

	<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b>	1.7	<b>REVIEWED:</b>
	<b>DATE:</b>	June 2021	<b>REVISED:</b>
	<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	Board of Directors	
	<b>POLICY AREA:</b>	Organizational Policies	
	<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Accessible Customer Service</b>	

## POLICY STATEMENT

The RSLFHT is committed to providing accessible customer service to persons with disabilities. The RSLFHT standard of service conforms to the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and “Accessibility Standards for Customer Service” (Ontario Regulation 429/07).

Any policy of the RSLFHT that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

The RSLFHT’s standard of service demonstrates the following core principles:

**Dignity and Sensitivity:** Services shall be provided in a respectful manner consistent with the needs of the individual.

**Independence:** Services for persons with disabilities shall support their independence while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy.

**Integration and Equality of Opportunity:** Service is the same for persons with disabilities as for persons without disabilities. People with disabilities will receive the same services and in the same or similar way as other patients.

**Responsiveness:** Service will be delivered in a timely manner, considering the situation at hand. If needed, an alternate format of service will be provided, and the customer will be kept apprised of the situation and timelines.

## APPLICATION

All personnel, policies, procedures, and processes of the Rideau St. Lawrence Family Health Team.

## ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE PLAN OUTLINE

The RSLFHT has an Accessible Service Plan which includes the following elements:

- Steps that will be taken to support persons with disabilities who require Assistive Devices, Service Animals and/or Support Persons.
- Process for providing notice to patients when there is a disruption in accessible service;

- Description of staff training on the various aspects of accessible service delivery including how to communicate with a patient in consideration of his/her disability and what to do if a disability is making it difficult for a patient to access RSLFHT services;
- A mechanism for patients to provide feedback on the RSLFHT's compliance with this policy; and
- A mechanism to inform patients on how to access a copy of this policy and the Accessible Customer Service Plan.

## **ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE PLAN**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this plan is to implement the corporate policy entitled "Accessible Customer Service".

### **DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this plan, the following definitions shall apply:

**Assistive Devices:** Auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids, and medical aids (i.e., canes, crutches, wheelchairs, hearing aids, walkers, oxygen tanks).

**Disabilities:** In accordance with the Human Rights Code, 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, brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, physical reliance on a guide dog or other support 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.

**Guide Dog:** A guide dog as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* is a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having qualifications prescribed by the regulations under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*.

**Nurse:** A registered nurse or registered practical nurse who is a registered member in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

**Personnel:** Shall include all employees, staff, volunteers, students, supervisors, managers, Board members or other persons representing the RSL Family Health Team as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

**Persons with Disabilities:** Shall include persons with all types of disabilities, whether visible or non-visible. A person with a disability may include a patient, service provider, visitor, etc.

**Physician:** A physician who is a registered member, in good standing, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

**Service Animal:** Any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or where the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that he or she requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability; or a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

**Support Person:** A support person is any person who accompanies a person with a disability, whether hired, a friend or family member or volunteer, to assist with communications, mobility, personal or medical care or with access to goods and services.

## STANDARDS

**Assistive Devices:** Persons with disabilities shall be permitted to obtain, use, or benefit from goods or services through the use of their own assistive devices. Where it is determined that the assistive devices may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or the health and safety of others, the RSLFHT will offer reasonable measures to assist him/her in obtaining, using, and benefiting from the RSLFHT's services.

In the event a person with a disability is hindered from accessing services, the RSLFHT will consult with the person and discuss ways to accommodate the person (example, providing temporary access to other assistive devices).

Personnel will be properly trained in the use of any assistive devices owned by the RSLFHT.

Personnel will let the patient know about accessible features in the immediate area that are appropriate to their needs (example, accessible washroom).

**Service Animals:** Service Animals, such as, but not limited to, guide dogs, hearing dogs, seizure response dogs or other certified service animals, shall be permitted entry to the RSLFHT facilities and rooms which are open to the public, unless prohibited by law, in which case alternate means of service will be provided. Examples of where a service animal is prohibited by law include areas where food is prepared or stored, areas where health and safety requirements apply (example, where sterile procedures occur) and in cases where municipal laws restrict breeds.

