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SECTION: Quality, Patient Safety, Risk Management SUBSECTION: Patient Relations	EFFECTIVE DATE: 11/12/13 (DD/MM/YY)
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1.0 Purpose

Niagara Health System (NHS) will provide appropriate Customer Service Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and practices that will facilitate the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA), and Ontario Regulations 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The goal of the AODA is to improve accessibility across the province. Nothing in this policy and procedures diminishes in any way the legal obligations of the NHS with respect to persons with disabilities that are imposed under any other Act or otherwise imposed law.

2.0 Scope

Applies to all areas of all sites of the Niagara Health System.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 **AODA** = Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- 3.2 **TDD** = Telephone Device for the Deaf
- 3.3 **TTY** = Teletypewriter

4.0 Policy

All Niagara Health System Staff, Physicians and volunteers must follow Accessibility Policies and Procedures to ensure patient, substitute decision maker and family rights are recognized and supported at all times.

- 4.1 The Niagara Health System, in recognizing the diversity of the community we serve is committed to continually improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in employment and services provided for our community.
- 4.2 Based on the provisions within the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005, the NHS will develop and communicate an annual accessibility plan that describes the measures taken in the past and planned for in the upcoming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities.

Implementation

- 4.3 All NHS employees, volunteers, agents, contractors and others who deal with the public or other third parties and those involved in developing customer service policies, practices, and procedures will receive Accessibility Awareness Training.
- 4.4 The NHS will also provide ongoing training with respect to changes in its policies, practices, and procedures to those individuals who require such training, as soon as practical.

- 4.5 The NHS will keep records of the training provided, including dates training is provided and the number of persons trained.
- 4.6 Accessibility Awareness Training will include:
- How to provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
 - How to interact and communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
 - The process for people to provide feedback on how we provide goods and services to people with disabilities and how we will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaint.
 - How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an alternative device or require the assistance of a guide dog, service animal or a support person to access services or goods.
 - Information on all NHS policies and practices in regards to the AODA.
 - A review of the purpose of the AODA and the requirements of the Customer.
 - How to use equipment or devices on the NHS premises that may help with the provision of goods or services and how to adapt existing service delivery to a person with a disability.
 - What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing NHS goods or services.

Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Support Persons

- 4.7 If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the NHS shall ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and keep the animal with him or her unless that animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.
- 4.8 If the service animal or guide dog is excluded by law from the premises, the NHS will provide other measures to enable the person with the disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- 4.9 If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, they shall be permitted to enter the premises together and not be prevented from having access to each other while in the premises.
- 4.10 The NHS may require a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person while on our premises only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises.

Assistive Devices

- 4.11 Consideration will be given to persons requiring the use of assistive devices in order to obtain, use or benefit from the provision of services; or the availability, if any, of other measures which enable them to do so.

Bell Relay Service

4.12 This service can also be used for telephone communication with the Deaf. The hearing person speaks to the operator who will type the conversation to the Deaf patient and transmit the message to the patient's Teletypewriter (TTY). With Voice Carry Over the hearing impaired person can read the message on the TTY and respond using their voice.

Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD/TTY)

4.13 The Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) or Teletypewriter (TTY) transmits a visual signal over the standard telephone line.

- a) This technology is available for individuals with severe to profound hearing loss or poor speech recognition ability. As one person types their message, the signal is transmitted along the telephone line and is decoded at the other end by the TTY device. It is necessary for both parties to have a system to communicate.

Interruption of Services

4.14 Under the Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities act, 2005, the NHS is responsible for making the following notifications:

If there is a temporary disruption in any NHS facility or services in whole or in part, the NHS shall give notice of the disruption to the public;

- a) Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.
- b) Notice will be given by posting the information at every public entrance on premises, by Security, Engineering or designate under the direction of the Clinical Program Director or On-call Manager.
- c) The Clinical Program Director or On-call Manager will contact the Webmaster to post the service interruption on the NHS public website.
- d) When required the NHS will make media notification through Corporate Communications.
- e) Fan out lists may be initiated under the direction of the Vice-President/Designate/Most senior staff member by assigning staff and or switchboard to make notification.
- f) NHS Corporate Communications may use social media to provide live feed updates of the service interruptions.

Feedback Process

4.15 The public can provide feedback on the accessibility of provisions of goods and services by the NHS through the Accessibility Advisory Committee by:

- a) e-mail at: patientrelations@niagarahealth.on.ca
- b) Mail addressed to: Patient Relations, St Catharines Site, 1200 4th Avenue. Catharine, ON, L2S 0A9
- c) By phone: 905.378.4647 ext. 44423
- d) In person: Patient Relations, St Catharines Site, 1200 4th Avenue. Catharines, ON, L2S 0A9

- e) Feedback will be responded to within 3 business days following the receipt by the NHS.

Notice of Availability of Documents

4.16 NHS will notify its clients that the documents required by Ontario Regulation 429/07 are available upon request.

Format of Documents

4.17 Any document, or information contained in the document requested by a person with a disability, will be provided in a format that takes into account the person's disability. The NHS and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

5.0 Related Documents

Policy – Consent to Treatment – 360-005-005

Policy – NHS Accessibility – 360-020-008

Policy – NHS Accessibility – Interpretation Services – 360-020-010

Procedure – NHS Accessibility – Interpretation Services – 360-020-011

6.0 References

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom – Constitution Act, 1982.

Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990.

Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, S.O. 1991, c. 18.

Social Worker and Social Service Work Act, 1998, S.O. 1998, c. 31.

Supreme Court of Canada Eldridge Decision – (1997) 3, *Eldridge* v. British Columbia (Attorney S.C.R. General).