

## **Accessibility and Customer Service**

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### **Purpose**

In fulfilling our mission, The United Church of Canada strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The United Church of Canada is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access employment, goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other participants. This policy outlines how the General Council Office and regional council offices will work together to provide accessibility to ministry personnel, employees, volunteers and clients with disabilities.

### **Policy**

The United Church of Canada is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people in a timely manner, and will do so by becoming an open, accessible, and barrier-free environment where there is full participation of persons with disabilities in the church's ministry and mission.

In accordance with applicable legislation and regulations the policy on Accessibility and Customer Service will be reviewed annually, revised appropriately and posted at all General Council and regional council workplaces.

Each regional council will develop, implement, and post a specific Accessibility Customer Service Policy Program at their location, which meets applicable legislative requirements, as well as the requirements of this policy.

The program will be based on the elements outlined in this policy.

### **Accessible Customer Service Policy Program**

#### **Communication**

We will communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

We will train staff on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.

Our Information Technology websites will meet the requirements of WCAG 2.0 Level AA.

#### **Telephone Services**

We are committed to providing accessible telephone services to our participants.

Alternative means of communication, such as email, fax, etc., will be offered to facilitate the process for the caller.

When communicating over the telephone, staff will speak clearly at a speed that meets the needs of the caller.

#### **Assistive Devices**

We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by people with disabilities while accessing our goods, services or opportunities.

We are committed to serving persons who require assistive devices to participate in and benefit from our programs, goods and services.

We will ensure that people are permitted to use their own personal assistive devices to access programs, goods and services or to participate fully in events, meetings or as a member of committees and task groups.

Upon a participant's request, every effort will be made to provide the requested assistive device and/or service.

Staff will be provided with guidelines on how to interact with individuals who use assistive devices.

#### **Billing**

We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers/clients. Invoices will be provided in alternative format upon request. We will answer any questions customers/clients may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone or email.

#### **Use of Service Animals and Support Persons**

We are committed to welcoming people who are accompanied by a support person or service animal. Service animals will have access to all parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties with the exception of areas of where food is prepared.

Staff will be provided guidelines on how to interact with people who are accompanied by a support person or a service animal.

Fees will not be charged for support persons accompanying a volunteer committee/task group member.

#### **Notice of Temporary Disruption**

Every effort will be made to provide staff/volunteers/participants with advance notice in the event of a planned disruption in the facilities or services usually used by persons with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

When service disruption is unexpected, information will be posted as soon as it is available.

#### **Training for Staff and Volunteers**

The United Church of Canada's Ministry and Employment Unit will be responsible for coordinating training for all employees and others who deal with the public or volunteer members. Training will be developed and delivered in various formats.

Training includes the following:

- The purpose of the Accessibility Policy
- 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 support person
- How to learn about the use of various assistive devices
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing The United Church of Canada's goods and services
- The United Church policies, practices and procedures relating to the accessibility standards

#### **Feedback Process**

The ultimate goal of the General Council and regional council offices of The United Church of Canada is to meet and surpass expectations while serving persons with disabilities.

Comments on our programs, goods and services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way The United Church of Canada provides programs, goods and services to persons with disabilities can be made by sending an email to:

[unitedchurchaccessibility@united-church.ca](mailto:unitedchurchaccessibility@united-church.ca).

- All feedback will be directed to the Ministry and Employment Unit.
- Participants can expect to hear back within ten business days
- Confidentiality will be respected.

#### **Modifications to This or Other Policies**

We are committed to developing accessibility policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

No changes, therefore, will be made to this policy before considering the impact on persons with disabilities or their families.

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

*This policy seeks to achieve service excellence to persons with disabilities. If anyone requires further information regarding this policy, please contact Ministry and Employment Unit.*