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## Accessibility in Customer Service Policy

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### Intent

Hope and Healing International (“Hope and Healing”) is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for all stakeholders, including clients, supporters, employees, job applicants, suppliers, and any visitors who enter the premises, work for the organization, access information provided by the organization, or use the organization’s goods and services.

Hope and Healing will work to break down the barriers that prevent or limit persons with disabilities from employment, receipt of goods and services, the built environment, and information and communication through the implementation of accessibility standards.

### Definitions

*Disability:*

1. 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, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other service animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
4. a mental disorder.

*Accessible formats:* Include but are not limited to large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

*Assistive device:* A technical aid, communication device, or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

*Communication supports:* Captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

*Conversion-ready:* An electronic or digital format that facilitates conversion into an acceptable format.

*Service animal:* An animal that can be recognized by visual indicators such as a vest or harness that is being used by an individual with a disability for reasons relating to the person's disability.

*Support person:* Another person who accompanies an individual with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or access to goods and services.

## **Guidelines**

### **Employment**

Hope and Healing will make every effort to identify, remove, and prevent barriers by developing inclusive employment procedures that support persons with disabilities with accommodations during the recruitment and selection stages, and throughout the employment life cycle.

#### Recruitment and Hiring

Hope and Healing understands that improving workplace accessibility and ensuring an accessible recruitment and selection process for applicants with disabilities can expand the pool of talented candidates. Upon request, the organization will provide candidates with reasonable accommodations during the interview and selection process. Where an accommodation is requested, the organization will consult with the applicant to arrange suitable accommodations, such as providing the application in an alternate or accessible format.

The organization's interview process will focus on experience and skills and will not discriminate against candidates who have a disability or require an accommodation. Hope and Healing is committed to hiring decisions that are unbiased and based on qualifications and past experience. Successful candidates will be made aware of policies and supports for accommodations upon completion of the recruitment process.

#### Training and Development

Hope and Healing recognizes that skills development and career planning can enrich the employment experience, increase engagement, and reduce turnover for individuals with disabilities. The organization will align training and development programs to meet the needs of employees with disabilities and provide training as soon as reasonably practicable upon the person being assigned to applicable duties. Training programs will be designed with flexibility to allow customization for the individual requirements of the employee, such as providing training materials in accessible or conversion-ready formats that take into account the need of the employee. The organization will consider employee barriers when implementing performance management processes, or when offering career development, employment support, or advancement opportunities.

## Communication

Hope and Healing will provide or arrange for accessible formats and communication supports for employees, upon request. The organization will consult with the employee to determine the specific barrier and the best way to provide support. Such accessible formats and communication supports are conversion-ready and will be provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost to employees.

When communicating with or providing information to an employee who requires accommodation or assistance due to a disability, the organization will ensure that all communication with the individual is completed in a manner that takes into account the individual's disability. Where an assistive device is used, the organization will reasonably accommodate the use of the device.

## Emergency Response

If necessary or if requested, Hope and Healing will create individualized workplace emergency response plans for employees with disabilities. The emergency response plan will consider the unique challenges created by the individual's disability and the physical nature of the workplace and will be created in consultation with the employee. If an employee with a disability requires assistance from a support person during an emergency, the company will designate a fellow employee to act as such.

Customized emergency response plans will be reviewed when:

- The employee moves to a different physical location in the organization;
- The employee's overall accommodation needs, or plans are reviewed;
- The organization reviews general emergency response policies.

## Accommodation

The duty to accommodate is required of all employers, in all jurisdictions in Canada, and encompasses providing respect and dignity, individualized accommodation, integration and participation, and barrier-free designs. Hope and Healing will provide individual accommodations to support the needs of employees with disabilities. Personalized accommodation plans will be designed to allow employees to contribute and participate in job related functions and activities to the best of their abilities. The process of accommodating individuals will take a consultative approach and is a shared obligation of the organization, the employee, and any applicable professionals required to assist the employee throughout the process.

## Return to Work

Hope and Healing is committed to a supportive return-to-work program and will develop and implement return-to-work processes for employees who are absent from work due to a disability and require accommodations in order to return to work. The organization will work with the employee to develop an individualized return-to-work plan and support the employee in

the transition period by addressing any barriers. The return-to-work process will outline the steps the company will take to facilitate the employee's return to work and use documented individual accommodation plans.

