

POLICY	Manual: Administrative	Section: Admin	Code No.: A A012	Old Code No.:
Title: Accessibility - Customer Service Regulation			Original Effective Date: Jan 22, 2010	
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Cross Index: A A011, A A013, A A014, A A015	Authoring Committee/Program/Dept: Accessibility Workgroup		Approved By: AMC	

Southlake Regional Health Centre commits to providing barrier free access to its environments, programs, and services.

Based on the requirements within the Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility for Customer Service (AODA), 2005, Southlake ensures that documents and practices comply with this Customer Service Regulation. Elements of the Customer Service Standard include policies or procedures addressing but not limited to:

- Training and Education
- Assistive Devices
- Service Animals
- Notice of Service Interruption
- Support Persons

Training and Education:

Education and training (as appropriate) regarding accessibility to services for individuals with disabilities is provided to all employees, students, volunteers, and physicians during orientation. A component regarding accessibility is included in the core curriculum to be completed annually.

Others service providers (e.g. contractors) who are not required to attend hospital orientation receive training and education from the department at Southlake employing their services. Such education shall be provided by the supervisor at Southlake who is overseeing the work of the service provider.

Assistive Devices:

Southlake facilitates the use of personal assistive devices for individuals with disabilities. An assistive device is defined as any device which allows persons with disabilities to obtain, use, or benefit from the provider's goods or services. Assistive devices are usually devices that people bring with them but may also include equipment available within the hospital for inpatient and outpatient use (e.g. hospital wheelchair).

Wherever possible, persons are permitted unlimited access to their assistive devices. Where the assistive device is not permitted (e.g. cell phone use in restricted areas), provisions are made to provide the service provided by the device.

Physical Facilities ensures the good working order of all hospital-owned assistive devices. Staff contact Physical Facilities or Environmental Services if they identify any hospital-owned assistive devices requiring repair or cleaning.

Assistive Devices include but are not limited to:

- **Physical assistive devices** - cane, walker, wheelchair, electric scooters, grasping devices
- **Communicative Devices** - hearing devices, laptop computers, personal data assistant (PDA), cell phones
- **Visual Aids** - magnification devices, Braille devices, white canes, glasses
- **Medical Assistive Devices** - personal oxygen tanks

Service Animals:

Service animals are accommodated at Southlake and are permitted in areas commonly accessed by the public. Service animals are restricted from entering the following areas:

- Food preparation and food storage areas

- Medication preparation or storage areas
- Clean or sterile supply storage areas
- Isolation rooms
- Surgical procedure rooms

Owners must make arrangements in advance for alternate care of the animal if they plan to enter an area which precludes animals.

The AODA designates an animal as a service animal if:

1. It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his/her disability; or
2. 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 animals are animals specifically trained to assist people with disabilities in their activities of independent living. They are not considered to be pets but rather an auxiliary aid similar to the use of a cane, crutch or wheelchair. Examples of service animals include:

- A guide animal, trained by authorized vendors to service for mobility, individuals who are visually impaired and/or blind.
- A hearing animal, trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound occurs, such as a knock on the door or fire alarm.
- Special skills animals, trained to assist a person who has a mobility or health disability. Duties may include carrying, fetching, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, steadying a person while walking, helping a person up after a fall, emotional support, etc. Service animals sometimes are called assistance animals.
- A seizure response animal, trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. The animal's service depends on the person's needs. The animal may go for help, or may stand guard over the person during a seizure. Some animals have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person.
- A companion animal or emotional support animal that assists persons with psychological disabilities. Emotional support animals can help alleviate symptoms such as depression, anxiety, stress and difficulties regarding social interactions, allowing individuals to live independently and fully use and enjoy their living environment.

A patient accompanied by a service animal is not required to disclose the nature of their disability.

Notice of Service Interruptions:

Service Interruption notifications are provided by Southlake as per Regulation 429/07 which deems that, "if, in order to obtain, use or benefit from a provider's goods or services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services of the provider and if there is a temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, the providers shall give notice of the disruption to the public." Notifications must include:

- Reason for and information about the disruption
- Anticipated duration
- Alternative facilities or services if available
- Contact name and number for information relating to the service interruption

Support Persons:

Southlake recognizes that support persons may be utilized by individuals with disabilities to facilitate their access to goods or services at Southlake. Wherever possible, a support person is allowed unlimited access to the person with the disability.

When a support person is permitted access to a controlled access care area* where exposure to confidential information of other patients may occur, measures must be taken by all staff in that area to ensure such exposure is minimized. Where possible, prior to the arrival in the controlled access area, the support person will be asked by nursing staff to sign a Confidentiality Agreement for Patient Escorts Accessing Controlled Access Areas (form #SLO638) in accordance with the Confidentiality Addendum re Special Purpose Visitors policy.

A support person is defined as "a person who accompanies a person with disabilities in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid support worker, a volunteer, a friend, or a family member. The support person does not need to have special training or qualifications. **A support person may be identified as such by the person with the disability and is not required to carry or produce documentation.**"

*Controlled access areas include surgical suites, procedure rooms, PACU, and recovery rooms.

References:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
- Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)