Personnel should avoid touching or addressing a service animal. Reception will offer a safe place for the animal to wait, and personnel will assist the patient while they are separated from the animal. Personnel may ask the patient for a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that their animal is required for reasons relating to their disability if it is not readily apparent.

**Support Persons:** A person with a disability may enter the RSLFHT with a support person and shall have access to the support person while on the premises, except when there is inherent risk involved which may result in injury or death.

When serving a person with a disability, personnel will ensure they receive the consent of the individual to have their support person present prior to commencing services, especially when dealing with confidential matters. Personnel will be sure to speak to and use eye contact with the patient, not the support person.

**Disruption in Services:** If there is a disruption in a particular facility or service used to allow a person with a disability to access goods, the RSLFHT will give notice (Schedule "C") of the disruption to the public by posting the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration of the disruption and alternative facilities or services that may be available. This posting shall be by reasonable method and in a conspicuous place. In the event the disruption is anticipated, reasonable advance notice shall be given.

**Training:** All personnel of the RSLFHT shall be trained in the various aspects of accessible customer service delivery.

Training shall include:

- a. an overview of the purposes and requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (OReg 429/07);
- b. a good awareness of the RSLFHT's policy with respect to customer service for persons with disabilities;
- c. learning the various types of disabilities, both visible and non-visible;
- d. instructions on how to interact and communicate with people, taking into account their disability (eg. writing, pictures, phone, on-line) but always asking first how the patient would like to communicate (Schedule "A");
- e. instruction on interacting with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or a support person;
- f. instruction on the use of RSLFHT assistive devices available, such as wheelchairs;
- g. the process available to persons with disabilities to provide feedback to the RSLFHT and how and when the MVFHT will respond to such feedback; and,
- h. Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing services;
- i. Instruction on posting a notice of disruption (for example, if the automatic door opener is not functioning, post a notice that the patient can call, and we will assist them to get in)

All new personnel shall receive this education during orientation.

Education shall be repeated annually. The RSLFHT will keep records of training, including the date on which education is provided and to whom it was provided.

**Feedback:** The RSLFHT is committed to providing high quality services to all patients. Feedback from service recipients is always welcome and helps to identify areas that require change and encourages continuous service improvements.

A notice to encourage patients with disabilities to provide feedback about our accessible customer service (Schedule "B") will be posted in the waiting room.

Feedback may be given in written, verbal or electronic format.

All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and used only to improve customer service.

Where a response is requested, the RSLFHT will respond using the same communication mechanism as the patient (ie. verbal, written)

**Availability of Documents:** The RSLFHT will post a notice on the website saying that documents required under the customer service standard are available upon request by emailing or calling the RSLFHT.

## SCHEDULE A – PRACTICE STANDARDS

*Recognize your nervousness and relax! People with disabilities are generally aware they may need some accommodations and will work with you. Just remember to ask how you can help.*

### HEARING DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deaf – severe to profound hearing loss</li> <li>- Hard of Hearing – a person who uses their residual hear and speech to communicate</li> <li>- Deafened – caused to hear poorly or not at all.</li> <li>- Oral Deaf – born deaf or became deaf before learning to speak</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attract the patient’s attention before speaking – gently touch on the shoulder or wave your hand, if necessary</li> <li>- Look directly at the person</li> <li>- Don’t assume the patient knows sign language or reads lips</li> <li>- Ask if another method of communicating (for example pen and paper) would be preferred by the patient</li> <li>- Speak clearly, at a normal volume, and keep your hands away from your face so that the patient can read your lips</li> <li>- Reduce background noise or move to a quieter area if the patient uses a hearing aid</li> <li>- Ensure appropriate lighting should the patient wish to read your lips</li> </ul>

### DEAFBLIND DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People with some degree of both hearing and vision loss</li> <li>- Many will be accompanied by a support person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speak directly to the patient, not the support person</li> <li>- Identify yourself to the support person</li> <li>- Patient may give you a card or note that explains the best way to communicate with them</li> </ul>

