

OPERATIONS | Policy: Accessibility Standards Policy

As a Christian organization, MCEC believes that all persons, irrespective of disabilities or limitations, are equal before God and deserving of hospitality, dignity, respect, and, to the extent possible, access to goods and services provided by MCEC. In light of this commitment, MCEC recognises the diverse needs of all Constituents and strives to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all.

On the basis of this policy, MCEC will promote accessibility by implementing practices and procedures which take into consideration people with disabilities. MCEC will ensure that practices and procedures related to accessibility will, to the extent possible, address integration, independence, dignity, and equal opportunity.

The purpose of this policy is to address the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Service*

Definitions

Assistive Device - an auxiliary aid such as technical aids, communication aids, cognition aids (reading, listening, talking aids), personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc.) that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities to access and benefit from the goods and services offered by MCEC.

Barrier – as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, means anything that prevents a person with a Disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her Disability, including a physical Barrier, an architectural Barrier, an information or communications Barrier, an attitudinal Barrier, a technological Barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.

Constituent – an individual who:

- supports MCEC financially;
- volunteers with MCEC councils, committees, or on special projects or assignments; or
- is a member or participant of an MCEC congregation; or
- is a representative of an affiliated MCEC organization.

Disability – as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, is:

- 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, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device

- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental Disability
- a learning Disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- a mental disorder
- an injury or Disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Employee – an Employee of the corporation Mennonite Church Eastern Canada or On-site Volunteer.

MCEC – the not-for-profit corporation known as Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

On-site Volunteer – someone who volunteers on-site in the MCEC offices on a regular basis, providing service to the Staff or to the public on behalf of MCEC.

Persons with Disabilities – individuals with a Disability as defined under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

Policy Coordinator – the MCEC Staff person designated by the Executive Minister as Policy Coordinator.

Service Animals – as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* an animal is a service animal for a person with a Disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her Disability; or if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the Disability.

Support Persons – as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* shall mean any person, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend who accompanies a person with a Disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Scope

This policy will apply to all MCEC Employees and On-site Volunteers in relation to the services that they provide to MCEC Constituents.

Principles

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the following:

- That goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of Persons with Disabilities;
- The provision of goods and services to people with disabilities and others are integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or permanently, to enable a person with a Disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the goods and services provided by MCEC; and
- People with disabilities are given an opportunity – equal to that given to others – to obtain, use, and benefit from the goods and services provided by MCEC.

Procedure

Procedures and practices will strive to reflect or achieve the following:

- Employees and On-site Volunteers receive training on providing accessible service;
- To the extent possible, communication is conducted in a manner that takes into consideration a person's Disability;
- Prior notice will be provided by MCEC for any admission fees applicable to Support Persons who accompany Persons with Disabilities;
- Notice will be provided when it is known that facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access MCEC's services are temporarily disrupted;
- Persons with Disabilities accompanied by a service animal are permitted in those areas of the premises owned or operated by MCEC that are open to the public, and where possible, in third party facilities utilized by MCEC for its programs and services;
- Persons with Disabilities accompanied by a support person are permitted to be accompanied by that support person on MCEC premises open to the public, and where possible, in third party facilities utilized by MCEC for its programs and services;
- Whenever possible, Persons with Disabilities are allowed to use their own personal Assistive Devices to obtain, use, or benefit from the services offered by MCEC; and
- The Policy Coordinator is the designated person to receive feedback on how MCEC is providing services to Persons with Disabilities;
- Policies, practices, and procedures related to providing accessible service will be available to the public.

Guidelines

1. Assistive Devices

The use of Assistive Devices by Persons with Disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from MCEC's goods or services is recognized unless otherwise prohibited due to health and safety or privacy issues.

It is the responsibility of the person with a Disability to ensure that his or her Assistive Device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Where applicable or available, Assistive Devices owned and operated by MCEC will be available for use by Persons with Disabilities. Appropriate Staff will be knowledgeable about the use of the Assistive Devices and trained in their use. Staff will be available to assist with the use of these devices if requested for use by an individual.

