

WATERMARK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.

Customer Service Policy

for Co-opS in Ontario

Passed by the Board of Directors on
the 26 day of November 2015

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Watermark Co-operative Homes Inc., (the “co-op”) is committed to providing quality services that are accessible to all, and to communicating with all persons with disabilities in a way that takes into account their disabilities.

In so doing, the co-op strives at all times to provide services in a way that respects the principles of:

- *independence* – allowing people with disabilities to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others
- *dignity* – providing services in a way that allows people with disabilities to maintain self-respect and the respect of others
- *integration* – allowing people with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar ways as others
- *equality of opportunity* – offering people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from the co-op’s services and co-op life.

2. purpose of policy

The purpose of this policy is to describe how the co-op provides services to people with disabilities and to ensure these services are provided in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, c.11 and the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* (collectively the “AODA”).

3. DEFINITIONS

Assistive device

A tool, technology or other mechanism that helps a person with a disability do everyday tasks such as moving, communicating or lifting. Assistive devices may include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, lifts, reading machines, recording machines, amplifiers, TTY services, oxygen tanks, communication boards, and/or white canes.

Disability

As defined by the AODA and Ontario *Human Rights Code*:

- (a) 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;

- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (d) a mental disorder; and/or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Service animal

An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability:

- (a) if it is a guide dog as defined in the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7;
- (b) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- (c) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support person

A person who accompanies a person with a disability to assist with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services.

4. POLICIES

4.1 Assistive devices

- (a) The co-op is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to access the co-op's services.
- (b) A person with a disability may use his or her own assistive device to access the co-op's services, unless this device poses a risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or to others.
- (c) If a person with a disability cannot use his or her assistive device because of health and/or safety risks, the co-op will take reasonable measures to assist this person to access the co-op's services.
- (d) The co-op will ensure that its staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by persons with disabilities while accessing the co-op's goods or services.

- (e) The co-op will also ensure that staff knows how to use assistive devices available on its premises for use by members and/or the public.

4.2 Service animals

- (a) The co-op acknowledges the vital relationship between a person with a disability and his or her service animal. Service animals are allowed to accompany people with disabilities on all parts of the co-op's premises that are open to the public or other third parties, except where food is prepared, utility rooms, or as otherwise excluded by law.
- (b) The co-op will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by service animals.
- (c) The person accompanied by the service animal will keep the animal with him or her at all times, and will be responsible for the service animal's care, supervision and control while on the co-op's premises.
- (d) Where another person's health and safety could be adversely affected by the presence of a service animal, the co-op will fully analyze all options for safely allowing the service animal onto the premises. In so doing, the co-op will consult with the person with the disability, and with the adversely affected person, to find a solution that meets the needs of both individuals.
- (e) If the service animal is excluded by law, or cannot otherwise enter the co-op's premises because of the health and safety risks to another person, the co-op shall ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to access the co-op's services.

4.3 Support persons

- (a) The co-op welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter the co-op's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on the co-op's premises.
- (b) If the co-op needs to discuss confidential information with a person accompanied by a support person, the person with a disability will be asked if he or she wishes the support person to be present and, if so, to sign a consent form authorizing the co-op to disclose confidential information in the presence of the support person. In addition, the support person will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to keep the confidential information disclosed by the co-op in strict confidence.

- (c) If the co-op charges an admission fee for an event or service, it shall post a notice in advance stating the amount, if any, payable by support persons accompanying a person with a disability.
- (d) The co-op may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the co-op's premises. This would occur only if, upon consultation with the person with the disability, it was the only way to allow the person on the premises and, at the same time, fulfill the co-op's obligations to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and of others on the premises.

4.4 Communication and information

- (a) The co-op will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.
- (b) The co-op will train staff who communicate with members, applicants, and/or the public on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- (c) The co-op will use plain language in its written materials.
- (d) The co-op will provide information in alternate forms upon request. This may include, but is not limited to, telephoning members to convey information normally provided in written notices, providing a large-print version of documents, and one-on-one meetings with members to review important information.
- (e) Upon request, the co-op will work with members with disabilities to ensure their full participation at board, members' and committee meetings.

4.5 Notice of service disruptions

- (a) The co-op will notify the public of a disruption in facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities to access the co-op's premises or services. The notice will include the reason for the disruption, its duration, and the alternative services available (if any).
- (b) The type of notice will depend on the circumstances. The notice may be given by posting a written notice in common areas (e.g. beside an elevator that is out of order, or an entrance way that is closed for repairs), by email, by posting a notice on the co-op's website (if any), or by a telephone call to members expected to be particularly affected by the disruption.

- (c) The co-op will give advance notice of scheduled disruptions. If the disruption is unexpected, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

4.6 Feedback

- (a) The co-op is committed to maintaining and improving access to its goods and services by people with disabilities, including members, applicants, and the public. Comments regarding the manner in which the co-op provides goods or service to persons with disabilities are welcome and appreciated.
- (b) Feedback regarding the way the co-op provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, by diskette, online, or by any other method.
- (c) The feedback process will be posted in the co-op's office, in the member handbook and on the co-op's website (if any).
- (d) If the person requests a response to the feedback, the [Co-op Manager] will contact him or her within three [3] business days to discuss next steps.
- (e) Feedback will be used to improve the way the co-op provides goods and services to people with disabilities. The co-op will seek the consent of the person giving the feedback before bringing a suggestion or complaint to the board, a committee, or any other person.

4.7 Training

- (a) Everyone who interacts with members or the public or other third parties on behalf of the co-op, whether they are paid or unpaid, will receive training on customer service requirements.
- (b) Everyone involved in the development of the co-op's customer service policies, practices and procedures will receive training on customer service requirements.
- (c) All third-party contractors who deal with members of the public on the co-op's behalf shall, upon request, demonstrate that their employees, agents, and/or subcontractors have received training on customer service requirements.
- (d) All training for employees, members and contractors will meet the requirements of the AODA. Training will include the following:
 - i. the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the customer service standard;

- ii. how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
 - iii. how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
 - iv. how to use the assistive devices available on the co-op's premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities;
 - v. what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the co-op's goods and services; and
 - vi. the co-op's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
- (e) Training may be provided through workshops, on-line training, written guides or any other method agreed upon by the board.
- (f) The co-op will ensure that new employees receive training within [one] month of the commencement of their employment, and that board or committee members receive training within [three] months of the commencement of their appointment. The co-op will also provide training on changes to the AODA and/or the co-op's policies or practices.
- (g) The co-op will maintain records of each training recipient, the training provided, and the date the training was completed.

PASSED by the Board of Directors on the 26 day of November, 2015

CONFIRMED at a general meeting of the Members on the 25 day of June, 2016.



President
c/s

Secretary 
