

| STATEMENT of POLICY and PROCEDURE | | | |
|--|--|------------|--------------------------------|
| Manual: | Accessibility Standards | Policy No. | AS 2.01A |
| Section: | Customer Service | Issued: | Dec. 2011 |
| Subject: | Client and public service policy on providing service to people with disabilities | Effective: | January 1 st , 2012 |
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1 POLICY

- 1.01 The mission of Bridges Community Health Centre (CHC) is to promote and maintain the health and wellness of all members of our community by:
- a) Providing health education to empower individuals and families in the prevention of illness and the promotion of wellness;
 - b) Providing health maintenance and restoration activities administered by accredited and culturally competent care providers;
 - c) Undertaking these responsibilities in a dynamic manner that is responsive to the ever-changing needs of our community.
- 1.02 Our commitment in fulfilling our mission is to strive at all times to provide our services in a way 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 and participants.
- 1.03 Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that:
- a) Persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the services offered by Bridges Community Health Centre;
 - b) Services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
 - c) The services provided to persons with disabilities are integrated with the provision to others unless an alternative measure is necessary to allow a person with a disability to benefit; the alternative measure may be temporary or permanent;
 - d) Communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes the person's disability into account;

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- e) Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access Bridges Community Health Centre's services unless superseded by other legislation.

2 PURPOSE

- 2.01 This policy and its procedures address the accessibility requirements of Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act**.

3 SCOPE

- 3.01 This policy applies to all employees and all facilities of Bridges Community Health Centre in Ontario.

4 RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.01 It is the responsibility of the managers and/or immediate supervisors to ensure that all employees follow the guidelines set out in this policy.
- 4.02 Each manager and/or immediate supervisor is responsible to ensure all employees are trained under Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and this policy, practices and procedure.

5 DEFINITIONS

- 5.01 "**Assistive Devices**" are auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (e.g., canes, crutches, wheelchairs or hearing aids).
- 5.02 "**Disability**", as per the Ontario **Human Rights Code**, 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,

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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;

- 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**.

5.03 “**Employees**” means every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of Bridges Community Health Centre, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

5.04 “**Persons with Disabilities**” are individuals who have a disability as defined under the Ontario **Human Rights Code** (and above).

5.05 “**Service Animals**” are animals individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

5.06 “**Support Persons**” are any persons, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend, who accompany a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

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6 REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07

7 PROCEDURES

Providing services to people with disabilities

Bridges Community Health Centre is committed to excellence in serving all clients and visitors including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

7.01 Communication

- a) We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.
- b) We will train staff who communicate with clients and visitors on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

7.02 Telephone services

- a) We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. We will train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.
- b) We will offer to communicate with clients and the general public, by email or mail if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

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7.03 Assistive devices

- a) 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 are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by clients or the general public with disabilities while accessing our services.
- b) We will ensure that staff know how to use the following assistive devices available on our premises for clients: Wheel chair; bariatric exam table.

7.04 Use of service animals and support persons

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) 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 Bridges Community Health Centre's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

7.05 Notice of temporary disruption

- a) Bridges Community Health Centre will provide clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the

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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.

- b) The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises.

7.06 Training for staff

- a) Bridges Community Health Centre will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of client and public service policies, practices and procedures. Individuals in the following positions will be trained:

Executive Director, Program Manager, Executive Assistant, all clinicians, health promotion staff, medical secretaries and volunteers.

- b) This training will be provided during the orientation process, within two (2) weeks after new staff commence their duties.
- c) Training will include the following:
- The purposes of the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act** 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 a support person

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- How to use the a wheel chair and bariatric exam table available on provider's premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of services to people with disabilities
 - What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Bridges Community Health Centre's services
- d) Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way services are provided to people with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

7.07 Feedback process

- a) The ultimate goal of Bridges CHC is to meet and surpass client expectations while serving clients with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.
- b) Feedback regarding the way Bridges CHC provides services to people with disabilities can be made by email, verbally to any staff member in person or on the phone, suggestion box or voicemail. All feedback will be directed to the Program Manager or Executive Assistant/HR Coordinator. Clients can expect to hear back within 5 business days.
- c) Upon receipt, the Executive Director will investigate the matter with the appropriate personnel and provide a written response within thirty (30) days.

7.08 Modifications to this or other policies

- a) We are committed to developing client and public service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence

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of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities.

- b) Any policy of Bridges CHC that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

7.09 Questions about this policy:

- a) This policy exists to achieve service excellence to clients and visitors with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to, the Executive Director of Bridges Community Health Centre.
- b) A copy of this policy is available upon request by contacting the Executive Assistant/HR Coordinator. In addition, a copy of this policy is available on the company's website at www.bridgeschc.ca under "**About Us**".
- c) The Policy document will be provided in a format that takes into account the person's disability.