

Policy Name and Number:	8.25 Accessible Customer Service
Source:	Best practice; legislation
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Approved By:	Senior Leadership Team

POLICY

Family Service Toronto (FST) is committed to achieving a fully accessible organization. To achieve this commitment, all FST personnel share in the responsibility for advancing accessibility by playing unique and important roles in removing and preventing barriers to participation.

FST always strives to provide its programs and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. In planning the location and use of offices, the organization considers the accessibility, availability and affordability of public transportation; the location of other relevant community resources; and the special needs of service recipients. FST is committed to providing people with disabilities the same opportunity to access and benefit from the same programs and services, in the same place and in a similar way as other service users. FST will ensure as many service facilities as possible are free of architectural barriers and design and adapt its programs and services, as appropriate, to accommodate the visual, auditory, linguistic and motor abilities of the people it serves.

This policy outlines FST responsibilities in providing programs and services to people with disabilities in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005), Accessible Customer Service Standard*.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all FST personnel (employees, students, volunteers).

DEFINITIONS

A disability, as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, includes physical, mental health, developmental and learning disabilities. Disabilities come in many different forms, sometimes obvious and sometimes not. Disabilities may be visible or invisible, they may differ in severity, and the effects of a disability may be continuous or intermittent.

For example:

- A person with a brain injury has a disability that is invisible.
- A person with arthritis has a disability that over time may become more severe.

- A person with multiple sclerosis has a disability that may sometimes affect daily routine and other times not.

The impact of a disability depends on the person's ability to access services, assistive devices, transportation, education and employment.

PROCEDURES

FST is committed to excellence in serving all service users, including people with disabilities. This commitment is demonstrated in a variety of ways that are detailed below.

1. Communication

FST personnel shall communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability by asking how they can help and taking guidance from the person with whom they are communicating.

2. Telephone Services

2.1 Accessible telephone service is provided to service users within the scope of FST's resources.

2.2 When communicating with clients and participants, personnel shall speak clearly in plain language and avoid the use of jargon and at a pace the person can understand.

2.3 If telephone communication is not suitable to a person's communication needs or is not available, other means of communication may be decided between personnel and service user.

3. Assistive Devices

Program teams are responsible for identifying the types of assistive devices their clients and participants may use while accessing FST programs or services and developing a familiarity with these devices.

4. Billing

4.1 FST is committed to providing accessible invoices to all service users who access fee charging programs and services.

4.2 Invoices shall be made available in a range of accessible formats including hard copy or secure e-mail. Upon request invoices shall be created in large print.

4.3 Personnel shall answer any questions service users may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone or via secure e-mail.

5. Use of Service Animals

FST welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

At no time shall a person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal be prevented from having access to their service animal.

6. Use of Support Persons

- 6.1 FST welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person.
- 6.2 At no time shall a person with a disability, who is accompanied by a support person, be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises.
- 6.3 Support persons who participate in a program or service for the purposes of supporting a person with a disability shall not be charged a fee.

7. Notice of Temporary Disruption

- 7.1 In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption, FST shall provide service users with as much advance notice as is reasonable.
- 7.2 This notice shall include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.
- 7.3 The notice shall be placed on FST's website, at all public entrances and at reception counters on FST premises. If clients/participants will not reasonably have had access to notifications through these means, personnel shall make every effort to contact them by phone or e-mail to inform them of the disruption.

8. Training for Personnel

- 8.1 FST shall provide training to all personnel who deal with the public or other third parties on its behalf.
- 8.2 This training shall be provided within one month of the date of hire/placement after personnel commence their duties. The following people/positions shall take lead responsibility with respect to this:
 - The hiring supervisor shall ensure all newly hired employees undergo training as part of their orientation.
 - The Student Coordinator shall ensure all students undergo training as part of their orientation to their placement.
 - The Coordinator, Volunteer Services shall ensure all volunteers undergo training as part of their orientation to their position.
- 8.3 Training shall include the following:
 - the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and its connections to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the requirements of 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
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing FST's programs and services
- FST's policy on accessible customer service

8.4 Personnel shall report completion of this training to the appropriate person, as indicated in section 8.2, within one month of their date of hire/placement.

9. **Feedback, Complaints and Questions**

Feedback, complaints and questions shall be addressed according to FST's Service User and Community Member Complaint policy and procedures.

10. **Modifications to Policies**

All policies about FST shall respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Any that do not shall be reviewed and a decision shall be made about whether it shall be modified or removed.

Websites of interest include:

Tips on Serving Customers with Disabilities

https://www.sgdsb.on.ca/upload/documents/accessibility-tips-booklet_eng.pdf

Ontario Interpreting Service

<http://www.chs.ca/services/ontario-interpreting-services>

Braille

www.canadianbraillepress.com

Captions

<https://www.ncicap.org>