



(CORPORATE)

Accessible Customer Services

Approved By:	Bill Bevan	Page:	1 of 5
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Policy Code:	359		
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Purpose Statement: The Windsor Essex Children's Aid Society (WECAS) is committed to ensuring persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunities and standards of service in accordance with *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

Policy Statement: WECAS is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

WECAS recognizes the diverse needs of persons within the communities we serve and will respond by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to everyone.

Scope: This policy shall apply to every person who deals with a member of the public or other third parties on behalf of WECAS.

Principles:

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that:

1. Persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the services at WECAS.
2. Services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
3. Services allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other persons.
4. Communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes the person's disability into account.
5. Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access WECAS services unless superseded by other legislation.

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Definitions:

Disability: As defined by the ADOA is:

- 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, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech 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;
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Barrier: As defined by the ADOA, means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, attitudinal barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.

Assistive device: Is a technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities in seeing, hearing, speaking, mobility, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, working or self-care.

Service animal: As defined by the AODA, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability;

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

Service animals include, but are not limited to “guide dogs”: a dog as defined in the *Blind Person’s Rights Act*, means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations under the *Blind Person’s Rights Act*.

Support person: means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

References:

Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities, 2005

Blind Person’s Rights Act, 1990

Dog Owner’s Liability Act, 1990

Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

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Procedures:

1. Assistive Devices

The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from WECAS services is recognized unless otherwise prohibited due to health and safety or privacy issues.

When applicable assistive devices owned and operated by WECAS will be available for use by persons with disabilities. Available assistive devices and the procedure for accessing them are outlined in the Assistive Device Procedure (Attachment A).

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

2. Service Animals

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal and keep that animal with them in areas/premises that are open to the public when accessing services provided by WECAS, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

A service animal will not be permitted:

- a) Where food preparation is being undertaken;
- b) As otherwise disallowed by law (ie: laws restricting certain animal breeds).

If the service animal is excluded by law, WECAS will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from WECAS services.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept in control at all times. If a customer or staff member has a severe allergy to animals, which could result in health and safety concerns, WECAS shall make reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

More specific information related to service animals may be found in the Service Animal Procedure (Attachment B).

3. Support Persons

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their support person in areas/premises that are open to the public, when accessing services provided by WECAS.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, WECAS shall ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises. If there is confidential information to be disclosed, consent must be received from the person with the disability and a confidentiality agreement must be signed.

When there is a fee, the applicability of fees and the fee amount, if any, for support persons will be posted wherever corporate fees are posted. (Eg. on the website; in materials, registration forms or signage where

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fees are posted.) This includes ticketed events, training, workshops, seminars and all other fees and/or admission costs not set out above.

WECAS may deem it necessary to require a support person for a person with a disability in order to protect the health and safety of that person or others on the premises. Refer to the Support Person Procedure (Attachment C) for details about the criteria that should be used in making such a determination.

4. Service Disruptions

In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities, services or systems that are relied upon by persons with disabilities to access WECAS services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance. Notice of the disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities, services or systems, if any, that may be available.

WECAS will provide notice of the disruption by:

- a) Posting the information in visible places around the premises;
- b) Posting the information on WECAS's website;
- c) By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances as soon as reasonably possible.

In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

5. Training

WECAS will provide training to all employees, volunteers, foster parents, board members and others who deal with the public on behalf of WECAS, and all those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Human Resources will maintain a training record of who has attended the training and when the training was completed. The training shall include but is not limited to the following:

- a) Review of the purposes of the AODA and requirements of the customer service standard;
- b) Instruction on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- c) Instruction on how to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or a support person;
- d) Instruction on the use of equipment or devices available at WECAS;
- e) Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.

Training shall be part of new worker orientation and will also be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

6. Feedback Process

WECAS will maintain a feedback process to enable members of the public to comment on the provision of the services to persons with disabilities. All feedback will be directed to the Executive Assistant to the CEO.

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Feedback may be provided through any of the following methods:

- a) Make a submission using the on-line feedback form available on the WECAS website www.wecas.on.ca;
- b) Send an email outlining the nature of the complaint of concern to the following email address: info@wecas.on.ca;
- c) Contact the Executive Assistant or designate by telephone;
- d) Attend the office and meet with the Executive Assistant of designate.

The Executive Assistant or designate will provide a response no later than fourteen (14) days of receipt of such feedback in a format that takes into account their disability and will outline actions deemed appropriate, if any. All feedback will be logged for reporting purposes, kept in strict confidence and used to improve customer service.

7. Notice of Availability of Documents

This policy and any other documents related to the delivery of services shall be made available, upon request, in a format that takes into account the person's disability to any person to whom it provides services.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy will be made available on the WECAS website.

Attachments:

Assistive Devices Procedure – Attachment A
Service Animal Procedure – Attachment B
Support Persons Procedure – Attachment C
Customer Service Feedback Form – Attachment D
Training Resource - Sept 2011