

Policies and Procedures for Mainstay Housing	
Name of Policy: Accessibility Policy – Customer Service Standards	Effective Date: January 1, 2012
Policy Approver: Board of Directors	Revision Date: January 1, 2012
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1. Policy

Mainstay Housing works with people living with mental health and addiction issues who are deeply affected by poverty. These people may be affected by physical disabilities. We provide them with housing, ongoing support and greater opportunity to be part of a community.

Mainstay Housing strives at all times to provide services to our tenant/members, participants, and members of the public (together referred to as “Clients”) in a way that respects their dignity and independence. We are committed to ensuring that Clients with disabilities receive accessible services with the same quality and timelines as others who seek our services.

Mainstay Housing supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all our services as set out in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001*, the *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005* and the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (the “Regulation”)*.

2. Scope

This policy applies to Mainstay Housing staff, volunteers, students, contractors and others who represent or are connected to Mainstay Housing and who interact with Clients.

Whether a person’s disability is apparent or not, everyone will be treated with courtesy, made to feel welcome, and have their need for accommodation respected whenever they use a Mainstay Housing service, and/or interact with Mainstay Housing staff, board members, volunteers, students and others.

3. Principles

Mainstay Housing representatives shall provide accessible customer service with the following key principles:

a) Dignity

Service is provided in a respectful manner consistent with the needs of the individual.

b) Independence

Services for Clients with disabilities will support their independence while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy. As such service delivery shall consider the nature of the service and alternative accommodation that may be required if available.

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c) Equity/Equality of Outcome

Service outcome is the same for all Clients, whether or not they have a disability.

d) Integrated

Services allow Clients with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other Clients where feasible.

e) Sensitive

Service is provided in a manner that is respectful to a Client’s needs.

f) Responsive

Service is delivered in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the accommodation required.

4. Customer Service Commitments

a) Training

All Mainstay Housing staff, volunteers, board members, students, and any other persons who deal with Clients on behalf of Mainstay Housing and all persons involved in developing customer service policies, practices, and procedures, will receive Accessibility Awareness Training. New staff members, volunteers, board members and students will be trained upon their initial orientation and existing staff members, volunteers, board members and students will receive training on a regular basis and when changes are made to these policies and procedures or regulations.

MAINSTAY HOUSING will provide training on:

- The purpose of AODA, the requirements of the Regulation, and any subsequent legislation;
- Mainstay Housing policies, practices and procedures pertaining to the provision of services to persons with disabilities, including customer service standards;
- Interacting and communicating with persons with different types of disabilities;
- Providing services to persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- Using the equipment or devices available on Mainstay Housing’s premises, or otherwise, that may assist with the provision of services to persons with disabilities; and

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- Addressing situations where a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Mainstay Housing services.

Mainstay Housing will keep records of the training provided, including dates training is provided and the number of persons trained.

Contractors and consultants providing services on behalf of Mainstay Housing to Clients will be required to ensure their staff have the appropriate training and confirm the same to Mainstay Housing in writing.

b) Assistive Devices

Individuals accessing Mainstay Housing’s sites and services are permitted to use their personal assistive devices, wherever possible.

If it is not possible to use an assistive device to access Mainstay Housing’s sites and services, Mainstay Housing will work with Clients to find an alternative way to access services or other alternative solutions to assist Clients.

c) Service Animals

Mainstay Housing is committed to welcoming persons with disabilities who are accompanied by their service animals (as defined in the Regulation) on the parts of its premises that are open to Clients, except in any site-specific prohibited areas as required by the law.

Owners of Service Animals may receive information from staff as to the location of fresh water for the service animal and where service animals may be walked to relieve themselves.

It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure his/her service animal is kept in control at all times.

Mainstay Housing will ensure that all staff, volunteers and third parties dealing with Clients are trained on how to interact with the person with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

d) Support Persons

Mainstay Housing recognizes the right of individuals to live independently with support and encourage those individuals to participate in our various services with their support person (as defined in the Regulation).

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Persons with disabilities may bring their support person with them to Mainstay Housing premises when accessing services.

Where a service or program requires pre-registration, the individual requiring support must register the support person at the same time to ensure that space is available for them to attend.

Where a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises, the person with a disability shall be accompanied by a support person at all times when on the premises seeking service.

Accommodations may be made for individuals with support persons where Mainstay Housing is notified in advance of trainings and events.

5. Feedback and Complaints Process

To ensure the best services possible, Mainstay Housing invites individuals to provide feedback, and if necessary, file a complaint on how Mainstay Housing provides services to Clients with disabilities.

Feedback and complaints may be provided in whatever manner that is accessible to the Client, including in person, by telephone, in writing, or by delivering an electronic text by email or on diskette or otherwise.

Feedback may be provided to the Executive Director

Telephone: 416-703-9266

In writing: 761 Queen Street West, Suite 301, Toronto, ON M6J 1G1

Email: info@mainstayhousing.ca

Mainstay Housing will respond to complaints and will take the appropriate action to address the identified issue. Complaints will be addressed using the procedure in the Harassment and Discrimination Policy for Tenant/Members/Participants.

Mainstay Housing will provide a response to feedback in a format that is accessible to the Client and the response will outline actions to be taken by Mainstay Housing, if any.

6. Communications

Mainstay Housing will communicate with persons with disabilities in a manner that takes into account the nature of their disability. This means that staff will communicate in a manner that enables persons with disabilities to communicate effectively for purposes of using, receiving, and requesting Mainstay Housing services. Relevant and critical documents currently identified, such as

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leases, tenant/members handbook, the Accessibility Policy, and any other policy referenced within the Accessibility Policy, will be given to a person with a disability in a format that is accessible to the person with a disability.

Mainstay Housing will train staff and volunteers who communicate with Clients on interacting and communicating with Clients in an accessible manner which takes into account a Client’s disability. Staff and volunteers will be encouraged to adopt a “How may I help you?” approach to communications.

Mainstay Housing may request information regarding an individual’s limitations and/or restrictions as is reasonable and necessary for the sole purposes of determining the feasibility of an accommodation or providing the most appropriate accommodation. Any information provided would be held in strict confidence according to Mainstay’s Personal Information Policy, to provide effective service.

7. Notice of Temporary Disruptions of Services

Mainstay Housing will communicate to the public when facilities or services that people with disabilities normally use to access services are temporarily unavailable. Notice of service disruption will be provided as soon as staff become aware of the disruption or, in advance, in the case of planned disruptions.

Mainstay Housing will utilize the most effective format of notification depending upon the situation.

8. Documentation

This policy and the identified documents will be made available upon request in a format that takes into account the tenant/members or member of the public’s disability.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy will be made available on Mainstay Housing’s website, and made available to any person to whom it provides services by any other method or format as is reasonable in the circumstances.

Mainstay Housing will maintain documents related to the provision of services to persons with disabilities i.e. policies, procedures, training materials and training records.

9. Interpretation

The definitions in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, 2005 and the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation, apply to this policy.