

Accessibility – Providing Services to People with Disabilities

POLICY

All client service provided by Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County shall follow the ideals of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. We will meet or exceed all applicable legislation regarding the provision of customer service.

Communication

1. We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.
2. We will train staff who communicate with clients on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

Telephone System

1. We are committed to providing fully 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.
2. We will offer to communicate with clients by [TTY](#), e-mail, mail or through a support person, if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

Assistive Devices

1. We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our services. We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by clients with disabilities while accessing our services.

Support Persons

1. We are 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 FC&S Guelph & Wellington premises with their support person. At no time will 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.

Use of Service Animals

Family & Children Services of Guelph and Wellington is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a Service Animal. We are also committed to providing a safe and healthy and inclusive workplace for all.

A visitor to Family & Children Services of Guelph and Wellington is permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in any area where they need to go, except in places where

the law excludes service animals. In these situations, alternative accommodations will be made to ensure that services can be offered.

Identification of a Service Animal

It is visibly apparent that the client/visitor requires the animal for reasons relating to disability; or the customer provides an identification card, or a letter from a healthcare practitioner, confirming that the customer requires the animal for reasons relating to a disability

PROCEDURE

1. Service Animals permitted in the building must be under the full control of the owner at all times. Acceptable measures of control are in a harness, on a leash, in a carrier, muzzled.
2. If it is not readily apparent that an animal in the building is a Service Animal, you may ask if the animal is a Service Animal.
3. It is also appropriate to ask what services the animal provides.
4. You cannot ask questions about a person's disability.
5. If certification is unavailable, you may request that the animal be removed from the premises.
6. If the Service Animal is disruptive or aggressive, staff may request the visitor to remove the animal from the premises and request the animal not be brought on the premises until steps have been taken to mitigate the behavior.
7. The visitor is responsible for caring for, supervising and cleaning up after their Service Animal.
8. The visitor is responsible for any damages caused by the Service Animal and accepts all risk and liability. The worker is to advise the visitor of this, in situations more when the animal is not certified.
9. Should any staff member have extreme allergies or fears, they should notify their supervisor immediately, so proper planning could occur prior to any planned visits. This may include creating distance between the two individuals, eliminating potential contact and restricting visits to assigned visit rooms.

How to interact with the service animal

1. Pay attention to the owner, not the Service Animal.
2. Avoid petting or talking to a Service Animal; the animal is working and must not be distracted from its tasks.
3. If the animal is off-harness, request permission before petting or talking to it.
4. Do not request the animal to be left in a different location, such as outside an office.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

1. We will provide clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used 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.
2. The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises. If possible, we will make all reasonable efforts to contact those with appointments who are affected by the disruption.
3. In the case of an office closure, closure information will be placed on the F&CS website when possible and notice will be placed at the public entrance of the affected site.

Training for Staff

1. We will provide training to all employees, volunteers, Foster parents, Board of Directors and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.
2. 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;
 - How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
 - What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing services;
 - F&CS Guelph and Wellington's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
3. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Feedback Process

1. The ultimate goal of F&CS Guelph and Wellington is to meet and surpass client expectations while serving clients with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well these expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.
2. Feedback regarding the way we provide services to people with disabilities can be made verbally (in person or by phone) or in writing (e-mail or mail). All feedback will be directed to the Director of Human Resources. Clients can expect to hear back within 7 business days.

Modifications to This or Other Policies

1. We are committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. Any policy of F&CS Guelph and Wellington that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

PROCEDURES

All employees must follow these procedures:

Service Animals

1. Do not distract or disrupt any service animal by touching, petting or talking to the animal.

Assistive Devices

1. Offer assistance;
2. Make worksite accommodations to ease the use of assistive devices.

Support Persons

1. Direct client service to the client;
2. Treat all parties with respect and dignity;
3. If required, ask for confidentiality releases to be signed by the client.

Feedback Process

1. Assist with the feedback process;
2. Accommodate the feedback process to meet individual client's needs;
3. Forward and follow up on all feedback.

Notice of Disruption in Service

1. Immediately notify the Director of Human Resources when service disruptions happen;
2. If possible, notify all scheduled clients of any disruptions.

REFERENCES

- [*C1-a-100 Diversity, Anti-Oppression and Equity*](#)

Date Approved: September 9, 2011

Reconfirmed: September 16, 2015

Revised: June 2021

Approved by: Director of Human Resources and Property