

**THE PROTESTANT SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD
OF THE TOWN OF PENETANGUISHENE**

POLICY MANUAL

POLICY TITLE:

SECTION/CODE:

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

School Operations D – 16

APPROVAL DATE:

SUPERSEDES:

NUMBER OF PAGES:

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POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene to provide an environment in all of its facilities that builds independence, dignity, and respect for our students, parents/guardians, the public, and our staff. Further, the Board is committed by 2025 to providing people with exceptionalities the same opportunity of access to our services in the same location, and in a similar way as these services are available, to all we serve.

Accessibility and mental health are related. Ensuring inclusion in Ontario's schools, and throughout society helps to support individual's mental health. We're committed to equal access, complying with the standards defined within the Accessibility for Ontarians with Exceptionalities Act (AODA) and endeavour to remove barriers in order to accommodate and fully include our stakeholders. (Taken from School Mental Health Ontario)

PURPOSE

The *Customer Service Standard, Accessibility for Ontarians with Exceptionalities Act, 2005*, sets a goal of an Accessible Ontario by 2025. The Protestant Separate School Board is committed to providing services to our students, parents/guardians, the public, and our staff that are free of barriers and biases. The Protestant Separate School Board strives to ensure that key principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity are reflected and valued in our learning and working environments. Our conduct will demonstrate our belief in the strength diversity brings to our community.

DEFINITIONS

1. Exceptionality

The term "exceptionality" covers a broad range and degree of conditions. An exceptionality may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. Section 10 of the *Ontario Human Rights Code* defines "disability /exceptionality" as:

- any degree of physical exceptionality, 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, muteness or speech 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 exceptionality,
- a learning exceptionality, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

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- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or exceptionality for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

2. Customer

A customer is any person who uses the services of the school Board.

3. Assistive Device

An assistive device is any device used by people with exceptionalities to help with daily living. Assistive devices include a range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, electronic communication devices.

4. Service Animal

A certified animal (certified meaning that both the animal and the handler have had training from a recognized Canadian training institution and the animal is registered as such in Canada), that provides supports and accommodation to students with a exceptionality, where the accommodation allows a student to access the Ontario Curriculum.

5. Companion Animal

An animal that is not considered to provide an accommodation to students with exceptionalities, as it is generally not considered to be an accommodation and not required to allow the student to access the Ontario Curriculum.

6. Support Person

A support person is a person who assists or interprets for a person with a exceptionality/exceptionality as they access the services of the Board. A support person is distinct from an employee who supports a student in the system.

7. Third Party Contractors

A third party contractor is any person or organization acting on behalf of or as an agent of the Board (e.g. bus operators, psychologists).

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8. Barriers to Accessibility

Barriers to accessibility means anything that prevents a person with a exceptionality from fully participating in all aspects of the services of the Board. This includes, but is not limited to, a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier.

9. Accommodation

Accommodation is a means, through reasonable efforts, of preventing and removing barriers that impede individuals with exceptionalities from participating fully in the services of the Board.

10. Interpreter Services

Interpreter services are services provided for hearing impaired individuals.

11. Accessible Formats

Accessible formats may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with exceptionalities.

12. Communication Supports

Communication supports may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

GUIDELINES

1. The Board will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that all policies, practices and procedures from the date of this policy forward are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity to all, with particular attention for persons with exceptionalities.
2. The Board will welcome all members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing our staff and volunteers to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of persons with exceptionalities; such services to incorporate measures include, but are not limited to, the use of assistive devices and service animals.

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3. To ensure greater awareness and responsiveness to the needs of a person with exceptionalities, the Board will provide appropriate training for all staff who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of the Board.
4. Training as identified in No. 3 will be provided to all staff and, when appropriate, to volunteers. As new staff are hired, the training may become a component of their orientation training and will be provided within a reasonable timeframe.
5. The Board will ensure that its policies and procedures related to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Exceptionalities Act, 2005* are made available to the public and also ensure there is capacity to provide communication about these policies and procedures in a format that takes into account a person's exceptionality.
6. When services that are normally provided to a person with an exceptionality are temporarily unavailable a disruption of service notice will be posted at the site and on the Board's website.
7. In order to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the Accessible Customer Service Standard, the Board will develop a process for receiving and responding to feedback. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public and will allow people to provide feedback using a number of methods.
8. So that adherence to this policy can be achieved efficiently and effectively, the Board and school-based administrators will take into account the impact on persons with exceptionalities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems or planning a new initiative.
9. The Board will create a feedback process that will review the implementation of this policy with the Board's various constituency groups. Examples include Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), citizens' groups and methods would include use of electronic means such as websites.
10. The Board will also establish a process for consulting with frontline staff and volunteers who have a role in implementing the expectations and procedures established under this policy to review its effectiveness.

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ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

The Supervisory Officer is authorized to provide the administrative procedures necessary to implement this policy.

Legal Framework

Accessibility for Ontarians with exceptionalities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07

Ontario Human Rights Code

Ministry of Education

Acknowledgment

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene acknowledges and appreciates the contribution of the Simcoe County District School Board in the development of this policy.