

# Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada Policy Manual

## **Policy Direction – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service**

### **Rationale and Relationship to Mission, Principles and Values**

In fulfilling our mission, the MS Society of Canada strives at all times to provide its goods and customer services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. To do so, we use reasonable efforts to ensure that our policies and procedures are consistent with the AODA's core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 was passed with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province to make Ontario completely accessible for persons with disabilities by January 2025.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Regulation (Ontario Regulation 429/07, the Customer Service Standard) came into effect on January 1, 2008. It sets out various requirements for ensuring that providers of goods and services in Ontario have policies in place that accommodate the needs of customers with disabilities and make the provision of goods and services accessible to those customers.

The compliance deadline for non-profit organizations, including the MS Society is January 1, 2012.

Although this policy direction addresses the work of the MS Society that is outward facing with its customers, the MS Society also has been and continues to be supportive of the respect of the dignity and independence of people with disabilities in its internal work. This is evidenced in the MS Society's various internal policies in areas such as volunteer management and human resources, as well in its provision of programs and services supporting persons living with multiple sclerosis.

### **Policy Objective**

The MS Society of Canada is committed to establishing policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or customer services to people with disabilities. The objective of this policy direction is to ensure the MS Society of Canada meets the accessibility requirements under the AODA in providing goods or customer services to persons with disabilities.

## **Policy Application**

The policy direction applies to staff, volunteers and companies or individuals with whom the MS Society at the national office, Ontario division, and in Ontario chapters and units has contracted to interact with the public or provide goods or customer services to the public on the MS Society's behalf.

The policy is effective on the date of approval.

## **Policy Details**

The Customer Service Standard sets accessibility requirements for the way in which the goods or customer services are provided.

The MS Society of Canada is committed to establishing policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or customer services to people with disabilities.

### **Providing goods and services to people with disabilities**

The MS Society of Canada is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

#### **Assistive devices**

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

#### **Communication**

We will communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability. We will train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

#### **Service animals**

We are 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, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

### **Support persons**

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be welcomed to have that person accompany them on our premises. As a general principle, fees will not be charged for support persons who accompany a person with a disability to access our customer services. In cases where fees are required, notice posted on the website related to this activity will be provided ahead of time on what fee would be charged.

### **Notice of temporary disruption**

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to customer services or facilities used by people with disabilities, the MS Society will notify customers promptly. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or customer services, if available. The notice will be placed at public entrances and on the website of the chapter/unit, division or national office, as appropriate.

### **Training**

The MS Society will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training will be provided to individuals in the national and division offices, and in chapter and units in positions that include, but are not limited to:

- Senior management and management;
- Client services;
- Human resources;
- Marketing and development;
- Communications;
- Information technology;
- Fundraising, finance and donor services;
- Volunteer management;
- Receptionists or office/chapter administrators

This training will be provided to personnel within one month of assuming their roles at the MS Society and will include:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard;
- The MS Society's plan related to the customer service standard;
- The MS Society's policies, practices and procedures relating to 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 a support person;
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the MS Society's goods and customer services.
- Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our policies, practices and procedures.

### **Feedback process**

Customers who wish to provide comments on the way the MS Society provides goods and customer services to people with disabilities can do so via letter, telephone, or email ([accessibilitystandards@mssociety.ca](mailto:accessibilitystandards@mssociety.ca)) to the vice-president, Ontario. The MS Society will respond to the comments within a reasonable time. Normally the response time will be within 30 days after receipt of the feedback. If additional time is needed to receive further clarification or details, the response time can be extended to an additional 30 days. If the MS Society extends the time, the individual sharing the comments will be notified within 30 days of the date on which the MS Society received the original communication.

Complaints will be addressed according to the MS Society's regular complaint management procedures.

### **Modifications to this or other policies**

We are committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, any changes made to this policy will consider the impact on people with disabilities.

All policies of the MS Society of Canada will respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

### **Authorization**

This policy direction was approved by the national board of directors, November 23, 2011 and by the Ontario division board of directors, November 2, 2011.

### **Policy Details**

The National Senior Management Team\* is authorized to develop detailed procedures and the training needed to accompany this policy direction.

### **Executive Champion**

The vice-president (VP), Ontario is the executive champion for the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy Direction and related procedures.

## Monitoring and Compliance

The VP, Ontario is responsible for leading the monitoring of the application and compliance of this policy direction and the related procedures in conjunction with other members of the National Senior Management Team.

## Related Policies, Legislation

Legislation that complement and support this policy direction include: the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Personal Information Protection and Electronics Documents Act (PIPEDA).

Other MS Society policies that complement and support this policy direction include: Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

The development of other accessibility standards (i.e. Integrated Standard and Built Environment Standard) in support of The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (the AODA) may impact this policy direction.

## Policy Review

The policy direction is to be reviewed at a minimum every five years following November 23, 2011. The related procedures are to be reviewed on an annual basis by the National Senior Management Team.

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## Definitions

**Disability** - The definition of disability under the AODA is the same as the definition of disability in the Ontario Human Rights Code. This is the definition of disability that applies to the customer service standard.

“disability” means,

- (a) 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 co-ordination, 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,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“handicap”)

**Customer** – Member of the general public accessing a service or good from the MS Society of Canada.

**National Senior Management Team** – The leadership team at the national office and Ontario Division comprised of the President and Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Development Officer, Vice-President Ontario Division, and National Vice-Presidents.