



## **Accessible Customer Service Policy**

### **Statement of Commitment**

Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka is committed to the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion for all people. Our policies are developed to facilitate equal opportunity for people with disabilities to access, use and benefit from our services or programs with the same quality and timeliness that others receive.

### **Accessible Customer Service Plan**

#### **Definitions**

“Assistive devices” shall mean an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).

“Disabilities” shall mean the same as the definition of “disability” found in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Persons with Disabilities” shall mean those individuals who have a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Service Animals” shall mean a service animal accompanying a person with a disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or 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 persons” shall mean any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, friend to who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

## **Practices and Procedures**

### Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability and preferred method of communication. Staff will communicate in the first person with the individual accessing services and will make every effort to secure interpreters, notetakers or intervenors as needed.

### Support persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them at all times while receiving services through Deaf Access. Fees will not be charged by Deaf Access for support persons facilitating the participation and inclusion of a community member with a disability.

### Service animals

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on all parts of our premises. Where service animals are not clearly identified, the owner may be required to provide pertinent documentation. Should off-site events be held on premises that do not allow service animals, this notice will be available to the public in advance on both print and web notices.

### Assistive devices

We will ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our programs and services, or those of our partner agencies at all four office sites.

### Notice of temporary disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities at any of our office locations, Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka will notify customers promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities.

### Training

Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with our consumers, the public or other third parties on our behalf. Training will also be provided to people involved in the development of policies, plans, practices and procedures related to the provision of our programs and services.

Individuals in the following positions will be trained:

Executive Director, Coordinator of Interpreting and Notetaking Services, Community Support Services Worker, Community Outreach Worker, Coordinator of Family, Child and Youth Services, Employment Advisor, ASL Instructors, Volunteers and Students

This training will be provided to staff, students and volunteers within three months of the commencement of work with the agency.

Training will include:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- Deaf Access' plan related to the customer service standard.
- 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
- How to use the TTY, accessible door operators, and any other accessibility equipment on site.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our programs and services

Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service plan.

#### Notice of availability

Deaf Access will notify the public that our policies are available upon request in print form in all office locations or by download from our website.

#### Modifications to this or other policies

Any policy of Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Any complaints related to accessible customer service will be received and processed in accordance with the agency's complaints process, as per our Consumer Complaint Policy.