

**OTTAWA-CARLETON LIFESKILLS (OCL)
ACCESSIBILITY PLAN and COMPLIANCE with the
ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA) 2005**

SUPPORTING POLICY STATEMENT and PROCEDURE # 4

SUBJECT: SERVICE ANIMALS and SUPPORT PERSONS

A Service Animals

Service animals offer independence and security to many people with various disabilities. Unless otherwise excluded by law, the Customer Service Standard specifies that a person with a disability is permitted to be accompanied by his or her guide dog or other service animal in areas that are open to the public. OCL welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on OCL public premises.

Some laws generally prohibit animals in certain areas, such as hospitals, kitchens, and food preparation areas. However, service animals are permitted in most situations. If prohibited by law, OCL will provide alternate means for the person to access OCL services if possible.

Service animals are non-participants and therefore should be granted free admission to the goods and/or services being accessed by the person with a disability they are accompanying. If an amount is for some reason payable for the service animal, notice is to be given in advance of the amount which must be no higher than what is charged to any other person.

It may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal when its appearance or behaviour (e.g., wearing a harness or saddle bags) identifies it as a service animal or if a person is using the animal to assist them opening doors or retrieving items, etc.

If it is not apparent the owner must identify the animal as a service animal and may be required to provide a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school, or a letter from a physician or other health care professional authorized to provide verification that the animal is a service animal.

B. Support Persons (companion)

Support persons assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways by aiding with communication (ie: sign language interpreter, etc.) or by providing physical assistance. The Support Person could be a paid professional, a volunteer, a friend or a family member. He or she does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

OCL is committed to welcoming people with disabilities onto OCL premises who are accompanied by a support person.

The purpose of the support person is to assist the individual they are with. At no time shall the Support Person interfere with the operation of any of OCL program or in the way OCL conducts its business while they are on OCL premises. OCL welcomes any feedback through the regular OCL feedback process.

In the event that a fee is charged in relation to a Support Person's presence on OCL premises or to attend an OCL sponsored event, advanced notice of the fee shall be provided.

C. Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Upon request, this Supporting Policy Statement and Procedure is available in accessible formats and communication supports.

PROCEDURE

SERVICE ANIMALS

- a) Service animals are welcome on all OCL premises except where prohibited by law. A service animal is not permitted in an OCL kitchen but is allowed in the common areas of the home. If prohibited by law the reason why the animal is excluded will be explained to the individual and other reasonable arrangements will be explored in consultation with the person who has the service animal.
- b) If required OCL will ask for verification that an animal is a service animal (ie: letter from medical professional, a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school, or other official documentation).
- c) Consideration will be given to employees, students, volunteers and/or the individuals supported by OCL who have allergies to a service animal through making alternate arrangements for the person with the service animal wherever possible.

Refer to OCL's Pets and Service/Therapy Animals Policy D-17 for additional information.

- d) Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: If there is a conflict between the provision of the AODA and/or its regulations or any other legislation or by-law relating to banned breeds (such as pit bulls), the provision that is more restrictive shall prevail.
- e) The person with the service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times while on OCL premises.

SUPPORT PERSONS (COMPANION)

- a) Any person who is accompanied by a support person shall be allowed to enter OCL premises with his/her support person. At no time will a person who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his/her support person while on OCL premises.
- b) OCL will determine the best way to assist the person with the disability by asking what the role of the support person is and what their responsibilities are.
- c) All communication must be directed to the individual and not to their support person.
- d) Consent must be obtained from the person with the disability prior to any conversation where confidential information may be discussed in the presence of the support person.
- e) It may also be necessary to obtain written consent of disclosure from the individual prior to discussing or releasing confidential personal information in the presence of a support person. If the individual uses a different support person for subsequent confidential meetings, a new signed consent is required. Copies of signed consents will be retained at OCL's head office.

- f) Support persons are responsible for complying with all OCL policies and procedures the same as the person they are accompanying.
- g) The purpose of the support person is to assist the individual they are with. At no time shall the support person interfere with the operation of any of OCL program or in the way OCL conducts its business while they are on OCL premises. Should an issue arise, OCL employees will advise the support person that the OCL feedback process is available to them. OCL reserves the right to ask the person and their support person to leave the premises if necessary.
- h) In the event that a fee is charged in relation to a support person's presence on OCL premises or to attend an OCL sponsored event, advanced notice of the fee shall be provided. If it is determined by OCL that a support person is required the fee (if applicable) for the support person shall be waived.