

Monday November 14th, 2016



A DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY
AND TRAINING MANUAL
ACCESSIBLE CLIENT STANDARDS

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AFP FELLOWSHIP IN PHILANTHROPY AND INCLUSION PROJECT

OVERVIEW

The Customer Standards Policies aim to train and educate staff and volunteers on how to best provide services to people with differing abilities. Although not all service providers are currently in an accessible building, services for referrals can still be done. To provide total inclusive care; updated policies, procedures, education and training are necessary.

The goal of the project was to create and implement two accessible client care policies, a client feedback form and a training manual to become more inclusive and closer to being fully compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) by 2025.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

This project and these documents being created and implemented are important, not solely because it is in compliance with the AODA (2005) but also because it governs how any organization provides services to clients with differing abilities. It provides the staff, Board of Directors, volunteers and contractors with an inclusive framework to apply to their individual roles. It trains staff to respect the client's dignity and independence, whether they are able to fully benefit from the services or not. Aligning the organization's practices with the AODA's guidelines allows the organization to identify, remove and prevent barriers for clients with differing abilities requesting service.

PROJECT STRATEGY

Within a pre-set one month time frame, the task at hand was to create these policies, present them to the Board of Directors for approval, provide training to all staff and volunteers, and finally generate and submit a compliance report to an AODA Compliance Officer.

The first step will be researching and gathering information through invested individuals, agencies and online resources.

1. Interviews with staff and clients
2. Conversations and information sharing with community agencies
3. Continue collaborating with AODA Compliance Office
4. Online Research for best practices and guidelines ⁱⁱ

After the information is compiled and analyzed, draft policies will be written and a small working group will be given the task to review and revisions will be made. The next step will be to present the policies to the organization's Board of Directors for revisions and then eventually a motion to accept them into the current Policies and Procedures.

When this is completed, a compliance report will be filled out and submitted to the AODA Compliance Office. Internally, the organization will continue to prepare to become fully accessible in the near future and re-visit compliance rules and update the training on an annual basis.

PROJECT COMMUNICATION TABLE

Key Participants	Method of Communications	Activity	Comments
Clients	Surveys	Determine needs	Limited Response
Staff	Phone/Email	History/service delivery	Good Response and involvement
Community Agencies	Phone/Email	Best Practices/ Current Policies	Limited Response due to time constraints
AODA (Chantel H.)	Email/Online	Law/Guidelines	Good Resources and guidance

PROJECT CHALLENGES

Challenges	Explanation	Impact	Resolution
Time constraints	Due to the 30-day project length many groups were not able to participate.	Less information and resources than was available.	Utilized the information that was provided as best as possible with annual re-visits to revise as seen necessary.
Current policies	There were no policies in place at the start of the project.	More time and effort had to be put into the research component to create these policies and training manual.	AODA Compliance Office provided guidelines and templates to assist. YWCA provided their P&P.
Work Load	Due to the project's time frame and normal roles the work load became a lot for one person.	Risk of a less efficient project pace, mistakes being made and not meeting the required deadline.	Requested support in the information gathering stage from co-workers.
Language	Terminology differed from other agency/AODA due to the nature of the organization's business and the clients served.	Wrong use of terminology could result in a document that is not 100% inclusive and not as applicable to the organization's operations.	Vetting the documents and making changes such as "customer" to "client" and etc.
Approval Process	Board of Directors to quickly learn the AODA to soundly make a decision regarding the policies.	Some frustrations and heavier workload.	Phone calls, emails and an in person meeting were used to clarify and answer all questions relating to the policies and its impacts.

Challenges	Explanation	Impact	Resolution
Training Process	Due to the time constraints and other challenges along the way, it was not feasible for all staff, volunteers and Board of Directors to complete training prior to September 16 th , 2016.	Frustration from staff and management on the timelines and added pressure to daily work activities.	Requested an extension for relief staff, volunteers and Board members due to their frequency of their time at the organization. Extension was granted until mid-October.

SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Staff:

1. Can you identify any barriers in the organization’s client standards for people with differing abilities?
2. Do you know the organization’s policy for accessible client standards?
3. Do you know about different devices that are used to assist clients with differing abilities?
4. Do you believe the organization can do more for clients with differing abilities in terms of client standards?
5. What form of client standard training or support would you feel is appropriate for your role?
6. Is there anything else that interferes with your ability to serve people?
7. Have you had clients provide feedback on the organization’s accessibility?

Clients:

1. Can you identify any accessibility barriers at this service provider in terms of client standards?
2. Do you believe this service provider can do more for accessible formats of communication?
3. Is there anything about how staff talk to people and act toward them that could be a barrier?
4. Is it difficult to communicate with the staff or read the material?
5. Is there anything else that interferes with your ability to receive service?

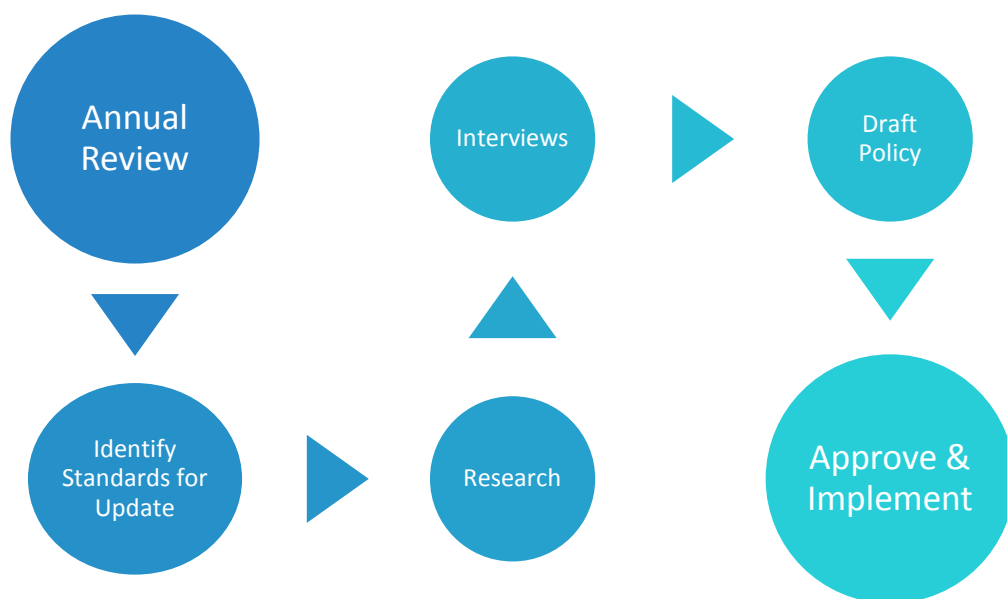
Community Agencies:

1. Does your agency have an Accessible Client Standards Policy and Training Manual
2. What was the general response to the training and policies being implemented?
3. What are your best practices when it comes to serving people with differing abilities and making communication more accessible?
4. What more do you think could be done to improve accessibility in your organization?
5. Are we able to use your organization’s Policy as a resource when developing one?

ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS

A schedule and plan will be put into place on an annual base for Management to review and update these policies as needed to keep in compliance with the AODA and to ensure we provide the most inclusive Accessible Client Care Services.

ANNUAL REVIEW PROCESS FLOW



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is important for organizations to be proactive when it comes to their Accessibility standards, as these are constantly changing and not staying informed could result in fines or being found non-compliant.
2. There are many agencies, consultants and resources online and via different forms of communication that supports the AODA. Utilizing these resources will help your organization to not have to re-invent the wheel but also access to best practices.
3. Every person who is involved in either receiving services from, delivering services or governing the organization should be involved in the research and development stage as the information they provide will be the most detailed and accurate for service delivery and experiences.

ⁱ <http://www.mediacurrent.com/blog/describing-images-improved-web-accessibility>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.ontario.ca/document/accessible-customer-service-policy-template>