2. Service Animals

Persons with Disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal and keep that animal with them in areas/premises that are open to the public, when accessing goods or services provided by MCEC, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

In the event that a service animal is otherwise prohibited by law from the premises, MCEC shall ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a Disability to obtain, use or benefit from MCEC's goods or services.

It is the responsibility of the person with a Disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept in control at all times.

3. Support Persons

Persons with Disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their support person in areas/premises that are open to the public, when accessing goods or services provided by MCEC.

If a person with a Disability is accompanied by a support person, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a Disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises. If there is confidential information to be disclosed to the Person with a Disability, it is the responsibility of the Person with a Disability to instruct the Support Person to be present or absent during the disclosure of confidential information.

Where fees for goods and services are charged, MCEC shall ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount that would be charged to a support person. E.g. If a person with a Disability registers for an MCEC event or workshop, the support person must also register but will not be charged a registration fee. The support person, however, may, at MCEC's sole discretion, be charged a fee for direct costs including, but not limited to, food, lodging, and transportation.

MCEC may deem it necessary to require a support person for a person with a Disability in order to protect the health and safety of that person or others while accessing MCEC premises or the site where services are being provided. This will only occur after consultation with the person with a Disability and when it is the only means to allow the person with a Disability to access MCEC's goods or services.

4. Service Disruptions

In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities, services or systems that are relied upon by Persons with Disabilities to access MCEC goods or services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance.

Notice of the disruption will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities, services or systems, if any, that may be available.

Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on the premises owned or

operated by the provider of goods or services, distributed by email notification, or posted on the MCEC website or by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.

In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

5. Training

MCEC shall ensure that all its Employees and On-site Volunteers receive training about the provision of its goods and services to people with disabilities.

Training will include a review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, S.O. 2005, c.11, the requirements of this policy, and instruction in the following matters, as necessary:

- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities as outlined in this policy and guidelines;
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an Assistive Device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person, as outlined in this policy and guidelines;
- How to use equipment or devices available from MCEC, that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a Disability; and
- What to do if a person with a Disability is having difficulty accessing MCEC's goods or services.

MCEC will log and maintain records which will record the details of the training provided, as well as the name of the person, location, and date the training was completed. Training will also be provided on an ongoing basis when changes are made to this policy and guidelines.

6. Feedback Process

MCEC has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which the MCEC provides goods and services to Persons with Disabilities. Information about this process is available to the public.

Should a Constituent wish to provide feedback to MCEC on the goods or services provided by MCEC, feedback can be provided to the Policy Coordinator in the following manner:

- In person at 201 - 50 Kent Ave, Kitchener;
- By telephone at 226-476-2500, toll free 1-855-476-2500; or
- By email, via the General Inquiries email address, at mcec@mcec.ca.

Once feedback has been received, the following process will be implemented:

- The Policy Coordinator will respond to the recipient within 72 hours to acknowledge receipt of the feedback;
- The Policy Coordinator will document the receipt of feedback in the Accessibility Feedback Report Form;
- All feedback will be forwarded by the Policy Coordinator, to the relevant Staff person;
- The relevant Staff person, upon receiving the feedback, will take appropriate action;
- If appropriate, the Staff person will follow-up with the person who provided the feedback;
- The Staff person will assess current policies, practices, and procedures to determine if any changes are required and make a recommendation to the Executive Minister within 14 days;

- Within 30 days of receipt of the recommendation, the Executive Minister will make a determination if amendment of the policy or protocols is warranted and initiate next steps; and
- Communicate to the Constituent any actions or proposed actions that are an outcome of the feedback.

7. Policy Review

On an annual basis, the Policy Coordinator will review the implementation of this policy with the Executive Minister and suggest any changes to practice and procedures.

Additional Information

For more information regarding The Mennonite Church Eastern Canada Accessibility Standards Policy, please contact the Policy Coordinator at 519-650-3806 or 1-800-206-9356 or via email at mcec@mcec.ca.

For a copy of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005*, please visit the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' website: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm.

References

1. Ontario Human Rights Code
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm
2. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm
3. Norfolk County Accessibility Plan.
<http://www.norfolkcounty.ca/government/accessibility/>
4. Region of Waterloo Accessibility Policy.
<http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/servicesforyou/accessibilityplanning.asp>