

Accessible Customer Service Plan Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

Lakeshore Arts is committed to excellence in serving all participants who engage in our services, including people with disabilities. We aim to integrate accessibility into all existing policies, practices and procedures for customer service to help ensure they are responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities.

I. Principles

Dignity means a person with a disability is treated with respect as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other person interacting with Lakeshore Arts. People with disabilities who receive services from Lakeshore Arts are not expected to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

Independence means freedom from control or influence of others – freedom to make one's own choices. It includes the freedom to do things in one's own or preferred way. Lakeshore Arts will treat people with disabilities as independent and will ask how to help someone rather than assuming we know how and make enquiries to individuals on how to best provide our services to them.

Integration means customers with disabilities are allowed to fully benefit from the same service, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers. Integration means that policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities. Lakeshore Arts endeavours to remove barriers to accessibility, and will work with persons with disabilities to consider how to best provide them with integrated services, including finding suitable alternative methods to provide the service.

Equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. People with disabilities who are accessing Lakeshore Arts should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.

II. Assistive devices

We will ensure that key staff members are familiar and can recognize various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

Handling assistive devices belonging to the customer with a disability

Individuals with disabilities are often accustomed to using these supports, and they have their own way of doing things. If in doubt, staff will seek out direction from the person by asking “May I help you?” or “How may I help you?”

Examples of assistive devices

Assistive devices that our staff will be most familiar with could include:

General devices

- White canes (to help with way-finding)
- Magnifiers (to magnify print and images)
- Hearing aid (to amplify sounds)
- Personal amplification devices (to amplify sounds closest to the listener while reducing background noise)
- Mobility devices, such as a wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches (to help with mobility)

Communications assistive devices

- Tape recorders, mini pocket recorders (to record information for future playback)
- Laptops
- Personal Data Assistants (PDAs); (e.g.: blackberries, GPS devices)

Lakeshore Arts staff will make every effort to familiarize themselves with the use of other assistive devices by persons with disabilities who access services at Lakeshore Arts.

III. Identifying Accessibility Needs

Lakeshore Arts requests that invitees state their accessibility needs ahead of time, to be able to respond to requirements.

Where necessary, Lakeshore Arts will reserve any accommodations that are needed by customers well in advance.

IV. Communication

Lakeshore Arts will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability, as identified by the person with the disability, or in response to a visible accessibility aid (i.e. white cane).

Our programming forms will include an opportunity to ask whether there are any disabilities that an individual would like Lakeshore Arts to take in to consideration when they attend the event/workshop/program.

When requested we will provide our information as text based only and in large format either printed or forwarded as an email.

V. Service animals and Support Persons

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises. Fees will not be charged for support persons. We will notify customers of this through a notice posted on our premises and on our website.

Who is a support person?

Support persons would include people in these roles:

- a paid personal support worker,
- a volunteer,
- a friend or
- a family member.

VI. Notice of temporary disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for people with disabilities (workshops, networking sessions, fundraising events), Lakeshore Arts will notify customers promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The notice will be placed at our storefront gallery window and on the home page of our website.

VII. Training

Lakeshore Arts will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf. As such, training will be provided to people involved in the development of policies, plans, practices and procedures related to the provision of our goods and services. Staff will also be trained when changes are made to the accessible customer service plan.

This training will be provided to staff within two months of being hired.

Training will include:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.

- Lakeshore Art's plan related to the customer service standard.
- 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 a support person.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our goods and services.

VIII. Feedback process

Customers who wish to provide feedback on the way Lakeshore Arts provides goods and services to people with disabilities can

- e-mail info@lakeshorearts.ca
- telephone Lakeshore Arts at 416-201-7093
- discuss verbally with a front line worker (gallery attendant), or
- write a letter to the attention of the Operations Manager.

All feedback, including complaints, will be raised to the Executive Director immediately, and action or response may be delegated to the Operations Manager depending on the severity of the issue. Customers can expect to hear back in maximum of 5 working days.

IX. Notice of availability

Lakeshore Arts will notify the public that our policies are available upon request by providing a copy of this plan on the website.

X. Modifications to this or other policies

Any policy of Lakeshore Arts that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed. Policies will be assessed annually for adherence to this customer service standard plan.

XI. Customer Service Standard Plan

In providing services to persons who access our programs and services, Lakeshore Arts:

- Welcomes walkers, wheel chairs (with assistance), and canes in the storefront gallery and workshop space.
- Will provide higher tables to accommodate individuals during workshops.
- May rent a more accessible venue to run selected workshops, when funding is available. This allows us to reach people with physical disabilities preventing access to the current gallery.
- Will modify gallery labels to better address vision challenges.
- Will use our website, marketing materials and storefront to identify the following:

- Washrooms are not accessible for those with physical challenges.
- Welcome support persons and the use of Seeing Eye dogs within our space
- Provide a variety of methods to give feedback to Lakeshore Arts

XII. Employment opportunities

Lakeshore arts is an equal opportunity employer and signs the Declaration of Non-Discrimination for the City of Toronto each year. This means that we have a policy of access and non-discrimination based on the City's human rights policy. This statement is included in all our job postings.

Lakeshore Arts will work with an employee with a disability to determine the accommodation most suitable to their disability. In most cases, the Operations Manager will work alongside the individual to determine suitable accommodation. For example accommodation may include either written and verbal instruction, additional training, or more frequent supervision.

In an emergency situation, personal information will only be released to emergency responders if prior consent has been given by the employee.

Employee Emergency Preparation

Regular fire drills will provide all employees, including employees with a disability a clear direction on how to safely leave the building. Accommodation will be made to ensure the employee with a disability understands and is comfortable with the process.

Training on use of the phone system in order to directly call any of the other employees will take place within the second day of employment. This provides easy access to any person in the building to address any issue or emergency which makes the employee feel uncomfortable.

All employees will be trained on how to access the Executive Director, police, paramedic or fire emergency response in the case of an emergency.