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**POLICY P.121.GOV**

**TITLE: ACCESSIBILITY**

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**Authorization: Board: 24 November 2009**

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## **1.0 OBJECTIVE**

- 1.1 To ensure that all reasonable efforts shall be made to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility for all members of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) community.

## **2.0 DEFINITIONS**

In this Policy

- 2.1 **Accessibility** means creating an environment in which systemic barriers to the full participation of people with disabilities are reduced or eliminated through reasonable efforts so that there is equitable access for all (e.g., services, systems, and policies).
- 2.2 **Assistive device** means any device used by people with disabilities to help with daily living, including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, hearing aids and electronic communication devices.
- 2.3 **Accommodation** means using all reasonable efforts to prevent and remove barriers that impede individuals with disabilities from participating fully in the District. Accommodation involves three principles:
- a) Respect for Dignity
  - b) Individual Accommodation
  - c) Inclusion and Full Participation
- 2.4 **Barrier to Accessibility** (outlined in Attachment 1) means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of the District. This includes, but is not limited to, a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.

- 2.5 **Community** means students, parents/guardians, trustees, staff, and volunteers of a school and feeder schools/family of schools as well as the community of people in businesses and organizations that are served by the District in any way.
- 2.6 **Customer** means all members of the public, including those who have disabilities and may require particular considerations in order to avail themselves of the services provided by a school board.
- 2.7 **Disability** means:
- 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, 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*.

The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go.

- 2.8 **Reasonable Efforts** vary depending on each situation. The OCDSB is expected to use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the following principles:
- a) dignity;
  - b) independence;
  - c) integration (except when alternative measures are necessary to meet the needs of an individual with a disability or disabilities); and
  - d) equal opportunity.

The principles may need to be balanced in order to meet the individual needs of the person with a disability.

- 2.9 **Service Animal** means a domesticated animal that may legally reside in an urban, residential home, which provides support to an individual with a disability. Service animals fall along a continuum that includes highly trained, certified guide and service

dogs as well as untrained, uncertified therapy or companion animals that provide emotional support for their handlers.

- 2.10 **Support Person** means another person who accompanies an individual with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid professional, a volunteer, a family member or friend.

### 3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 The District shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices support and are consistent with its obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)* and associated regulations.
- 3.2 The District shall welcome all members of the school and broader community to its facilities by committing staff and volunteers to providing services in a manner that respects the independence and dignity of people with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of assistive devices and service animals.
- 3.3 All Board policies, procedures and practices must be consistent with and shall be governed by the following principles and commitments:
- a) respect for the integration of services to allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers, or alternatively, the provision of alternate measures necessary to meet their needs;
  - b) respect for the independence and dignity of people with disabilities allowing them freedom from control or influence of others, freedom to make their own choices, and freedom to do things in their own way;
  - c) respect for the equal opportunity and dignity of people with disabilities to have the same opportunities, benefits and intended outcomes as others;
  - d) a commitment to ensuring, in a timely manner, that people with disabilities have the same access to employment opportunities and services as do all employees and prospective employees;
  - e) a commitment to meeting, in a timely manner, the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in the provision of services related to information and communications so that they have the same access to our services as other members of our community;
  - f) a commitment to meeting, in a timely manner, the accessibility needs of students with disabilities, and ensuring their safety, in the provision of services related to student transportation;

- g) a commitment to ensuring that accessibility design, criteria and features are considered in the procurement or acquisition of goods, services or facilities, except where it is not practical to do so; and
- h) a commitment to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in the design of public spaces, including newly constructed or redeveloped outdoor play spaces, parking spaces, and pathways.

## **4.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

- 4.1
  - a) These directives apply to all members of the OCDSB community in the area of accessibility
  - b) Specific procedures for customer service are provided in PR.666.GOV Accessibility (Customer Service)
- 4.2 The District shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that both visible and invisible barriers to accessibility are identified and removed to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities. This shall include:
  - a) promoting inclusive design in facilities, programs, policies, practices and services to provide equal access for people with disabilities;
  - b) providing a relevant accommodation process that ensures shared responsibility to support the unique needs of people with disabilities;
  - c) addressing attitudes and stereotypes which pose a substantial barrier to people with disabilities; and
  - d) taking into account the impact on people with disabilities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems or planning a new initiative.
- 4.3 To enhance awareness and responsiveness to the needs of people with disabilities, the District shall ensure that training is provided, appropriate to their specific roles and responsibilities, on its obligations under the AODA and accompanying regulations, the Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities, and this policy (including any changes made to it) to:
  - a) all employees and volunteers;
  - b) all persons who participate in developing District policies; and
  - c) all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the District.
- 4.4 No a priori distinctions between categories of service animal shall be made and each request to allow for support by a service animal shall be considered objectively with respect to safety, manageability, and need, taking full account of documented professional rationale and prescription in critical support of either well-being or learning.

- 4.5 The Director of Education shall be responsible for the establishment of procedures to support the implementation of this policy ensuring ongoing compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and regulations, as required, in the following areas:
- (i) customer service;
  - (ii) information and communications;
  - (iii) built environment;
  - (iv) employment; and
  - (v) transportation.
- 4.6 The effectiveness of this policy shall be reviewed periodically, according to an established process involving consultation with frontline staff, community members and volunteers.
- 4.7 The Director of Education shall report annually to the Board with respect to the OCDSB's ongoing compliance with this policy.

## 5.0 APPENDICES

Attachment 1 – Barriers to Accessibility

## 6.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*

Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

*Ontario Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards*

Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, Ontario Regulation 429/07 Guide

January 2008 – Ministry of Community and Social Services

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: Summary of Requirements, March 2008

*A Guide to the Integrated Accessibility Standards, July 2012*

Board Policy P.125.SCO School Board Code of Conduct

***Board Procedure PR.572.HR Disability Support Program – Individual Accommodation Plans***

Board Procedure PR.666.GOV Accessibility (Customer Service Standards)

***Board Procedure PR.686.SCO Use of Service Animals for Students***

## BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

- a) **Architectural or structural** barriers may result from the design of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout.
- b) **Information and communications** barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that is not clear or plain can all cause difficulty.
- c) **Technology**, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers.
- d) **Systemic** barriers can occur through policies and procedures. These are any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities – for example, denying access to a person with a service animal.
- e) **Attitude** is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or non-visible disabilities or they simply discriminate against them because of stereotypes. Some may feel that they could offend an individual with a disability by offering help or in some cases they will ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether.