

1.0.3.3 Accessibility

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Policy

KW Counselling Services is committed to excellence in serving all clients including those seeking counselling services, workshop and program participants, people making service inquiries, and visitors to the Agency. This Accessibility Policy ensures that workers with disabilities are given an equal opportunity to work and clients with disabilities are given an equal opportunity to access services. This policy also ensures that services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

This Accessibility Policy is informed by the following laws: the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (the AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (the IASR).

Disability definition: any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness. A condition of mental impairment, mental disorder, developmental disability, learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language. Disabilities can be visible, hidden, permanent, or occur only at certain times.

Procedure

To ensure that Board members and workers comply with the Agency's duty to accommodate people with disabilities training will be provided at the time of orientation, when changes are made to the policy and when changes are made to the pertinent laws mandating accessibility. The duty to accommodate is the most appropriate solution that best meets the individual needs of the person with a disability and must be made to the point of undue hardship for the Agency.

Training will include the following:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards
- 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
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Agency's programs or services - see Training Tips section

Assistive devices

The Agency will ensure that Board members and workers are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities. Assistive devices are tools, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communication and lifting.

Communication & Accessible formats

Board members and workers will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. When unsure about the best approach they are encouraged to ask the person politely and not assume they know how best to communicate with the person. Request for accessible formats can be emailed to HR@kwcounselling.com or by speaking with HR. A copy of KW Counselling Service's Accessibility Policy is available on the website and available upon request.

Service Animals

Service animals are allowed on our premises. A service animal is an animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability. The person may provide a letter from an authorized professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability or it may be readily apparent.

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. A support person's role may include tasks such as helping with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs.

Notice of temporary disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for workers or customers with disabilities, alternative services and assistance will be provided, if available. Agency staff will attempt to notify workers and clients promptly and directly via KW Counselling Services Website, signage at entrances/exits, notices to staff, Radio/TV announcements as appropriate. Program Directors will ensure the process is implemented as outlined and will give clear direction to staff in the event of disruption to services.

Feedback Process

Feedback on the way the Agency can improve access to people with disabilities can: verbally discuss their concerns, send an email to hr@kwcounselling.com or complete a Service Feedback Form for Persons with a Disability found on the website.

All feedback will be directed to the appropriate Program Director and the Executive Director. Clients can expect to hear back within two business days. Complaints will be addressed according to KW Counselling Services complaint management procedures.

Training Tips:

Tips for interacting with assistive devices:

- Don't touch or handle personal devices without permission.
- Never move the device out of reach.
- Respect personal space.
- Remember to be patient.

Tips for interacting with service animals:

- Do not address or touch the animal-they are working!
- Pet or service animal? Not sure? Ask.
- Allow the handler to care for and supervise their animal.

Tips for interacting with support persons:

- Which person is the client? Follow their lead or ask when you are unsure.
- Speak directly to the client, not the support person.
- Remember a translator or interpreter is NOT there to participate in the conversation or to provide their personal opinions.

Tips for interacting with someone with vision loss:

- When guiding a person with vision loss, offer your elbow.
- Make it common practice to describe services being offered.
- Offer to read out loud written documents when not available in Braille.
- Identify yourself and speak clearly and directly to the person with vision loss.

Tips for interacting with someone with hearing loss:

- Speak clearly, repeat or paraphrase and ensure your mouth is not covered.
- Have pen and paper available to communicate through notes.
- If the person is using a hearing aid, try to reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- Speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.

Tips for interacting with someone with a learning disability:

- Offer to read, discuss and explain documents.
- Avoid lengthy conversations to allow time to process the information provided.
- Be patient.

Tips for interacting with someone with speech impairment:

- Allow the person to finish their own sentences.
- Never assume they also have another disability.
- Ask simple questions that can be answered with a yes or no.
- Do not pretend to understand what the person is saying. If you are not sure, apologize and ask the person to repeat.

Tips for interacting with someone with a mental health disability:

- Remember they deserve the same respect and consideration as anyone else.

- Remain confident and reassuring.
- Ask them to tell you the best way to help.

Tips for interacting with someone with a physical disability:

- Never touch or move their assistive devices without prior permission.
- Never leave the person or their wheelchair in an awkward or undignified position.
- Always try to make eye contact from the same level when having a conversation.