

## **Accessible Customer Service (ACS) Policy**

This policy is available to the public in alternate formats upon request.

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### **1. Introduction**

HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency (HFO MRA) supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005.

This and related policies, procedures, and practices are designed to ensure that HFO MRA continues to be accessible to all, including those with one or more disabilities, and to comply with the legal requirements under AODA. The related policies are listed at the end of this policy.

### **2. Our Accessible Customer Service Policy/Mission**

HFO MRA respects the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities.

Whether a person's disability is apparent or not, everyone should be treated with courtesy, made to feel welcome, and have their need for accommodation respected whenever they interact with HFO MRA.

HFO MRA will strive at all times to provide barrier-free access and services in ways that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. HFO MRA is committed to ensuring customers with disabilities receive accessible services with the same respect, quality, and timeliness as do others. Accommodation will be customized to each person according to individual needs.

### **General Information and Procedures**

### **3. Facilities**

Some persons with disabilities may require assistance in accessing HFO MRA's main offices. The building is wheelchair accessible but we will need to arrange for assistance at the building entrance as the doors are not automated. Once inside the main entrance, the offices are accessible via one elevator by persons with disabilities. The offices have accessible washrooms on each floor.

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In selecting meeting rooms for functions held off site, preference will be given to accessible meeting rooms over traditional meeting rooms where possible and practical.

In the event that it is neither possible nor practical to accommodate a person with a disability at a specific meeting/event, HFO MRA will make alternative arrangements such that the person with a disability may i) participate via videoconferencing or teleconferencing or ii) receive information that was presented at the meeting and be provided input on the issues that were discussed through an accessible format. Each situation will be addressed on an as needs basis according to the individual's needs and the nature of their desired participation.

Upon request, HFO MRA will provide information on accessible restaurants in the area to persons with disabilities attending its functions. In the event that HFO MRA intends to provide food or beverages other than water, identified dietary needs will be accommodated.

#### **4. Use of Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities may use personal assistive devices (e.g. note taking devices, walkers, oxygen tanks, etc.) when visiting HFO MRA offices or attending HFO MRA functions. The agency may require that the person using an assistive device be seated in a specific location within the meeting room in order to facilitate the smooth running of the proceeding (e.g., seat persons with bulky assistive devices out of main traffic flow areas to minimize tripping risk; seat persons with noisy assistive devices in the least disruptive locations).

HFO MRA will review the need to acquire assistive devices to meet client needs on an as needs basis.

#### **5. Use of service animals and support persons**

There are no areas in the HFO MRA offices where service animals are excluded by law. Persons with disabilities may bring their service animal into the areas of our premises that are open to the public. HFO MRA will ensure all employees and third parties dealing with the public are trained in how to interact with persons with disabilities who are accompanied by service animals. Where it is known in advance that a service animal will be in attendance, HFO MRA will:

- Provide adequate seating for the person and the service animal;
- Determine a suitable outdoor area and allow sufficient time at breaks for the service animal's;
- Identify a nearby veterinarian; and
- Have a water bowl for the animal.

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Agency premises open to the public. 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.

When support persons are required (e.g., sign language interpreters, real-time captioners, attendants, etc.) for HFO MRA-sponsored meetings, consultations or events, HFO MRA will

arrange to pay support persons directly for their time and reasonable travel expenses upon request, in accordance with the HFO MRA travel and hospitality policy.

## **6. Communication**

HFO MRA will communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. This means employees will communicate in a manner that enables persons with disabilities to communicate effectively for purposes of using, receiving, and requesting HFO MRA services.

HFO MRA will strive to incorporate good accessibility practices in its processes and operations. Such practices could include:

- Using appropriate language, e.g., “persons with disabilities” vs. “the disabled”;
- Planning meetings to allow for accessibility (e.g., inviting clients to identify accessibility needs in event promotional material, using accessible meeting facilities, organizing meeting space to allow for ease of movement, having large print format handouts available, etc.);
- Training employees in alternative communication methods such as TTY and relay service when voice communication is unsuitable;
- Following guidelines for and providing alternate communication formats:
  - Offer at least two formats (electronic (.html), .pdf)
  - Consider providing audio, ASL
  - Endeavour to use plain language
  - Make available large print format documents; and
- Notifying public of alternate formats available.

## **7. Feedback process**

The ultimate goal of this policy is to meet customer service delivery expectations while serving persons with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback on the provision of services to persons with disabilities may be made by:

- Electronic mail to: ACS@HealthForceOntario.ca
- Facsimile transmission to: 416-862-4818
- Telephone: 416-862-2200 or 1-800-596-4046
- TTY 416-862-4817
- Letter mailed to: 163 Queen St. E., Toronto, ON, M5A 1S1

If the above methods are not suitable, customers may request another method. Privacy will be respected and all feedback will be reviewed for possible action that can be taken to improve HFO MRA services.

Where possible, feedback will be addressed immediately. Clients can expect an acknowledgement of verbal/telephone feedback within five business days or a response to a

mailed/e-mailed complaint within ten business days of receipt. The response will indicate how the matter will be addressed. HFO MRA will follow up with any required action within the timeframe noted in the response. HFO MRA will adapt the feedback/response as necessary to accommodate the needs of the customer and in a format that is accessible to the individual.

## **8. Notice of temporary disruptions**

HFO MRA will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services used by persons with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, how long the disruption is expected to last, and a description of any alternative facilities or services available (if any).

The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises. Depending on the nature of the disruption, notice will also be provided on outgoing telephone messages and on the HFO website.

In the event that there is a planned temporary disruption in services that is expected to last for less than 48 hours, no advance notice will be given.

## **9. Training for Employees**

Within three months of hiring, all HFO MRA employees and representatives are to receive training on:

- The purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service;
- HFO MRA policies, practices, and procedures relating to the provision of services to persons with disabilities;
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities, including those who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
- How to use equipment or devices that may assist with the provision of services to persons with disabilities; and
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing HFO MRA services.

All employees will review the on-line training video, *Serve-Ability*, available on the Ministry of Community and Social Services web site at:

[http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/serve-ability/FLASH\\_Eng/index.html](http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/serve-ability/FLASH_Eng/index.html)

HFO MRA will adopt accessibility training good practices for employees as needed. Such practices could include:

- Additional training that can benefit any area of accessibility; e.g., preparing alternate formats, using assistive devices, etc.;
- Refresher training as required.

## **10. Modifications to this policy or related policies**

HFO MRA is committed to ensuring their customer service policies, practices, and procedures respect and promote the dignity and independence of all persons with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the effect on persons with disabilities.

Any HFO MRA operational policy affecting customer service that does not respect and promote the dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity of persons with disabilities will be modified or revoked.

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. Questions about HFO MRA's ACS policy or suggestions on how to improve our policies and practices may be directed to the Director, Corporate Affairs.

### **Related HFO MRA Policies:**

Policy Number OP-06            HFO MRA Unexpected Closings Policy

### **External Resources:**

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)  
[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_05a11\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm)

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001  
[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_01o32\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_01o32_e.htm)

Ontario Human Rights Code:  
[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90h19\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm)

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services  
[www.accesson.ca](http://www.accesson.ca)