

# Accessible Client Service

## Policy

**Resolve Counselling Services Canada**, in accordance with the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, will not discriminate on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability in providing service to clients.

Resolve Counselling Services Canada strives to provide an environment in all of its facilities that builds independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for all staff and clients. Resolve Counselling Services Canada Counselling Centres is committed to providing services to our clients that are free of barriers and biases. Resolve Counselling Services Canada recognizes that persons with disabilities should be able to benefit from the same access to services, in the same place and in a similar way to other clients.

Resolve Counselling Services Canada, in accordance with *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, will observe the following key principles in providing service to clients:

Independence – services for all clients, including persons with disabilities, shall support their independence free from the influence of others while respecting their individual rights to personal privacy and safety.

Dignity – services for all clients, including persons with disabilities, shall be provided in a respectful manner, by treating clients as valued and deserving of effective and full service.

Integration – services offered shall allow persons with disabilities to fully benefit in the same way or similar way and in the same place as other clients. Alternate measures may be used when integration does not serve the needs of all persons with disabilities.

Equality of Opportunity – persons with disabilities shall have the same opportunity to benefit from services as other clients and shall not need to make significantly more effort to access services.

## Definitions

Assistive Device – is any device used by persons with a disability to help with daily living. These may include a range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks or electronic communication devices.

Barrier – means anything that prevents persons with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of Resolve Counselling Services Canada’s service. Barriers may include a physical, architectural and attitudinal barrier as well as an information or communication barrier, technological barriers, a policy, procedure or practice.

Disability – is defined by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Disabilities may include: any degree of physical disability; a visual, hearing or speech impediment; a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability; a learning disability or dysfunction.

Service Animal – as reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, 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 Person – is a person who assists or interprets for a person with a disability as they access the services of Resolve Counselling Services Canada.

## **Procedures**

### **The Provision for Services to Persons with Disabilities**

Resolve Counselling Services Canada will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- ensuring that all clients receive the same value and quality;
- allowing clients with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing Resolve Counselling Services Canada services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- using alternative methods when possible to ensure that clients with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- taking into account individual needs when providing Resolve Counselling Services Canada services; and
- communicating in a manner that takes into account the client’s disability.

### **Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing services provided by Resolve Counselling Services Canada.

## **Guide Dogs, Service Dogs and Service Animals**

A client with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service dog or service animal will be allowed access to all Resolve Counselling Services Canada premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law i.e. Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario. If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pitbulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

### **Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:**

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the client for reasons relating to his or her disability, Resolve Counselling Services Canada may request verification from the client. Verification may include:

- a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
- a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

### Care and Control of the Animal:

A client that is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all time.

### Allergies:

If a health and safety concern presents itself i.e. staff or other clients with a severe allergy to the animal, Resolve Counselling Services Canada will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

## **Support Persons**

If a client with a disability is accompanied by a support person, Resolve Counselling Services Canada will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the client is not prevented from having access to the support person. There may be times where seating and availability prevent the client and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations Resolve Counselling Services Canada will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the client, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.

### **Notice of Disruptions in Service**

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of Resolve Counselling Services Canada. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that clients with disabilities rely on to access or use Resolve Counselling Services Canada's services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

#### Notifications will include:

- services and/or service locations that are disrupted or unavailable;
- reason for the disruption;
- anticipated duration;
- a description of alternative services or options .

#### Notification Methods:

When disruptions occur, Resolve Counselling Services Canada will provide notice by:

- posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the Resolve Counselling Services Canada website;
- contacting clients with appointments;
- verbally notifying clients when they are making an appointment; or
- by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

### **Feedback Process**

Resolve Counselling Services Canada recognizes that feedback is critical to the process of identifying and removing barriers to service for persons with disabilities. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all clients at the reception desk and on our website.

Feedback may be provided in any manner convenient to the client including in-person, by telephone, by fax to 613-544-8138, by email to [accessibility@resolvecounselling.org](mailto:accessibility@resolvecounselling.org) or by filling out our Accessibility Feedback Form and either dropping it off at one of our locations or mailing it to Resolve Counselling Services Canada, 417 Bagot Street, Kingston, Ontario, K7K 3C1.

All feedback should be addressed to the attention of the Accessibility Officer. Clients that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

## **Training**

All Resolve Counselling Services Canada employees and volunteers will be trained on the various aspects associated with providing client service to persons with disabilities. As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with persons with a disability who: use assistive devices; require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or require the use of a support person.
- Instructions on what to do if persons with a disability are having difficulty accessing our services.
- Resolve Counselling Services Canada's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible client service to persons with disabilities.

Training will be mandatory for all new Resolve Counselling Services Canada employees and volunteers. Employees and volunteers will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, procedures and practices. Resolve Counselling Services Canada will keep a record of training on each employee/volunteer personnel file.

## **Notice of Availability and Format of Documents**

Resolve Counselling Services Canada shall notify clients that the documents related to the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. A copy of the documents will also be available in large print or plain language. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place in all Resolve Counselling Services Canada facilities as well as the Resolve Counselling Services Canada website and/or any other reasonable method.