



Niagara Catholic District School Board  
**ACCESSIBILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**  
ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

800.8.1 – Schools and Community Councils

Policy No. 800.8.1

Adopted Date: December 15, 2009

Latest Reviewed/Revised Date: December 20, 2016

## DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy, the following definitions are provided;

**Customer** is any person who uses the services of the school board, who is not a student or staff, as they are covered by the Education Act and Regulations, various Employment and Labour Acts, and Board Policies and Procedures.

**Assistive Device** is any device used by people with disabilities to help with daily living. Assistive devices include but are not limited to a range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, and electronic communication devices.

**Service Animal** is an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a regulated health professional.

**Support Person** is a person who assists or interprets for a person with a disability as they access the services of the Board. A support person is distinct from an employee who supports a student in the system.

**Third Party Contractors** is any person or organization acting on behalf of or as an agent of the Board (e.g. bus operators, contracted professionals.)

**Barrier to Accessibility** is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of the services of the Board. This includes, but is not limited to, a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, and or a technological barrier.

**Accommodation** is a means through reasonable efforts, of preventing and removing barriers that impede individuals with disabilities from participating fully in the services of the Board.

## EXPECTATIONS

1. The Board will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that all policies, practices and procedures from the date of this policy forward are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity for all, with particular attention to persons with disabilities.
2. The Board will welcome all members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing members of the organization to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of persons with disabilities and such services to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of support persons, assistive devices and service animals. (*Appendix 1, Appendix 2, Appendix 3*)

3. To ensure greater awareness and responsiveness to the needs of a person with disabilities, the Board provides appropriate training for all members of the organization on Accessible Customer Service and how to interact with people with different disabilities.
4. Training as identified in No. 3 will be provided to all members of the organization. As new members of the organization are hired or identified, the training is a component of their orientation training and will be provided within a reasonable timeframe.
5. The Board will ensure that its policies and procedures related to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* are made available to the public and also ensure there is capacity to provide communication about these policies and procedures in a format that takes into account a person's disability.
6. When services that are normally provided to a person with a disability are temporarily unavailable such as access to an elevator, a disruption of service notice will be posted at the site and on the Board website. (*Appendix 4*)

Please note: The Board encourages individual members of the public, who will be accessing any Board site, to provide sufficient notice of their special needs to Board staff so that staff may accommodate the individual.

7. In order to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the Board has a process for receiving and responding to feedback. Information about the feedback process is readily available to the public and will allow people to provide feedback using a number of methods.
8. So that adherence to this policy can be achieved efficiently and effectively, the Board and all its managers and school-based administrators will take into account the impact on persons with disabilities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems, or planning a new initiative.
9. The Board has a feedback process that will review the implementation of this policy with the Board's various constituency groups. Examples include: the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Federations, unions, citizens' groups. Methods of communication will include the use of electronic means such as Board Website. (*Appendix 5*)
10. The Board has a process for consulting with frontline staff and volunteers who have a role in implementing the expectations and procedures established under this policy to review its effectiveness.

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## **ACCESSIBILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDELINE SUPPORT PERSONS**

### **Use of Support Persons by the General Public**

The Niagara Catholic District School Board will welcome authorized members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing the members of our organization to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of support persons.

### **Definition/Explanation of Support Person**

A support person is a person who assists or interprets for a person with a disability who accesses the services of the Board. A support person is distinct from an employee who provides support services to a student or staff person in the system - separate and specific procedures apply.

### **Additional Information**

A support person is an individual chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services. Personal care needs may include, but are not limited to, physically transferring an individual from one location to another or assisting an individual with eating or using the washroom. Medical needs may include, but are not limited to, monitoring an individual's health or providing medical support by being available in the event of a seizure.

The support person could be a paid professional, a volunteer, a friend or a family member. He or she does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

### **1.0 Responsibility**

- 1.1 Supervisory Officers, Principals and Departmental Managers will ensure that members of the organization receive training in interacting with people with disabilities who are accessing Board services accompanied by a support person.

### **2.0 Access to Board Premises**

- 2.1 Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be welcomed on Board and/ or school premises with his or her support person. Access will be in accordance with normal security procedures.
- 2.2 This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include places or areas of the school or board offices where the public does not have access.

