



# Accessible Customer Service Policy Statement

## Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

### 1. BridgeWay Family Centre's Mission

In partnership with families and communities, we enrich the early years of children through our programs, resources and support.

### 2. BridgeWay's Commitment to Accessibility

In fulfilling our mission, BridgeWay strives at all times to ensure that our policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles outlined in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, by providing our goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients.

### 3. Background

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) was created with the goal of developing standards that would improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the Province. *Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* (Ontario Regulation 429/07) is the first standard developed under the AODA. The regulation requires designated organizations, including BridgeWay to be in compliance with a number of accessible customer service standards by January 1, 2012.

### 4. Definitions

**Assistive Device** is a technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

**Barrier**, as defined by the AODA, means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an

architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

**Disability** – As defined by the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code, is:

- 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 coordination, 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,
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

**Service Animal** – As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

**Support Person** – As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

## 5. Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

Requests for accommodation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### 5.1 Communication

BridgeWay will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will communicate with members of the public in person, in writing, by e-mail and by telephone.

We will train staff and volunteers who communicate with clients on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

### 5.2 Telephone services

BridgeWay will endeavour to provide accessible telephone service to our clients. We will train staff to communicate with clients over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.

We will offer to communicate with clients by email or in person (on BridgeWay premises) if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

### **5.3 Written Documentation**

BridgeWay will endeavour to ensure its documentation or the content of the documentation is made accessible to people with disabilities. For this reason, an alternative format will be provided upon request that takes into account a person's disability. We will make reasonable efforts to respond to request for documents in alternate formats in a timely manner.

### **5.4 Workshops and Programs**

BridgeWay will endeavour to ensure that workshops and programs are made accessible to people with disabilities. For this reason, accommodations will be provided upon request that take into account a person's disability.

### **5.5 Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices as required in accessing goods or services provided by BridgeWay, unless otherwise prohibited by law.

## **6. Use of Support Persons**

BridgeWay is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter our premises with his or her support person. At no time will this person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

Where admission fees for the support person are applicable, advance notice of the fee will be made available. Advance notice may be posted on BridgeWay's premises, through the BridgeWay website, or by another means of notification as appropriate.

## **7. Use of Service Animals**

BridgeWay 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. We will also ensure that all staff and volunteers who deal with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

Service animals must be supervised by their owners and kept in control when used to access BridgeWay's goods or services.

## **8. Notice of Temporary Disruption**

BridgeWay will provide clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually relied upon by people with disabilities.

This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on premises operated by BridgeWay, at centre reception desks, and/or posted on our website or by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.

## **9. Training for staff**

BridgeWay will provide training to all employees and volunteers who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and to all those who are involved in the development and approvals of BridgeWay's policies, practices and procedures.

Training will include the following:

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities, including those who use an assistive device, a service animal or a support person
- How to use any equipment or assistive devices available on our premises
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing BridgeWay's goods or services
- BridgeWay's customer service policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.

Training will be provided to currently employed staff by January 30, 2012. New staff will be trained as part of their orientation upon employment.

Training will be provided on an on-going basis as deemed necessary or in connection to changes to these policies, practices and procedures.

As required by Ontario Regulation 429/07, BridgeWay will keep records of the training provided. The records will include the dates on which training was provided and the number of individuals who received the training.

## **10. Feedback Process**

BridgeWay has a feedback process so that members of the public are able to comment on the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.

Feedback regarding the way BridgeWay provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made in person, in writing or by telephone, or by e-mail as follows:

BridgeWay Family Centre  
Head Office  
1801 Lakeshore Road West, Unit 101  
Mississauga, ON L5J 1J6  
Telephone: 905-822-1114  
Fax: 905-822-1102  
[accessibility@bridgewaycentre.ca](mailto:accessibility@bridgewaycentre.ca)

All feedback received will be directed to the Executive Director. Constituents can expect to receive a response within a reasonable timeframe. However, some complaints may require more time to address and must be reviewed for action, possibly at a higher level.

Complaints will be addressed according to complaint categories already established in our company's complaint management procedures.

## **11. Questions about this policy**

If anyone has a question about this policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, they may contact BridgeWay's Senior Manager, Human Resources for response.

Copies of all documents required under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation are available upon request.