



Accessibility - Customer Service

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Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures and practices that will facilitate the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA) and Ontario Regulations 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. Nothing in this policy diminishes in any way the legal obligations of the Geraldton District Hospital with respect to persons with disabilities that are imposed under any other Act or otherwise imposed by law.

POLICY:

Goods and services provided by Geraldton District Hospital shall be accessible to persons with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equal opportunity as set out in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Definitions

Service Animal

Service animals have training to perform specific tasks for people with disabilities. For instance, if a dog is clearly guiding a customer who is blind, providers should know without asking that this service animal is a guide dog.

Emotional Support Animal

Emotional support animals provide comfort and security. However, they do not have training for specific tasks. Therefore, emotional support animals do not qualify as service animals under the AODA. Service providers are not required to allow support animals on their premises.

Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals:

Geraldton District Hospital welcomes all people with disabilities and their service and / or emotional service animal.

Service and emotional support animals are permitted at the Geraldton District Hospital when on a leash and accompanied by the owner except in restricted areas, in compliance with legislated requirements and with the following provisions:

- The owner must provide all necessary care and attention for the dog /animal.
- The dog / animal must be clean and in good health
- Proof of applicable immunization shall be made available upon request
- Overnight stays must receive prior approval from the appropriate manager / designate.

When service animal is required by the client, the plan of care must reflect the need and the required interventions.

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Renewed by:		Approved on:	2022-11-04
Renewed on:		Revision Date:	2024-11-04

For admitted acute care clients, nursing staff will provide the family member / pet owner with an [Authorization for Support Animal Accompaniment](#) form, available on Omni-Assistant. Once completed, the form is submitted to the manager or designate for review and signature of approval. A separate authorization is completed for each animal.

For Long Term Care residents, please refer to the document [Pet Visitation](#) for details.

The manager or designate considers the following when determining the approval of this request:

- Is pet visitation a necessary part of the client's treatment plan?
- Is there an identified responsible designated handler for this animal?
- Are there health and safety concerns identified pertaining to the client's roommates (i.e., allergies, fear of animals, infection control issues)?
- If concerns are identified related to the pet visiting, the client may be brought outside for the client's room (lobby, outside), as long as there are no safety or security concerns.

If the pet is approved to visit, all animals and designated handlers are issued appropriate yellow identification tag by the nursing staff on the designated unit for display at all times while on GDH premises. Tags will be supplied directly at the unit level.

Visitors with family pets not registered and not showing the appropriate yellow identification tags shall be requested to leave by either nursing staff or security until such time as the above conditions are met.

All approved pets must be cared for by a designated handler other than the client during the visitation.

Visitation must take place during visiting hours.

It is the responsibility of the designated handlers to ensure that they are prepared to clean up any "messes" that may occur while in the facility.

Failure to abide by the conditions set out will result in the revocation of the animal's visiting authorization.

Restricted Areas

- Food preparation and service areas
- Cafeteria and dining area access ONLY permitted for service animals as required
- Medication or clean / sterile supplies storage areas

Infection Prevention and Control

IPAC procedures for visiting service animals, emotional support animals or client pets:

- It is recommended that staff should not touch the animal. If a staff member does touch the animal, they must perform hand hygiene before and after touching the animal.
- Animals should not visit clients during meals
- Judgement should be used if including animals during medical treatments.

- When the animal is on the client's bed or other furniture, place a clean barrier (i.e., sheet, towel) between the client and the animal and place in the laundry immediately after
- If any bite or scratch occurs, immediately terminate the visit.
- If a client currently requires additional precautions, contact the Occupational Health and Infection Control manager / designate to assess the risk to determine if the animal will be allowed. If the risk is only to the client, the client may choose to continue to have their animal with them.
- It is recommended that therapy animals not visit during an outbreak.

Service Animal Identification

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

When Geraldton District Hospital staff cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask a person to provide documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

A regulated health professional able to provide such documentation is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

If service animals are prohibited by another law, Geraldton District Hospital will do the following to ensure people with disabilities can access our goods, services or facilities:

- Explain why the animal is excluded
- Discuss with the customer another way of providing goods, services or facilities

Support Person:

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises and will not be prevented from having access to each other while accessing services on the premises.

Where fees for goods and services are applicable, Geraldton District Hospital will include the amount payable by the support person in advance.

In certain cases, the Geraldton District Hospital might require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for the health or safety reasons of:

- The person with a disability
- Others on the premises

Before making a decision the Geraldton District Hospital will:

- Consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs
- Consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence
- Determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises

Where fees for goods and services are applicable when a support person is required by the Geraldton District Hospital, the Hospital will waive such fees.

Disruption of Services:

Notice of a disruption of facilities or services used by persons with disability to access goods and services provided by Geraldton District Hospital shall be communicated to the public. The notice will include the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration of the disruption and alternatives that may be available. This information will be posted in a conspicuous place in the premises or by other methods considered reasonable. If the disruption is expected, a reasonable amount of advance notice will be given. If the disruption is unexpected, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

Assistive Devices:

A person with disability who requires assistive devices to access the goods or services of Geraldton District Hospital shall be allowed to use such devices while accessing goods and services on the premises. Geraldton District Hospital provides some assistive devices for use by clients who require them while accessing goods and services on the premises (see [Assistive Devices](#) policy).

Communication:

Staff will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

Teletypewriter (TTY) and Bell Relay Services:

A teletypewriter is a device that allows users to send typed messages across phone lines. Many people with hearing disabilities use a TTY. TTY users can communicate directly with another TTY user or they can call a Relay Service. The Relay Service operator will receive the messages on a TTY and relay the messages, by standard phone, to a person who does not have a TTY. A standard phone user can also place a call through the Relay Service operator to a TTY user.

Geraldton District Hospital does not have a TTY device however the Bell Relay Service can be utilized calling 1-800-855-0511.

Training:

Training on the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities shall be provided to all employees, volunteers, agents, contractors and others who deal with the public and to every person who participates in the development of policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public.

Training for current employees has been provided since January 1, 2010 and is included in the orientation of new employees thereafter. The training is also provided on an annual basis for all employees. Geraldton District Hospital will also provide on-going training in respect to changes in its policies, practices and procedures to those individuals who require such training as soon as practical.

The basic training will include:

- A review of the purposes of the AODA and requirement of the customer service standard.
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animals or a support person.

- How to use and or access equipment or devices available in the organization, such as wheelchairs, elevators, lifts, etc. that may help a person with a disability access our goods or services.
- What to do if a person with a particular disability is having difficulty accessing our goods or services.

Feedback:

The public can provide feedback on the accessibility of goods or services available at Geraldton District Hospital by:

- Completing a client comment card available throughout the hospital ([Client Feedback Card](#) policy) or on the website.
- Submitting a complaint as per hospital complaint policy ([Complaint Process](#) policy).
- Submitting a compliment as per hospital compliment process policy ([Compliment Process](#) policy).
- Sending a letter addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, 500 Hogarth Avenue, Geraldton, ON, P0T 1M0.
- Contacting the Chief Executive Officer by phone at (807) 854-4107
- Other feedback processes will be established in consultation with individual persons with a disability, upon request.

Note: a copy of the ODA, 2001 and AODA, 2005 are available in the Accessibility folder on the common drive.

References:

1. Animals at St. Joseph's Care Group, St. Joseph's Care Group, Policy # AC 6-11, June 2019.