### **3.0 Confidentiality**

- 3.1 Where a support person is accompanying a person with a disability, who is the parent/guardian of a student, for the purpose of assisting in a discussion that may involve confidential information concerning the student, the Superintendent, Principal or other staff member must first secure the consent of the parent/guardian regarding such disclosure.
- 3.2 Consent to the disclosure of confidential information in the presence of the support person must be given in writing by the parent or guardian. (See attached "Sample Consent Form".)
- 3.3 The support person must also provide assurance in writing to safeguard the confidentiality of information disclosed in the discussion.
- 3.4 A copy of the signed consent document will be retained in the school/board office.
- 3.5 If the parent/guardian uses a different support person for subsequent meetings, a new signed consent will be required.

### **4.0 Support Persons Accompanying a Person with a Disability at School Events for which there is an admission fee**

- 4.1 Where an individual with a disability who is accompanied by a support person wishes to attend a school, family of schools or board-organized event for which a fee is charged, the notice of the event will include information as to whether support persons will be charged a fee and specify the amount of the fee.

### **5.0 Where the Board may require the presence of a Support Person**

- 5.1 The Board may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.

**NOTE:** This would be a highly rare situation and would only occur where, after consultation with the person with the disability, requiring a support person is the only means available to allow the person to be on the premises and, at the same time, fulfill the Board's obligations to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or of others on the premises. In such a situation the Board will waive the admission fee or fare for the support person, if one exists.

It is further noted that people with disabilities are free to accept a reasonable risk of injury to themselves just as other people do. Different individuals will have a different tolerance for risk. Risk should be weighed against any benefit for the person with a disability. It is not enough that the support person might help to protect health and safety; a support person must be necessary or essential to protect health and safety before you can require one - the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means. Any considerations on protecting health or safety should be based on specific factors and not on assumptions. Just because someone has a disability doesn't mean they're not capable of meeting health or safety requirements.



## SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

I, (parent/guardian) consent to the sharing of confidential information by (name of principal teacher/other staff member) related to my child/ward (name) in the presence of my support person (name).

My support person (name) consents to safeguarding the confidentiality of the information shared.

Affirmation of consent:

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Printed Name of Parent/Guardian) \_\_\_\_\_

I undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of information shared between (school staff) and (parent/guardian) for whom I am a support person.

Support Person Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Printed Name of Support Person) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness - Principal/Staff Member \_\_\_\_\_

(Printed Name of Staff Person) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ACCESSIBILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDELINE ASSISTIVE DEVICES

### Use of Assistive Devices by the General Public

The Niagara Catholic District School Board will welcome authorized members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing the members of our organization to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities. Such services incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of assistive devices.

### Definition/Explanation of Assistive Devices

An assistive device is any device used by people with disabilities to help with daily living. Assistive devices include a range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, and electronic communication devices.

### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

#### 1.0 Responsibility

- 1.1 Supervisory Officers, Principals and Departmental Managers will ensure that members of the organization are trained to support parents and the general public who may use assistive devices while accessing Board services.
- 1.2 Training is focused on how to interact with people using assistive devices rather than on the technical use of the assistive devices.
- 1.3 Students and staff have separate and specific procedures related to their personal use of assistive devices.

#### 2.0 Communication re Use of Assistive Devices

##### *Assistive Devices Carried by Persons with Disabilities*

- 2.1 The Board website and each school website will indicate that all Board facilities provide services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities and offer services that include the use of assistive devices.
- 2.2 Each Board facility that is open to the public will post information in the front office/reception area that welcomes the use of assistive devices and encourages users to seek support from members of the organization as they require it.

##### *Assistive Devices/Services- Made available by the Board\**

- 2.3 The Board website and school websites, as applicable, will indicate the availability of assistive devices provided by the Board or school to assist in provision of services to people with disabilities.

**\*NOTE:** These could include:

<i>Assistive devices:</i>	Telephones with large numbers, amplifiers, lifts.
<i>Services:</i>	<i>Sign language interpretation, oral interpretation, real-time captioning.</i>
<i>Alternate service methods:</i>	<i>Assistance of a staff person to complete a transaction, e.g., school registration</i>

## **TIPS FOR HELPING SOMEONE WITH AN ASSISTIVE DEVICE**

Many users of Board services and facilities who have disabilities will have their own personal assistive devices.

