



**Interpretation of Policy**

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***FSO/SFO Accessibility for Peoples with Disability Policy***

**1. Policy Objectives**

The goal of this policy is to ensure that Family Services à la famille Ottawa (FSO) meets or exceeds the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (“AODA”) and its regulations.

**2. Policy Statement**

FSO welcomes and encourages people with disabilities to use its services. FSO will provide access to program services for people with disabilities in a way that respects their rights to dignity, independence and integration.

This commitment is consistent with FSO’s mission to deliver services in a welcoming and supportive environment, and with FSO’s core values of equity; accessibility, diversity and fairness in the treatment of all individuals. FSO/SFO will establish policies, practices and procedures which support the accessibility standards established under the AODA on customer service, information and communication, employment, and the built environment.

FSO will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of people with disabilities. FSO defines reasonable efforts as providing the best possible service within the context of available resources, balancing the needs of people with disabilities with others who may encounter barriers to access and with the community at large, the health and safety of FSO service providers.

**3. Scope**

This policy applies to the delivery of services and programs provided by FSO

## Accessibility Statement

FSO welcomes and encourages people living with disabilities to use our services. FSO will provide access to our services for people with disabilities in a way that respects their right to dignity, independence and integration. FSO uses the definition of disability in the AODA. A disability can include a) physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement, b) mental impairment or developmental disability, c) learning disability, d) mental disorder, and e) an injury or disability for which government benefits are received.

FSO strives to provide service to everyone in a welcoming and supportive environment. FSO will consider the individual needs of people with disabilities in delivering service by:

- Considering individual and special needs when applying FSO policies and procedures
- Communicating with people in a way that meets their needs
- Welcoming feedback and suggestions about services in a variety of formats
- Welcoming occupying support people
- Offering a range of assistive devices such as wheelchairs
- Welcoming service animals
- Letting people know if services are not available, for example, if a program is going to be closed or if the website is not available
- Ensuring that emergency responses address accessibility
- Training staff and volunteers to provide the best possible service
- Providing a forum for addressing concerns or challenges associated with accessing our services, including phone number and key contact information
- Providing opportunities for continuous improvement and regular review of accessibility policies and procedures.

## 4. Principles

**Dignity** – service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people. People with disabilities are not treated as an afterthought or forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

**Independence** – allowing a person with a disability to do things on their own without unnecessary help, or interference from others.

**Integration** – service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable the person to access goods or services.

**Equal Opportunity** – People with disabilities have an opportunity equal to that given to others to access your goods or services.

**5. Accountability**

The Board of Directors and Management Team at FSO is accountable to employees, clients and to the government of Ontario for meeting the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (“AODA”) and its regulations.

**6. Communication**

Program staff and volunteers will communicate with people with disabilities in a way that takes their needs into consideration.

**7. Training for Staff and Volunteers**

FSO will continue to train staff and volunteers to meet the needs of people with disabilities. This includes training requirements in the AODA and its regulations, and will be mandatory.

**8. Feedback Process**

FSO welcomes customer feedback and makes information available to all customers on how to provide feedback. Feedback is accepted by FSO/SFO in a variety of formats. Staff assistance is available to support all residents, including people with disabilities, in providing feedback.

**9. Requests for Accommodations under the Ontario Human Rights Code**

FSO will continue to meet the standards set by the Ontario Human Rights Code. When a request for accommodation is made, FSO/SFO will strive to provide accommodations in a way that most respects the dignity of the person. FSO/SFO recognizes that people with disabilities may require individualized accommodations and that each person’s needs are unique. Accommodations will be provided unless FSO/SFO experiences “undue hardship” as defined in the code.

## 10. Specific Directives-Customer Service Standard

The following directives address the requirements established by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. Ontario Regulation 429/07 (“Customer Service Standard”)

### a. Provision of Services

In keeping with FSO’s values of providing free and equitable access, in a welcoming and supportive environment, FSO/SFO will:

- Provide services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities and provides them with equal opportunity to learn about, use or benefit from FSO/SFO’s services.
- Integrate services for people with disabilities. FSO/SFO understands that equitable access sometimes requires different treatment, including separate or specialized services. However, such services will be offered in a way that respects the dignity and full participation of people with disabilities.

### b. Service Animals

FSO continues to welcome service animals that are needed to assist people with disabilities.

### c. Support People

FSO welcomes people with disabilities and accompanying support people who accompany/help them with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or to access goods and or services. In most cases, FSO/SFO does not charge for its services that it offers. However, when admission fees are charged for programs or services, admission fees will be waived for support people or advance notice will be given of any admission fees that support people must pay.

### d. Assistive Devices

FSO offers a broad range of assistive devices to meet the needs of people with disabilities and will make reasonable efforts to permit the use of assistive devices that enable people with disabilities to use FSO/SFO’s services. FSO/SFO defines an assistive device as a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities, such as moving, communicating or lifting (examples include: walkers, magnifiers for reading etc.) FSO/SFO also recognizes that accessibility can be achieved and provided in different ways.

**e. Training**

Under the AODA legislation, FSO is required to provide staff with accessibility standard training, and will do so as follows:

**i. Current Employees**

Current FSO employees will take part in an interactive training program using the e-learning tool provided by the Ministry of Child and Social Services entitled, *Serve-Ability: Transforming Ontario's Customer Service*. Training will be conducted as part of each component's regular team meetings and coordinated by each team's representative on the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

**ii. New Employees**

New employees will receive the same training as above on an individual basis as part of FSO's orientation process. This training will be coordinated by the Human Resources Officer who has been provided with the resources necessary (desk and laptop with the e-learning module) to deliver the training.

**iii. Content of Employee Training**

- Introduction to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability legislation
- Goal and mandate of the AODA
- Overview of AODA standards and related legislative requirements
- Definition of disability and types of disabilities
- Barriers to accessibility
- Principles of effective client services
- Proper etiquette for interacting with people with disabilities
- How to recognize and respond appropriately to people using personal supports, service animals and assistive technology.

**f. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption**

FSO will provide notice of service disruptions in service which affect clients with disabilities, which include the reason for disruption, how long the disruption will last and a description of available alternatives, if any. In the event of an unplanned disruption, notice will be provided as quickly as possible.

**g. Information and Documentation on Accessible Customer Service**

FSO will document its policies, practices and procedures as required by the Customer Service Standard. Members of the public will be notified of the availability of this documentation which will be available in a variety of formats on FSO/SFO's website.