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**POLICY STATEMENT (INCLUDING SCOPE)**

Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington (CMHA WW) is committed to ensuring equal access and participation with people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their identity and independence.

We believe in integration and are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and Ontario’s Accessibility laws, including the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

This policy shall apply to every person who interacts with people who access, or are supported by, services of the organization, whether the person does so as a CMHA WW employee, volunteer, student on placement, contractor or physician. It shall also apply to all persons who participate in developing the organization’s policies and procedures governing the provision of services to members of the public.

**1.0 INTENDED OUTCOME**

To offer an equitable work and service environment whenever possible.

**2.0 DEFINITIONS**

Assistive Device	A technical aid, communication device or medical aid 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. Some examples are: TTY (teletypewriter), walkers, elevators, among others.
Disability	For the purposes of this policy ‘disability’ is defined according to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 as: (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, or

	(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; (“handicap”)
Service Animal	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 [the person’s] disability; or (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. O. Reg. 429/07, s. 4 (9). Service animals include, but are not limited to, “guide dogs”.
Support Person	Means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies [the person] in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. O. Reg. 429/07, s. 4 (9). A support person may be a paid professional, volunteer, family member or other.

### 3.0 POLICY

#### 3.1 Providing services to people with disabilities

CMHA WW will make every reasonable effort to:

- Provide services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.
- Give people with disabilities the same opportunity to access services and allow them to benefit from the same services in the same place and in a similar way as other persons supported unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable the person to access services.
- Communicate in a manner that takes into account the person’s disability, e.g. Use of an interpreter, sign language, communication board, information in written format, etc.

#### 3.2 Assistive Devices

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from services unless otherwise prohibited by law (e.g. health and safety of others). In such situations, the organization may offer the person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist the person in obtaining, using and benefiting from services, where such other measures are available.

Assistive devices available on our premises will be available for the use of persons with disabilities and where applicable, direction or assistance in the use of the device will be provided.

#### 3.3 Use of Service Animals

CMHA WW is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. If a guide dog or other service animal accompanies a visiting person with a disability, the person shall be permitted to enter the premises with the animal and keep the animal with them. A person who is accompanied by a service animal must maintain care and control of the animal at all times.

Service animals will not be permitted, however, in areas where food preparation is undertaken or as otherwise disallowed by law.

Where service is being delivered in another location in the community, reasonable efforts will be made to provide locations where service animals are permitted, notwithstanding areas where it is disallowed by law.

Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the animal is used for reasons relating to a disability, CMHA WW may request a letter from a physician confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability. The person may have an alternate form of verification available and in such a situation CMHA WW may also accept as confirmation a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

If another individual at the site or staff member has a severe allergy to animals, which could result in health and safety concerns, all reasonable efforts shall be made to meet the needs of all individuals involved.

### **3.4 Use of Support Persons**

Where a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, CMHA WW shall ensure that both persons are entitled 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 an amount is payable by a support person for admission to an event or activity in connection with services of the organization (e.g. attendance at a workshop), consideration will be given to reduce the cost by basing the fee on a cost recovery model where possible.

### **3.5 Preventative and Emergency Maintenance of the Accessible Elements in Public Spaces**

CMHA WW has procedures in place for preventative and emergency maintenance of accessible elements in its public spaces. Accessible public space elements maintained by CMHA WW include reception desks, public meeting rooms/offices, waiting rooms, washrooms, parking areas, and exterior paths of travel, such as walkways, stairs, and ramps, where these elements are not already covered by the Ontario Building Code.

Our procedures include the following:

- The Facilities team, responsible for maintaining accessible elements in CMHA WW's public spaces, in conjunction with the site coordinators, will develop preventative maintenance schedules, as required, to keep the elements in good working order or restore them to their original condition when necessary.
- The Joint Health and Safety Committee Members will inspect applicable accessible elements that are available for use by the public regularly. Any elements that are found to have defects or need maintenance will be identified and so they can be addressed. Typically, a work order will be generated and sent to the Facilities team, and, upon review, arrangements will be made to correct the defect(s) or perform the necessary maintenance.
- In the event that CMHA WW receives information that an accessible element needs maintenance or repairs, the information will be sent to the Facilities team, so the element can be inspected, and appropriate action taken, as noted above.

- In cases where it is determined that emergency maintenance or repairs to an accessible element are required, the element will be taken out of service and the necessary repairs will be assessed and addressed as a priority.
- For leased CMHA WW properties, the site coordinators and/or the facilities team will notify the landlord and upon review, arrangements will be made to correct the defect(s) or perform the necessary maintenance.

### **3.6 Notice of Temporary Disruption**

Temporary disruptions in services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the agency's control or knowledge. The organization will make reasonable efforts to provide prior notice of disruptions, recognizing that in some circumstances, such as in the situation of unplanned disruptions, advance notice will not be possible.

Notices will be posted in visible places, and/or on the organization's website, and/or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances (such as recorded telephone messages) as soon as reasonably possible.

Where possible, notice of disruptions will include:

- Information about the reason for the disruption;
- The anticipated length of time or duration of the disruption; and
- A description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available.

### **3.7 Training**

CMHA WW will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of policies, practices and procedures. Training will be provided as part of orientation to employment or service with the organization.

Training will include:

- Review of the purposes of the AODA and requirements of the customer service standard;
- Instruction on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities and with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or a support person;
- Instruction on how to use equipment or devices available at our premises or that are provided otherwise, that may help people with disabilities access services, such as TTY telephones, elevators, or other technology; and
- Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing services.

### **3.8 Feedback Process**

Comments regarding how well accessible service expectations are being met by the services of CMHA WW are welcome and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way that services are provided to people

with disabilities can be made in the manner deemed most convenient for that person, such as by telephone (1-844-CMHA WW 3), website, TTY, in writing or by email, in person, or otherwise. E-mail correspondence should be addressed to [corporate@cmhaww.ca](mailto:corporate@cmhaww.ca). If a response is requested, such responses will be provided within 5 business days.

### **3.9 Availability and format of documents**

Written notice of the availability of the documents required under this regulation are available at each location and on the organization's website. We will attempt to accommodate all requests for information in alternate formats and/or any other reasonable method.

### **4.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)