

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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DATE ISSUED: November 25, 2011	DATE REVISED:

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POLICY STATEMENT

Welland Hydro-Electric System Corp. is committed to providing exceptional and accessible service for its customers in a way that respects the dignity, independence, integration and equality for all people. The provision of services to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible. Persons with disabilities, including those that use or need the use of assistive devices and/or support persons, will be given an opportunity, equal to that given to others, allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

PURPOSE

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public on behalf of Welland Hydro, whether the person does so as an employee, contractor, third party, student on placement otherwise.

DEFINITION(S)

WHESC : Welland Hydro Electric System Corp, or the company

Alternative Service- means a service generally intended to be temporary that approaches the desired result until such time as the barrier is removed or an equivalent service is put in place.

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 - means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his/her disability, including a physical barrier, and architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Contractor – means a company or person with a formal or informal contract to do a specific job on behalf of WHESC.

Disability- 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,

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amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness, muteness, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal.

- a) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- b) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- c) A mental disorder
- d) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established.

Service Animal- is any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to her disability.

Support Person – is a person who accompanies a person with disability.

GENERAL

1. WHESC will provide goods and services to people with disabilities, with particular consideration to the following areas:
 - a.) The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities:
 - Goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
 - The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities are integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person to obtain, use or benefit from WHESC goods or services.
 - Persons with disabilities to obtain, use, or benefit from the Welland Hydro goods and services.
 - b.) Communication
 - When communicating to a person with disability, WHESC will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's current barriers. Staff will be trained on how

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to interact and communicates with people with various types of disabilities.

- c.) Training (See Training at number 6)
- d.) Notice of Temporary or Unexpected Disruptions in Services:
In the event of a temporary or unexpected disruption of services, WHESC will make a reasonable effort to provide notice of the disruption to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration.
- e.) Feedback Process:
 - Is encouraged as it may identify areas that may require change and service improvement.
- f.) Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service
 - Inclusive vs. Exclusive/Incorrect Language

<u>INSTEAD OF</u>	<u>USE</u>
- The visually impaired/blind	person who is blind, person who has a visual impairment
- The aged/ elderly	seniors
- Disabled, handicapped, crippled	person with disability, people with Disabilities
- Lame	person who has a mobility Impairment
- Physically challenged	person with a physical disability
- Deaf, mute, dumb, hearing impaired	person who is deaf... hard of hearing
- Confined to a wheelchair bound	person who uses a wheelchair
- Insane, crazy, demented, deviant, loony Lunatic, mad, maniac, mental, mentally Diseased, neurotic, nut case, psycho, Schizophrenic, mentally retarded, Defective, feeble minded, idiot, imbecile Moron, simple, mongoloid	person with a mental health disability, who has schizophrenia, depression, intellectual disability, intellectually impaired
- Suffers from, afflicted by, stricken with, victim of	person with a disability or mobility impairment, with multiple Sclerosis, etc.

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RESPONSIBILITY

1. Physical Disabilities

- include a range of functional from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through muscle weakness, tremors, and paralysis. Physical disabilities can be congenital such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendonitis.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- Provide seating for those who cannot stand in line
- People with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things, so ask first before you help
- Be patient as customers will identify their needs to you
- Speak normally, and directly to your customer, Do not speak to the support person accompanying them

TIPS

- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, do not touch, move or lean on them
- Provide your customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment(automatic doors, washrooms, etc)
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter
- If a surface is too high or wide, step around it to provide service

2. Hearing Disabilities

- Hearing loss or disabilities may cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds, or words. A person who is deaf, deafened, or hard-of-hearing may unable to use a public telephone, understand speech in a noisy environment, pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- Always ask how you can help. Do not shout. Speak clearly
- Any personal matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing
- Deaf people may use a sign language interpreter to communicate. Always direct your attention to the Deaf Person, not the interpreter.
- If they have a service animal, do not touch it, the service animal is working and has

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to pay attention all the times.

TIPS

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waiving your hand.
- Be precise when giving instructions and be prepared to repeat or rephrase if necessary.
- Face the person directly and keep all objects away from your face and mouth.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.
- If required, write notes back and forth to share information

3. Deaf-Blindness Disabilities

- Is a combination of hearing and vision loss.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Do not touch or address the service animals, they are working and have to pay attention at all times
- Direct your attention to your customer, not the intervener.