### Redeployment

If an employee cannot be accommodated in their current position, even with accommodations to either the job processes or hours, Hope and Healing will consider redeployment by placing the employee in an alternative position within the organization. The organization will work with Human Resources and the employee to determine whether there is another available position. If the accommodation requires a substantial change in the position, involving duties or hours, the position may be redesigned.

### Inability to Accommodate

Hope and Healing will provide workplace accommodation up to the point of undue hardship. Undue hardship may occur where it is established that no forms of appropriate accommodation exist, or where the creation of accommodation would create a health and safety hazard or cause unreasonable costs for the organization.

Where a necessary accommodation is found to cause undue hardship on the organization, Hope and Healing will work to find a fair and equitable compromise that meets the needs of the employee and the organization to the greatest extent possible.

## **Customer Service**

### Access to Goods and Services

Hope and Healing will seek to provide barrier-free access to the organization's goods and services for all customers. Where barriers cannot be removed, alternate means for accessing goods or services will be provided to the best of the organization's ability.

### Support Persons and Service Animals

If a customer with a disability is accompanied by a support person, Hope and Healing will ensure that both persons may enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person.

A customer with a disability accompanied by a service animal will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law.

### Communication

Hope and Healing understands the importance of accessible digital and non-digital forms of communication and will do its best to provide accessible types of communication and information to all individuals with disabilities.

Such accessible formats and communication supports will be provided upon request, in a timely manner and at no additional cost.

The following are examples of strategies and methods that Hope and Healing will use to communicate in a variety of ways:

- using plain language to make a document easier to read for people with certain learning disabilities;
- using e-mail to communicate with customers who are deaf or have speech impairments;
- providing written handouts of commonly-spoken information;
- using large print for people who have low vision;
- providing easy-read, simplified summaries of materials for people with developmental or intellectual disabilities;
- offering phone service rather than requiring in person service for people with physical disability;
- offering assistance of a staff person to complete a transaction.

Hope and Healing will train staff who communicate with clients and supporters on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

The content of training will provide guidance on:

- a review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07;
- a review of practices and procedures relating to the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities;
- how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities who use assistive devices;
- how to interact with and serve people with disabilities who require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal;
- how to interact with and serve people with disabilities who require the assistance of a support person;
- what to do if a person with disability is having difficulty in accessing the organization's services.

### Service Disruptions

Service disruptions may occur for reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of Hope and Healing. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customers with disabilities rely on to access or use goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice.

When disruptions occur, the organization will:

- Post notices in the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption;

- Update the organization's website with information about the disruption;
- Contact customers with appointments; or
- By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

The organization will make every reasonable effort to indicate when services will resume and suggest alternatives that can be utilized during the disruption. In some circumstances, such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions or emergencies, advance notice may not be possible.

### Emergency Notifications

Hope and Healing will provide emergency and public safety information, plans and procedures, maps and warning signs at evacuation points, and any other emergency alert information, in accessible formats or with appropriate communication supports, upon request.

The organization will:

- Work with any individuals requesting information and to see how to best meet their needs;
- Ensure emergency information can be seen, read, and heard by anyone, including people with disabilities; and
- If a person with a disability requires assistance from a support person in case of an emergency, make sure an employee is available to act as such.

### Customer Feedback

Customer feedback can lead to improved service, increased clientele, and a reduction in complaints. Hope and Healing will ensure that feedback can be provided by customers with disabilities through a variety of mechanisms, such as in person, by mail, by phone or by e-mail.

- using HR e-mail box - [hr@hopeandhealing.org](mailto:hr@hopeandhealing.org)
- using e-mail address on a website – [info@hopeandhealing.org](mailto:info@hopeandhealing.org)
- calling Human Resources - 905-640-6464, ext. 238
- submitting a suggestion in a written form to HR – PO BOX 800, Stouffville, ON L4A 7Z9, Canada, Attn: Human Resources.

### **Building Accessibility**

Hope and Healing will work to ensure that the built environment, including building interior and exterior, are designed to facilitate barrier-free access to goods or services for customers and employees. If areas of the built environment are not accessible for certain individuals with disabilities, the organization will work with the individual to provide an alternate means of access.

### **Compliance with Government of Canada Standards**

Hope and Healing's 'Accessibility in Customer Service' Policy may be impacted by any/ all changes to the accessibility standards for customer

service initiated by the Government of Canada and the Ontario Human Rights Code.