

Policy Name: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities
(AODA)

POLICY

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and aligned with The Redwood's Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression Framework, The Redwood's aim is to meet the standards as outlined in the act in an effort to make the organization accessible to people with disabilities, regardless of the nature of the disability.

PURPOSE

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of [Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07](#) under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#), and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

The following programs and services provided by The Redwood shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity:

- Safe free refuge, 24 hours of the day
- 24 hour crisis helpline
- Services offered in the client's language
- Telephone counseling
- Client and child counseling
- Housing support services
- Referrals to subsidized daycare and school registration
- Job readiness training and employment counseling
- Legal support in immigration, family law and legal aid
- Referrals and advocacy to gain access to ESL, healthcare and other services
- Volunteer Services

SCOPE

- a) This policy applies to the provision of programs and services offered at premises owned and operated by The Redwood.
- b) This policy applies to employees, volunteers, stakeholders, and persons who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of The Redwood, including when the provision of programs and services that occur off the premises of The Redwood such as in: counseling services, crisis helpline call centers, community and fundraising events, and third party support services.
- c) The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs, service animals and service dogs only applies to the provision of programs and services that take place at premises owned and operated by The Redwood.

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- d) This policy shall also apply to all persons who participate in the development of The Redwood's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of programs and services offered to members of the public or third parties.

RESPONSIBILITY

Each employee and volunteer is responsible for ensuring adherence to the principles outlined in this policy in all aspects of employment.

DEFINITIONS

Assistive Device – is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

Disability – the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

- 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;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or 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](#).

Guide Dog – is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the [Blind Persons' Rights Act](#), to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

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

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- if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Service Dog – as reflected in [Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562](#) a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- it is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability;
- or the person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

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, medical needs or access to goods and services.

REFERENCES AND RELATED POLICY AND PROCEDURE

- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Health Protection and Promotion Act, O.R. 562
- Blind Persons' Rights Act

PROCEDURE

In accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07, this policy addresses the following:

- A. The Provision of Services and Programs offered to Persons with Disabilities;
- B. The Use of Assistive Devices
- C. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs
- D. The Use of Support Persons
- E. Notice of Service Disruptions
- F. Client Feedback
- G. Employee and Volunteer Training
- H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

A. *The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities*

The Redwood will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- ensuring that all clients receive the same value and quality of services;

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- allowing clients with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing the programs and services offered by The Redwood so long as this does not present a safety risk for others;
- using alternative methods when possible to ensure that clients with disabilities have access to the same programs and services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- taking into account individual needs when providing programs and services; and
- communicating in a manner that takes into account the client's or customer's disability.

Barriers to Access

While The Redwood does its best to ensure fully accessible environments, there may be physical or other barriers that prevent the client from accessing our services. If a situation such as this does present itself, we are committed to working with the client to ensure they have access to all of our programs and services. This may include providing staff support and/or offering alternative options.

B. Assistive Devices

Client's own assistive device(s):

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing the programs and services provided by The Redwood.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of the programs and services offered by The Redwood. For example, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, the programs and services will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the client or alternative measures will be considered to ensure the client has access to our programs and services.

Assistive devices and accessible facilities provided by The Redwood:

The Redwood will ensure that staff will have the knowledge and ability to operate assistive devices available at the shelter, and thus will be able to aid clients in the use of the device(s) should assistance be required.

The following assistive devices and facilities are available on a first come, first serve basis and upon request, to assist clients in accessing the services programs offered by The Redwood:

- Ramped Entrances
- Chairlift or person lift
- Accessible bedroom
- Accessible bathroom
- Laundry service

C. Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs

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A client with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises unless otherwise excluded by law. “No pet” policies do not apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs.

Food Service Areas:

A client with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog or service dog will be allowed access to food service areas that are open to clients unless otherwise excluded by law. Other types of service animals are not permitted into food service areas due to the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60.

Exclusion Guidelines:

If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law (see applicable laws below) The Redwood will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access the services and programs offered, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

Applicable Laws:

The Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60, normally does not allow animals in places where food is, prepared, processed, handled, served, stored, or offered. It does allow guide dogs and service dogs to go into places where food is served, or offered. However, other types of service animals are not included in this exception.

Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pitbulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the client for reasons relating to their disability, The Redwood may request verification from the client.

Verification may include:

- a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
- a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

Care and Control of the Animal:

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The client that is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.

Client Concerns:

If a health and safety concern presents itself; for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, or another valid concern that presents a barrier, The Redwood will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals. This includes working with other shelters in the area to determine the best accommodation plan for the client.

D. Support Persons

If a client with a disability is accompanied by a support person, The Redwood will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the client is not prevented from having access to the support person.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the client prior to the conversation.

E. Notice of Disruptions in Programs and Services

Temporary service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of The Redwood. In the event of any temporary disruptions to the facilities, programs and services utilized by clients with disabilities to access or use The Redwood's programs and services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notifications will include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- Programs and services that are disrupted or unavailable
- Reason for the disruption
- Anticipated duration
- A description of alternative services or options available

Notifications Options:

When disruptions occur The Redwood will provide notice by:

- Posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on The Redwood website;
- Contacting clients with appointments;

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- Verbally notifying clients when they are making a reservation or appointment; or
- By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

F. Feedback Process

The Redwood shall provide clients with the opportunity to provide feedback on the programs and services provided to clients with disabilities. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all clients and notice of the process will be made available on the website and on the premises. Feedback forms along with alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email), will be available upon request.

Submitting Feedback:

Clients can submit feedback to:

- Employee Name and/or Position Title
- Phone Number
- Mailing Address
- Email Address
- <http://www.theredwood.com>

Clients who wish to provide feedback by completing an onsite feedback form or who wish to offer feedback verbally can do so to any The Redwood employee or volunteer. *Update if feedback should only be supplied to specific individuals such as client service, guides, hospitality, etc.*

Clients that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

G. Training

Training will be provided to:

- a) all employees, volunteers, stakeholders and persons who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of The Redwood; for example: counselors, support staff , event operators, crisis helpline call centers; and,
- b) those who are involved in the development and approval of client service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions:

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As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- A review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- The Redwood's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible services to clients with disabilities.

Training Schedule:

The Redwood will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees, volunteers, stakeholders and persons who deal with the public or act on our behalf during orientation. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

Record of Training:

The Redwood will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

H. Notice of Availability and Format of Documents

The Redwood shall notify customers that the documents related to the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the client's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place owned and operated by The Redwood, The Redwood's website and/or any other reasonable method.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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REVISION CONTROL

Date	Revision	Effective