### INTELLECTUAL OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intellectual development and capacity that is below average</li> <li>- Can mildly or profoundly limit ability to learn, communicate, do everyday physical activities and live independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don’t assume what the patient can or cannot do</li> <li>- Use plain language and plain language handouts, if needed</li> <li>- Take your time, be patient</li> <li>- Ask: “Do you understand this?”</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May be an invisible disability</li> <li>- May understand you more than you know</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide one piece of information at a time – step by step instruction</li> <li>- Offer information in simpler concepts</li> </ul>
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## LEARNING DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Affects how a person acquires, interprets, retains, or takes in information</li> <li>- In many cases individual has average or above average intelligence</li> <li>- It does not mean the person cannot learn, but that they learn in a different way</li> <li>- May affect language-based learning, mathematics, writing, reading, fine motor skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be patient. The person may take time to process information, understand and respond</li> <li>- Demonstrate a willingness to assist and allow time for questions</li> <li>- Speak normally, clearly, and directly to the patient</li> <li>- Provide information in a way that works for the patient (i.e., pictures, written instructions)</li> <li>- Be prepared to explain any materials you provide</li> </ul>

## MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defined as the absence of psychological well being and satisfactory adjustment to society</li> <li>- Some features of mental health disabilities are phobias, panic attacks, hallucinations, mood swings, and bipolar disorders (depression and manic phases)</li> <li>- Can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Treat the patient with the same level of respect and consideration given to anyone else</li> <li>- Be confident, reassuring and calm</li> <li>- Do not be confrontational</li> <li>- If the patient is in crisis, ask them how you can best help them</li> <li>- Take the patient seriously</li> <li>- Don't take things personally</li> <li>- Patient may need more time to process information and ask questions</li> </ul>

## SPEECH OR LANGUAGE DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May have problems communicating</li> <li>- May have difficulty pronouncing words</li> <li>- May slur or stutter</li> <li>- May use communicative boards or other assistive devices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't assume that a person with a speech impairment has another disability, but remember that they may</li> <li>- Give whatever time they need to get their point across</li> <li>- Ask questions that can be answered "Yes" or "No", if possible</li> <li>- Don't interrupt or finish the patient's sentences</li> <li>- May have to use pen and paper</li> <li>- Say: "I don't understand, can you repeat that?", if needed.</li> </ul>

## PHYSICAL OR MOBILITY DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May restrict a person in the following ways:</li> <li>- control or speed of movements</li> <li>- ability to grasp some objects</li> <li>- ability to walk long distances</li> <li>- ability to sit or stand for prolonged periods</li> <li>- ability to change positions</li> <li>- Can be present at birth, result from disease or injury or may be temporary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speak directly to the patient</li> <li>- Ask before you help</li> <li>- Respect the patient's personal space</li> <li>- Don't touch assistive equipment without permission</li> <li>- Don't move any assistive items they may have</li> <li>- Let the patient know about accessible features (example accessible washrooms)</li> <li>- If going to have a long conversation with a person in a wheelchair, consider sitting so you can make level eye contact</li> <li>- If the patient is able to move on their own but are slow or in pain, offer a closer exam room</li> <li>- If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Wait for and follow the patient's instructions</li> <li>b) Confirm that they are ready to move</li> <li>c) Describe what you are going to do before you do it</li> <li>d) Avoid uneven ground and objects</li> <li>e) Don't leave the patient in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## VISION DISABILITY

Definition	Standard Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most individuals who are legally blind have some remaining vision, very few are totally blind</li> <li>- Low or no vision can restrict ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards</li> <li>- May use guide dog or white cane</li> <li>- May need to view written documents in large print, or with help of magnifier</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don't assume the patient can't see you</li> <li>- Identify yourself when you approach the patient</li> <li>- Don't touch the patient without asking permission</li> <li>- Don't raise your voice</li> <li>- Don't touch or speak to service animals</li> <li>- When entering a room with the patient, offer to describe the dimension, furniture, people in it</li> <li>- Speak directly to the patient               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer your elbow to guide the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<p><b>patient if needed. If they accept, walk slowly.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Identify landmarks to orient the patient to the environment</b></li><li>- <b>Be precise and descriptive with information or directions</b></li><li>- <b>Don't leave patient. Guide them to a comfortable location or chair.</b></li><li>- <b>Ask the patient if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them</b></li></ul>
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