TIPS

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some **people** who are deaf-blind have some sight of hearing, while others have neither.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it's an emergency.
- Understand that communication can take some time, be patient.

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4. Vision Disabilities

- Reduce one's ability to see clearly.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact
- If the person uses a service animal, do not touch or approach the animal, it is working.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, location as necessary.
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull. Direct the person from the elbow.
- Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it is emergency.
- Do not leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Do not walk away without saying good-bye.

5. Intellectual Disabilities

- Affect a person's ability to think and reason. He may have difficulty with understanding spoken and written information, conceptual information, perception of sensory information, memory.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- Use clear and simple language.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person
- Be patient and verify your understanding (seek confirmation)

TIPS

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information
- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decision
- If you cannot understand what is being said to not pretend. Ask again.

6. Speech Disabilities

- Involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Problems with pronunciation, pitch and loudness, hoarseness or breathlessness and stuttering or slurring.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

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- Give the person your full attention. Do not interrupt until they finish their sentence
- Ask them to repeat as necessary or to write their message
- Verify your understanding (seek confirmation)

TIPS

- If possible, communicate in a quiet environment
- Patience, respect and willingness to find a way to communicate are the best tools.

7. Learning Disabilities

- Include a range of disorders that effect verbal and non-verbal information acquisitions, retention, understanding and processing. Learning disabilities can result in difficulties in reading, problem solving, time management, way finding, and processing information.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- Ask how you may assist them
- Offer an alternative form of communication if required
- Break up the information (no lengthy conversations)

TIPS

- Learning disabilities are generally invisible and the ability to function varies greatly.
- Allow extra time to complete tasks as necessary.
- Be willing to provide the information “to go” so they may review it at home
- Use straightforward language if at all possible

8. Mental Health Disabilities

- Include a range of disorders; however, there are three main health disabilities such as anxiety, mood, behavioural.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- Offer an alternative form of communication if required
- Break up the information (no lengthy conversations)
- Treat each person as an individual. Ask what would make him the most comfortable and respect his needs to the maximum extent possible
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations

TIPS

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- Stay calm and courteous, even if the customer exhibits unusual behavior. Focus on the service they need and how you can help.

9. Other Disabilities to be Aware of

- **Smell Disabilities** - inability to sense smells or a hypersensitivity to odours and smells.
- **Touch Disabilities**- can affect a person's ability to sense texture, temperature, and vibration to pressure.
- **Taste Disabilities**- can limit the experience of the four primary taste sensations; sweet, bitter, salty and sour.
- **Other disabilities**- accidents, illness and diseases including ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDs, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement.

10. How to Interact with Individuals who have a Service Animal or Support Person

- Service animals offer independent and security to many people with various disabilities. Some laws generally prohibit animals in certain areas; however, service animals are permitted in most public situations.
- Support people assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an intervener sign language interpreter, or a personal support worker providing physical assistance. A support person may also be a friend or relative that will assist and support customer

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service

- Every employee shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own service animal or support person to access goods and services.
- Every employee shall allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal unless the animal is excluded by law.

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- When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting, or other harmful behavior) an employee may ask the person with the disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods and services.
- Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person while accessing goods and services.
- If a support person is necessary to protect the Health and Safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premise, the person with a disability may be requested to make arrangements for (and cover the costs) a support person.

TRAINING

1. WHESC shall require that the following people receive training about the provision of its goods or services to people with disabilities:
 - a) Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of WHESC whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.
 - b) Every person who participates in developing WHESC policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.
2. WHESC will provide training to its employees and will maintain records which will record the details of the training provided, as well as the name of the person, location, and date the training was completed.
3. WHESC will provide training to each person as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties. Training will also be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to applicable legislation/ and or WHESC policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Accessibility Awareness Training will include the following elements:

1. A review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard;
2. How to provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
3. How to interact and communicate with persons in a manner that takes into account their disabilities;

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4. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
5. The process for people to provide feedback about WHESC provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.
6. What to do if a person with disability is having difficulty accessing WHESC goods and services.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

1. This document will be reviewed annually or as required.

RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES/FORMS:

Procedures/Forms	Document #