

Policy Title: **Accessible Customer Service**
Policy Type: Management
Approval: ELT & President & CEO
Date of Last Revision: July 2024

Purpose

Habitat for Humanity Canada ("Habitat Canada") is dedicated to providing services that uphold the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We aim to ensure equitable access to our services for all donors, volunteers, employees, and partners, fostering an inclusive environment. This policy complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

This policy is publicly accessible to all Habitat Canada donors, volunteers, customers, and partners.

Providing Services to People with Disabilities

Habitat Canada is committed to excellence in serving all donors, volunteers, employees, and partners, including people with disabilities. We will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

1. Communication

- We will tailor our communication methods to meet the specific needs of people with disabilities. Comprehensive training will be provided to staff on interacting and communicating with individuals with various types of disabilities to ensure respectful, inclusive, and effective communication. This includes:
 - Offering alternative communication methods such as email, text, or written notes if verbal communication is challenging.
 - Providing documents in accessible formats, such as large print, braille, digital formats, and audio.

2. Telephone Services

- We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone services to our donors, volunteers, employees, and partners. Communication on the phone will be clear, in plain language, and paced appropriately for understanding. We will offer alternatives such as letter mail, email, video calls, or text messaging if telephone communication is unsuitable for an individual's needs.

3. Assistive Devices

- 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 employees are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities while accessing our support or services. We will ensure that employees know how to use the assistive devices available at our offices for those with disabilities.

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4. Documentation

- We are committed to providing all written communications, including invoices, charitable tax receipts, and letters, in accessible formats. This includes but is not limited to large print, braille, digital formats, and audio. We will respond to any questions about the content of any written document in person, by telephone, email, or other accessible means as required by the individual. Additionally, we will ensure that all documentation complies with current accessibility standards and guidelines.

Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal to the areas of our offices that are open to the public and other third parties. We will ensure that all staff, 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.

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Habitat Canada's offices with his or her 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.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of facilities or services used by people with disabilities, Habitat Canada will promptly notify donors, volunteers, employees, and partners. The notice will detail the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and any alternative facilities or services available. Notices will be posted at all public entrances and reception areas.

Training for Staff

Habitat Canada will provide training to all employees, volunteers, and others who interact with the public and all those involved in developing and approving policies, practices, and procedures. Training will include the following:

- The purposes and requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the customer service standard.
- Interaction and communication strategies for people with various disabilities.
- Proper use of assistive devices and interaction with service animals and support persons.
- Procedures to assist individuals with disabilities in accessing Habitat Canada's services.

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- Habitat Canada's specific policies, practices, and procedures related to these customer service standards.

Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices, and procedures that affect the way services are provided to people with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices, and procedures.

Employment and Workplace Accessibility

We will ensure that accommodations are made for employees and job applicants with disabilities, including:

- Notifying the public and employees about the availability of accommodation during the recruitment process.
- Providing accessible formats and communication support upon request.

Undue Hardship

Habitat Canada acknowledges that providing accommodation may sometimes present undue hardship. Undue hardship refers to significant difficulty or expense incurred by an organization when accommodating a person with a disability. This may include substantial financial costs, health and safety concerns, or operational difficulties. In situations where undue hardship is determined, Habitat Canada will explore and implement alternative accommodations to the best of our ability.

Feedback Process

Our goal is to meet and surpass public expectations while serving people with disabilities. Comments on our services are welcome and appreciated. Feedback regarding how Habitat Canada provides services to people with disabilities can be made by letter, email, voicemail, or in person. All feedback should be directed to the Director, Human Resources. A response can be expected within 10 days.

Policy Review Period

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant legislation. The review process will involve input from stakeholders, including employees, volunteers, donors, and individuals with disabilities.

Policy Modifications and Questions

We are committed to creating customer service policies that promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Any changes to this policy will consider their impact on individuals with disabilities. Policies that do not respect and promote dignity and independence will be modified or removed. For questions about this policy or its purpose, contact the Director, Human Resources, for clarification.