Examples of personal assistive devices include:

- wheelchairs
- scooters
- walker
- amplification devices that boost sound for listeners who are hard-of-hearing without reducing background noise
- hearing aids
- oxygen tanks
- electronic notebooks or laptop computers or personal data managers
- communication boards used to communicate using symbols, words or pictures
- speech-generating devices that "speak" when a symbol, word or picture is pressed

*Key Point To Remember: One should not touch or handle an assistive device without permission.*

## **MOVING PERSONAL ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair remember to:

- wait for and follow the person's instructions;
- confirm that the person is ready to move;
- describe what you are going to do before you do it;
- avoid uneven ground and objects that create bumpy and unsafe ride; and
- practice consideration and safety - do not leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

Do not move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of the users reach.

Respect personal space. Do not lean over a person with a disability or lean on their assistive device.

Let the person know about accessible features in the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

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## ACCESSIBILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDELINE USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS

### Use of Service Animals by General Public

The Niagara Catholic District School Board will welcome authorized members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing the members of our organization to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of service animals.

### Definition/Explanation of Service Animal

A service animal is an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a regulated health professional.

### Additional Information

Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety. The customer service standard's provisions also apply to animals providing other services to people with disabilities.

It is "readily apparent" that an animal is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or by what it is doing. For example, it may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that identifies it as a service animal or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if a person is using the animal to assist him or her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

### 1.0 Responsibility

- 1.1 Supervisory Officers, Principals and Departmental Managers will ensure that all members of the organization are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

### 2.0 Access to Board premises

- 2.1 Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal will be welcomed on Board and/or school premises with his or her service animal and will be accompanied by the service animal while on the premises. Access will be in accordance with normal security procedures.
- 2.2 This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include places or areas of the school or board offices where the public does not have access.
- 2.3 This procedure deals solely with the individual's right to be accompanied by a service animal.



### **3.0 Exclusion of Service Animal**

- 3.1 A service animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples include the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Food Safety and Quality Act*. The former Act prohibits service animals in places where food is prepared, processed, or handled (e.g., kitchen of school cafeteria or culinary arts classroom) although service dogs are permitted where food is served and sold (e.g. school cafeteria or lunchroom).
- 3.2 Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a service animal, consideration must be given to options available prior to exclusion of a service animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal. It is the Board's expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate the risk be considered, e.g. creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alterations to schedules, etc.
- 3.3 A service animal can be excluded if it is of a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the Ontario *Dog Owners' Liability Act* which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.

### **4.0 Alternative measures if Service Animal must be excluded**

- 4.1 In the rare instance where a service animal must be excluded, the Board must make every effort to put alternative arrangements in place to provide the services required by the person with a disability. This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussing with the person how best to serve them, e.g., a person with a vision disability might need someone (a member of staff or volunteer) to guide them.

### **5.0 When it is necessary to confirm an animal is a Service Animal**

- 5.1 Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the school or Board staff member may ask the person using the service animal for a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that the animal is needed because of a disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used.
- 5.2 Where the person using the service animal regularly attends at the school or Board facility, the Principal or Departmental Manager may request to keep a copy of the letter on file but only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the person using the service animal may be asked to bring a letter with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The Principal or Departmental Manager shall preserve the confidentiality of the letter and information contained in the letter, and shall not use or disclose the letter or information except as provided for in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, cM56, or as otherwise required by law.

## ACCESSIBILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDELINE DISRUPTION OF SERVICE

When services that are normally provided to a person with a disability are unavailable such as access to an elevator, a disruption of service notice will be posted at the site and on the Board website. Definition/Explanation of Disruption of Service:

As members of the general public, people with disabilities may rely on certain facilities, services or systems in order to access the services of the school or Board offices. Escalators and elevators, for example, are important to people with mobility disabilities because that may be the only way they can access the premises. Other systems and services designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities can include accessible washrooms, amplification systems, and note-taking. When those facilities or services are temporarily unavailable or if they are expected to be unavailable in the near future, a notice of disruption of service is required.

Generally, disruptions to all of the Board's services, such as during a major storm or power outage, do not require this special notice. However, if the disruption has a significant impact on people with disabilities, a notice of the disruption should be provided.

### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

#### 1.0 Responsibility

- 1.1 Supervisory Officers, Principals, Departmental Managers, Board Communications Specialists and/or Facilities Services Staff will ensure that the users of Board and school services are notified when there is a disruption in services that may have an impact on access to services by people with disabilities.

#### 2.0 How Must the Notice of Disruption of Services be provided

- 2.1 Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place at or in the school or at or in Board facilities. Other options that may be used include: posting on the Board and/or school website; through direct communication with users of the services in accordance with school practices.
- 2.2 Consideration should be given to providing notice in multiple formats.
- 2.3 If the disruption is planned, notice should be provided in advance of the disruption. If the notice is unplanned, notice should be provided as soon as possible after the disruption has been identified.

#### 3.0 What Must be Included in Notice of Disruption of Services

- 3.1 The notice of disruption of service must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.

## **SAMPLE NOTICES DISRUPTION OF SERVICE**

### **Sample 1 - Access to School Building**

To: Parents, Guardians and Community Users of our School

Maintenance work will make the main door of the school and the access ramp inaccessible from May 1 to May 8. A temporary ramp has been set up that gives access to the door at the east of the school building. We regret this inconvenience. If you have questions or concerns, please contact [*insert Principal's name*] at [*insert phone number*].

Thank you,  
Principal

### **Sample 2 - Accessible Washroom**

To: Visitors to the Education Centre

Our accessible washroom is out of service due to a broken pipe. Repairs are underway and the washroom is expected to be usable again by tomorrow. In the interim, we have made arrangements for our visitors to use the accessible washroom at 123 Main Street, which is located next door to our premises. We apologize for this inconvenience.

Thank you,  
Controller of Facilities Services

## ACCESSIBILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDELINE MONITORING AND FEEDBACK ON ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Niagara Catholic District School Board will monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service through a process for receiving and responding to feedback. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public and will allow people with disabilities to provide feedback using a number of methods.

The Board has a feedback process that will review the implementation of this policy with the Board's various constituency groups. Examples include, but are not limited to, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Teacher Federations\*, Employee unions, and citizens' groups. Methods will include electronic means such as websites.

\*NOTE: Consultation relates to membership of these groups as providers of Accessible Customer Service.

### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

#### 1.0 Responsibility

- 1.1 The Director of Education and/or designates will implement a process for feedback on Accessibility Customer Service that has the following components:
  - Information on the Board and school websites inviting users of Board services to provide feedback on their experience with, or concerns about, access to services for people with disabilities
  - Printed information available through school offices and public offices of the Board to invite people with disabilities to provide feedback on their experience with, or concerns about, accessibility of services. Consideration should be given to providing information in alternate formats.
  - Information on how the Board will respond to feedback.
- 1.2 The Director of Education and/or designates will create a process for reviewing implementation of the policy on Accessibility Customer Service that includes consultation with various constituency groups including, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Federations, unions, and citizens' groups. Consultation methods could include electronic feedback and focus groups.

#### 2.0 Methods for Feedback

- 2.1 A range of methods for soliciting feedback will be employed to ensure optimum access to the feedback process by people with disabilities.
- 2.2 Methods could include e-mail, verbal input, suggestion box or feedback card.
- 2.3 The feedback process should include the title(s) of the person(s) responsible for receiving feedback and indicate how the Board's response to the feedback will be made known.

#### 3.0 Proactive Measures for Accessibility Customer Service

- 3.1 To ensure ongoing efficient and effective adherence to the Accessibility Customer Service Policy, the Board, its school-based administrators, and its managers including those representing the Board, will take into account the impact on people with disabilities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems, or planning a new initiative.

## **SAMPLE NOTICE MONITORING AND FEEDBACK ON ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The Niagara Catholic District School Board is committed to ensuring that its services meet optimum standards of accessibility for people with disabilities using the facilities and services of the Board. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way Niagara Catholic District School Board provides services to people with disabilities can be made by *[insert the ways feedback can be provided, for example, e-mail, verbally, suggestion box, feedback card, etc.]*.

All feedback will be directed to *[insert title of person responsible for receiving feedback]*.

Response to your feedback will be provided as follows: *[indicate method, e.g., direct response to the individual, summary report on website, etc.]*