

## AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### 1.0 Agency

#### 1.0.3.3 Accessibility

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### **Policy**

KW Counselling Services is committed to excellence in serving all clients including those seeking counselling services, workshop and program participants, people making service inquiries, and visitors to the Agency. This Accessibility Policy ensures that people with disabilities are given an equal opportunity to access services as that given to others. This policy also ensures that services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

This Accessibility Policy is informed by the following laws: the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code), the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (the AODA) and the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (the IASR).

### **Definitions**

- **Disability:** any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness. A condition of mental impairment, mental disorder, developmental disability, learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- **Service Animal:** an animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability. The person may provide a letter from an authorized professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability or it may be readily apparent.
- **Support Person:** a person 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.
- **Assistive Device:** a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communications and lifting.

## **Procedure**

To ensure that all board members, staff, interns and volunteers comply with the Agency's duty to accommodate people with disabilities, training will be provided at the time orientation is completed and when changes are made to this policy and when changes are made to the pertinent laws mandating accessibility. The duty to accommodate is the most appropriate solution that best meets the individual needs of the person with a disability. Accommodation must be made to the point of undue hardship for the Agency.

Training will include the following:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards
- 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 the Agency's programs or services

\* see Training Tips below

## **Assistive devices**

The Agency will ensure that staff, interns and volunteers are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by clients with disabilities while accessing our programs or services.

## **Communication**

Agency board members, staff, interns and volunteers will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. When unsure about the best approach they are encouraged to ask the person politely and not assume they know how best to communicate with the person.

## **Service Animals**

The Agency welcomes people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on our premises.

## **Support Persons**

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

## **Notice of temporary disruption**

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities, alternative services and assistance will be provided, if available. Agency staff will attempt to notify clients promptly and directly via KW Counselling Services Website, signage at entrances/exits, notices to staff, Radio/TV announcements as appropriate. Service directors will ensure the process is implemented as outlined and will give clear direction to staff in the event of disruption to services.

## **Feedback Process**

Clients and members of the public who wish to provide feedback on the way the Agency provides services to people with disabilities can verbally discuss their concerns, send an email directly to [hr@kwcounselling.com](mailto:hr@kwcounselling.com) or complete a *Service Feedback Form for Persons with a Disability*.

All feedback will be directed to the appropriate service director and the Executive Director. Clients can expect to hear back within two business days. Complaints will be addressed according to KW Counselling Services complaint management procedures.

A copy of KW Counselling Service's Accessibility Policy shall be made available to clients upon request.

## **Training Tips:**

### **Tips for interacting with assistive devices:**

- Don't touch or handle personal devices without permission.
- Never move the device out of the client's reach.
- Respect the client's personal space.
- Remember to be patient.

### **Tips for interacting with service animals:**

- Do not address or touch the animal-they are working!
- Pet or service animal? Not sure? Ask "what is your animals trained skill?"
- Allow the client to care for and supervise their animal.

**Tips for interacting with support persons:**

- Which person is the client? Follow their lead or ask when you are unsure.
- Speak directly to the client, not the support person.
- Remember a translator or interpreter is NOT there to participate in the conversation or to provide their personal opinions.

**Tips for interacting with someone with vision loss:**

- When guiding a person with vision loss, offer your elbow.
- Make it common practice to describe to clients services being offered.
- Offer to read out loud written documents when not available in Braille.
- Identify yourself and speak clearly and directly to the client.

**Tips for interacting with someone with hearing loss:**

- Speak clearly, repeat or paraphrase and ensure your mouth is not covered.
- Have pen and paper available to communicate through notes.
- If a client is using a hearing aid, try to reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- Speak directly to the client, not the interpreter.

**Tips for interacting with someone with a learning disability:**

- Offer to read, discuss and explain documents.
- Avoid lengthy conversations to allow time to process the information provided.
- Be patient.

**Tips for interacting with someone with speech impairment:**

- Allow the client to finish their own sentences.
- Never assume they also have another disability.
- Ask simple questions that can be answered with a yes or no.
- Do not pretend to understand what the person is saying. If you are not sure, apologize and ask the person to repeat.

**Tips for interacting with someone with a mental health disability:**

- Remember they deserve the same respect and consideration as any other client.
- Remain confident and reassuring.
- Ask them to tell you the best way to help.

**Tips for interacting with someone with a physical disability:**

- Never touch or move their assistive devices without prior permission.
- Never leave the person or their wheelchair in an awkward or undignified position.
- Always try to make eye contact from the same level when having a conversation.