

## CUSTOMER SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

### **Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities**

Yonge Hearts Child Care Centre is committed to excellence in serving all customers, including people with varying abilities. We are committed to ensuring that participants and clients with disabilities receive accessible programs and services with the same quality and timelines as others do, wherever possible. Yonge Hearts supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in our program and services as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001 and the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

It is acknowledged that providing an accessible program and services at Yonge Hearts is a challenge and sometimes not possible. Where this is the case, the Centre is committed to ensuring appropriate referrals.

We are further committed to ensuring that our policies, practises and procedures comply with the following core principals:

1. Dignity and Independence - Goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities at all times.
2. Integration - The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities will be integrated with the provision of goods and services to others unless alternative measures are required, on a temporary or permanent basis, to allow persons with disabilities to benefit.
3. Equal Opportunity - Persons with disabilities will be given equal opportunity that is given to others to obtain, use and benefit from goods and services.

We will ensure that any policy that does not respect and promote dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**“Assistive Device”** - Is any device used to assist a person with a disability in performing a task or tasks or to provide assistance in the activities of daily living.

**“Disability”** - As per the Act and the Human Right Code, means:

(a) 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 co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.

(b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

(c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

(d) a mental disorder, or

(e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1977, (“handicap”)

**“Persons with Disability”** – Is any person who has a disability as defined under the Act, and the Human Rights Code.

**“Service Animal”** - An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,

(a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by that person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or

(b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

**“Support Person”** - A person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help him or her with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

**“We”, “Our” and “Staff”** - Refers to “Our Centre” and it’s employees, volunteers and/or contractors.

### **Assistive Devices**

It is our policy to allow people to use their personal assistive devices to access our services wherever possible. In the event that Yonge Hearts provides assistive devices, we will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with those devices to assist our families in accessing our services.

If a person with a disability is unable to use their personal assistive device or one provided by the Centre, we will use our best effort to provide an alternative means of assistance to allow that person to access our services.

### **Communication**

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disabilities. We may request information regarding an individual's limitations and/or restrictions as is reasonable and necessary for the purpose of determining the feasibility of an accommodation or providing the most appropriate accommodation. Any information provided will be held in strict confidence and only shared with the Director or designate for the purposes of assessing and/or providing an appropriate accommodation.

### **Service Animals**

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a service animal, we will ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with him/her unless the service animal is otherwise excluded by law.

Where a service animal must be excluded, Yonge Hearts will explain why this is the case and attempt, to the extent possible, to use other methods to provide assistance to enable the person with the disability to obtain, use, and benefit from the Centre's services. The service animal must be under the care and control of the individual at all times.

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

### **Support Persons**

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises and, when possible, on field trips.

Where there are costs or admission fees associated with field trips or other events either on or off the Centre premises, the Centre will cover any additional costs.

Accommodations may be made for individuals with support persons in advance of training seminars or events at the discretion of the Director.

We may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when at the Centre, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others in the facility.

### **Notice of Temporary Disruption**

Yonge Hearts will communicate to the public when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access the programs and services are unavailable.

Any notice of disruption will include the following information:

- (a) That a service is unavailable
- (b) The reason for the disruption
- (c) The anticipated duration of the disruption
- (d) Alternative services, if available

Centre staff will provide such notice by posting the information in a conspicuous location by the main entrance.

### **Staff Training**

Yonge Hearts Child Care Centre will provide training as required under the AODA to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public on our behalf, as well as to those who develop customer service policies and related practices and procedures for the Centre.

Training will include:

- The purpose of the Accessibilities of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person
- How to use any assistive devices or equipment provided by the Centre to help people with disabilities to access our program and services
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing programs and services
- Familiarization with the Centre's policies, practices and procedures relating to the provision of programs or services to persons with disabilities
- Ongoing training that will occur on an as needed basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

The degree and format of the training will be tailored to suit individual's interactions with participants or clients and his/her involvement in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of programs and services. Training will be provided as soon as practicable after the person is assigned to the role or duties that require training.

Yonge Hearts will keep records of the training provided, which will include the dates when the training occurred and the names and number of people trained.

Contractors and consultants providing services on behalf of Yonge Hearts to participants or clients will be required to ensure that their staff has the appropriate training.

### **Feedback Process**

To ensure the best possible service, Yonge Hearts invites individuals who wish to provide feedback, and if necessary, file a complaint on the way we provide services to people with disabilities.

Feedback may be provided to the Director of the Centre in writing via email and/or hard copy.

Complaints should be made directly in writing to the Board of Directors and submitted to the Director.

Complaints will be addressed according to our conflict resolution procedures. Clients can expect a written response to their feedback and/or complaint within thirty days.

### **Notice of Availability of Documents**

We will provide the public notice of the availability of the documents, required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, (O.Reg429/07) upon request.

Notice of availability will be provided on our website and/or will be posted at a conspicuous location at the Centre.

### **Format of Documents**

If we are required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, we will take into account the person's ability to access the information and will provide the document or information contained in the document in a format that meets those needs as agreed upon with the person.