

MERRYMOUNT CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Category: CLIENT SERVICES
Subject: ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES
Policy Number: 2-1-31

Approved: October 2011
Revised: October 2019

Reviewed: December 2018
Updated: April 2019

Revision Code: B
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POLICY:

Merrymount strives at all times to provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Merrymount is committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our programs and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other service users, in accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O.R. 429/07)* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and, in the case of the Supervised Access Program, the Ministry of the Attorney General's "Best Practices Manual for Supervised Access Service Providers". Service provided to persons with disabilities and others will be integrated, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to benefit from the service.

PROCEDURES:

1. Communication

Staff and volunteers will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. Merrymount will train staff who communicate with people using Agency programs and services on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

2. Telephone and e-mail

Merrymount will train all staff who communicate with clients and other members of the public over the telephone in clear and plain language, and to speak clearly and slowly.

Clients will be offered communication with the Merrymount by e-mail or Bell Relay Service (1-800-855-0511) if voice phone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

3. ASL Interpreters

Merrymount will arrange for an American Sign Language – English interpreter to be present when a person who is Deaf and who communicates in ASL is using a program or service. (Interpretation between ASL and a language other than English will be provided if an interpreter able to do so is available.) Merrymount does not charge the client for the ASL interpreter's services. Staff and volunteers will be trained in how to communicate with a person who is Deaf with the assistance of an ASL interpreter.

4. Assistive devices

Merrymount will provide programs and services to people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services, and will train and familiarize staff and volunteers with respect to various assistive devices that may be used by people while accessing services.

5. Billing

To make invoices accessible to all clients, Merrymount will provide them in the following formats upon request: printed hard copy or large print hard copy (sent by mail or given in person), and e-mail. Client questions about invoices will be answered in person, by mail or electronically in accordance with the communication, telephone service and e-mail provisions above.

6. Service animals

Merrymount programs and services welcome persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, and they will be permitted to keep the animal with them while using the services. Staff and volunteers will be trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

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7. Support persons

Merrymount welcomes persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person, and at no time will staff or volunteers prevent them from having access to the support person while on the premises. There is no amount charged for the service user's own support person to be present. Staff members and volunteers will be trained in how to work with people accompanied by support persons.

8. Mobility

In selecting, planning and modifying facilities for Agency programs and services, including entrances, washrooms and visitation areas, Merrymount will take all reasonable steps to ensure equal safety, dignity and independence of access to persons with disabilities who require the use of mobility aids such as wheelchairs, scooters or walkers.

9. Notice of temporary disruption

Merrymount will provide notice to clients in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in programs and services. The notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and alternative services if available. The notice will be posted at the entrances used by people using Agency programs and services.

Staff also will endeavour to contact clients about a disruption if they are scheduled to be in a program or service during the period of the disruption. The effort to contact them will be made phone or e-mail (whichever is the usual way of communicating with each client) to tell them about the disruption, the reason for it and any alternative service information.

10. Training for staff

Merrymount will provide training as described below to all employees, placement students and volunteers who deal with people accessing or using Agency programs or services.

This training also will be provided to staff members who are directly involved in developing program and service policies, practices and procedures. This includes the Program Managers, the Human Resources Manager, the Director of Finance and the Executive Director.

This training will be provided as soon as possible, and within one month after a person begins working in one of the included positions. The training program will include any mandatory training in accessibility that may be specified by a licensing or funding body, such as the on-line accessibility training modules for Supervised Access that are provided by the Ministry of the Attorney General for Supervised Access staff and volunteers.

The training will include the following:

- The purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty in accessing Merrymount program or service.
- Merrymount's policies, practices and procedures relating to the Customer Service Standard, and how they apply to the way programs and services are provided to people with disabilities.

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Following initial training after hire, staff and volunteers will be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

11. Feedback Process

Merrymount aims to meet and surpass client expectations while serving people with disabilities. Comments on how well the services are meeting those expectations are being met are welcomed and appreciated. Feedback and complaints may be made orally or in writing, in person or by phone, telephone Relay Service, e-mail or mail according to the person's preference and communication needs.

During intake, clients will be encouraged to provide feedback, positive or negative, about accessibility, and they also will be informed about the complaint procedure. Feedback forms will be made readily available, and forms that have been submitted will be reviewed by the manager or supervisor in charge of the program or service.

People who have a concern or complaint about the way services are made accessible to persons with disabilities should bring it immediately to the attention of the staff working directly with them. If is not resolved promptly to their satisfaction, they should contact the Manager of the program, or if they already have taken it up with the , the Director responsible for the program. A Manager who receives a complaint will document it and respond within seven days if possible, and will make all reasonable efforts to resolve the matter as soon as feasible. A person who is not satisfied with the response by the Manager or Director may submit the complaint to the Executive Director or designate, who will investigate and respond within seven days if possible.

12. Modifications to this or other policies

Merrymount is committed to developing and maintaining policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. No changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. If provisions in other policies are found to be obstacles to promoting the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, they will be modified or discontinued.

13. Availability of documents

This policy and procedures exist to achieve service excellence to people with disabilities. As part of the intake process, all clients will be informed that a copy of this policy and procedures and any other documents as may be required under O. Reg. 429/07 will be provided to them on request, in a format that takes their disability, if any, into account. If service users have questions about the policy and procedures, the Program Supervisor will ensure that the information or explanation requested is provided as promptly and completely as possible.

| Version Code | Description | Date | Author |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| A | Original development and release | October 2011 | Tom Patterson |
| B | Updated to reflect current job titles | April 2019 | Lee-Anne Cross |