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: February 23, 2021

EXPECTATIONS

1. The Board will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that all Governance policies, practices and Administrative Operational Procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity for all, with particular attention to individuals with disabilities.

2. The Board will welcome all members of the school and broader community to Board facilities by committing members of the organization to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of individuals 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.

3. The Board will provides appropriate training for all members of the organization on Accessible Customer Service and how to interact with individuals with different disabilities using an online training module.

4. The Board will provide training for new employees as a component of their orientation.

5. The Board will ensure that the Governance Policies and Administrative Operational Procedures related to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* are available to the public, and will ensure there is capacity to provide communication in a format that accounts for an individual's disability.

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

7. Employees of the Board will consider the impact on individuals with disabilities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems, or planning a new initiative.

8. The Board will seek feedback from Catholic School Councils, the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (NCPIC), the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC), unions, staff, volunteers and community groups to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the Accessible Customer Service Standard Governance Policy and Administrative Operational Procedures.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

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 individuals with disabilities. Such services incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of assistive devices.

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

Responsibility

1. Superintendents of Education, Principals and Administrators 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.
2. Training will focus on how to interact with individuals using assistive devices rather than on the technical use of the assistive devices.

SERVICE ANIMALS

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 individuals with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of service animals.

Service Animals
A service animal is an animal that supports an individual with a disability that is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a regulated health professional.

Examples of service animals include dogs used by individuals who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for individuals 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 standards' provisions also apply to animals providing other services to individuals 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 an individual is using the animal for assistance such as opening doors or retrieving items.

1. Responsibility

Superintendents of Education, Principals and Administrators will ensure that all members of the organization are properly trained in how to interact with individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

2. Access to Board premises

1. Any individual with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal will be welcomed on Board and/or school premises with the service animal and will be accompanied by the service animal while on the premises. Access will be in accordance with Access to Board Premises Administrative Operational Procedures (302.6.3).
2. Access will be limited to those areas where the public or third parties customarily have access.
3. This procedure deals solely with the individual's right to be accompanied by a service animal.

3. Exclusion of Service Animal

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).

2. Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another individual 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 that all measures to eliminate the risk be considered, such as creating distance between the two individuals concerned, or making reasonable alterations to schedules. Please refer to the Guidelines for the use of Service Animals for use by Students in Schools.
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. Alternative measures if a Service Animal must be excluded

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 individual with a disability. This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussing with the individual how best to serve them (e.g., an individual with a vision disability might need someone (a member of staff or volunteer) to guide them).

5. When it is necessary to confirm an animal is a Service Animal

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 individual 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.
2. Where the individual using the service animal regularly attends at the school or Board facility, the Principal or Administrator may request to keep a copy of the letter on file but for only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the individual using the service animal may be asked to bring a letter with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The Principal or Administrator 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.

SUPPORT PERSONS

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 individuals with disabilities, such services to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of support persons.

Use of Support Persons by the General Public

A support person is an individual who assists or interprets for an individual 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 as 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 and does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

1. Responsibility

The Human Resources Services Department will ensure that members of the organization receive training in interacting with individuals with disabilities who are accessing Board services accompanied by a support person.

2. Access to Board Premises

1. Any individual with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be welcomed on Board and/or school premises with the support person. Access will be in accordance with the Access to Board Premises Administrative Operational Procedures (302.6.3).
2. Access will be limited 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. Confidentiality

1. Consent to the disclosure of confidential information in the presence of the support person must be given in writing by the parent/guardian in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection Act* (Appendix A).
2. The support person must also provide assurance in writing to safeguard the confidentiality of information disclosed in the discussion (Appendix A).
3. If the parent/guardian uses a different support person for subsequent meetings, a new signed consent will be required.
4. A copy of the signed consent will be retained in the school/Board office.

4. Support Persons Accompanying an Individual with a Disability at School Events for which there is an admission fee

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 support persons will not be charged a fee.

5. **Where the Board may require the presence of a Support Person**

The Board may require an individual with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, where it is believed that a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the individual with a disability and/or the health or safety of others on the premises.

DISRUPTION OF SERVICES

As members of the general public, individuals with disabilities may rely on certain facilities, services or systems in order to access the services of the school or the Board. Escalators and elevators, for example, are important to individuals 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 individuals 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, a notice of disruption of service is required.

When services that are normally provided to an individual 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.

1. Responsibility

Superintendents of Education, Principals, Administrators, Board Communications' Officer 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 individuals with disabilities.

2. Notice of Disruption of Services

1. Notice may be given by posting the information at the school or Board facilities. Other options that may be used include posting on the Board and/or school websites and through direct communication with users of the services in accordance with school practices.
2. Consideration should be given to providing notice in multiple formats.
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.
4. 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.

MONITORING AND FEEDBACK ON ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

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

1. Responsibility

1. The Principal/Administrator will review and respond to customer concerns/complaints regarding access to services for individuals with disabilities in consultation with their immediate Supervisor.
2. The Superintendent of Education or Supervisor will respond to customer service complaints that are not resolved by Principals/Administrators.
3. The Director of Education/Designate will review feedback, concerns/complaints regarding access to services for individuals with disabilities and will respond to customer complaints that are not resolved by the Superintendent or Supervisor in accordance with the Board Complaint Resolution Policy (800.3) and Administrative Operational Procedures.

2. Methods for Feedback

Feedback regarding the way the Niagara Catholic District School Board provides services to individuals with disabilities can be made through the school Principal or site supervisor, as applicable, or by accessing the Monitoring and Feedback on Accessible Customer Service Form available on the Board website. For further assistance, including comments and feedback about accessibility issues and compliance, requests to receive information in accessible formats, you may also contact Jennifer Pellegrini, Board Communications' Officer, by phone at 905.735.0240 ext. 297 or by email at

Monitoring and Feedback on Accessible Customer Service.

Comments are welcomed and appreciated. Response to feedback and/or requests will be provided by direct communication with the individual via phone, email, or by mail and kept on file as part of recording and tracking process.

Adopted Date:	**December 15, 2009**
Revision History:	**February 24, 2015** **December 20, 2016** **February 23, 2021**

APPENDIX A

CONSENT OF DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IN THE PRESENCE OF A SUPPORT PERSON

I, _____ _____consent to the sharing of confidential information by
(Print First and Last Name of Parent/Guardian)

_____ related to my child _____
(Name of Principal/teacher/other staff member) (Print First and Last Name of Student)

in the presence of my support person _____.
(Print First and Last Name of Support Person)

My support person _____ consents to safeguarding the
(Print First and Last Name of Support Person)

confidentiality of the information shared.

Parent/Guardian Affirmation of Consent:

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Support Person Affirmation of Confidentiality:

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_____

This information is being collected pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and under the Authority of the Education Act.