services (if any) that are available.
- c) Notice may be given by posting the information on ERHHC's hospital site, website, or by such other method as is reasonable to the particular circumstance.

Training

- a) ERHHC will provide appropriate levels of training to all employees and agents who deal with the public (or other third parties acting on behalf of ERHHC) as well as those staff who are involved in the development and approvals of policies, practices and procedures that deal with the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties;
- b) Records of training will be kept in the Human Resources Department;
- c) Training will include the following topics:
 - i) The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
 - ii) The requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
 - iii) How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities

- iv) How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
 - v) How to use the assistive devices available at ERHHC
 - vi) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing ERHHC's services
 - vii) ERHHC's policies, practices and procedures relating to the provision of goods and services to the public and other third parties, and
- d) Staff will also be trained on an ongoing as needed basis when changes are made to the applicable policies or processes that affect persons with disabilities.

Feedback Process and Complaints

- a) ERHHC welcomes feedback concerning our services, including comments on the effectiveness of our customer service processes for persons with disabilities; and
- b) Feedback regarding ERHHC's provision of goods and services to people with disabilities can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by utilizing email.
- c) Complaints will be addressed according to ERHHC's policy concerning complaints (see Administration Complaint Procedure Policy).
- d) Feedback and complaints will be directed to the CEO. The CEO will be responsible for initiating a response.

Availability of the Accessible Customer Service Documents

ERHHC shall provide posted notice to the public stating that copies of corporate policies/procedures under the ACT are available to the public. Thus, upon request, ERHHC shall provide copies of related documents in a reasonable manner. This information will be provided in a manner that facilitates communication with a person with disabilities.

DEFINITIONS

The AODA and Ontario Regulation 429/07 contain and refer to various definitions that are relevant to this policy, some of which are set out below:

- a) **Assistive device** means,
 - any device that is designed, made or adapted to assist a person perform a particular task and may include, but is not limited to, wheelchairs, reading machines, recording machines, hearing devices and devices for grasping.
- b) **barrier** means,
 - anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice ("obstacle").
- c) **disability** means,
 - i) 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,
- ii) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
 - iii) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
 - iv) a mental disorder, or
 - v) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 ("handicap")
- d) **guide dog** means
a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations (Blind Persons' Rights Act 1990 s1 (1))
- e) **service animal** means an animal acting as a service animal for a person with a disability,
- i) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
 - ii) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability
- f) **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 or medical needs or with access to goods or services

REFERENCES:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
- Ontario Regulation 429/07 - Accessibility Standards For Customer Service
- Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2009, April). *Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.*