

### Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

Roots of Empathy (ROE) is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities. The following policies, procedures and practices are guided by the fundamental principles underlying the Customer Service Standard. We are committed to ensuring that this policy is rigorously observed by all employees and any third party that provides goods and services on our behalf.

The objective of this policy is to provide a framework through which we can achieve service excellence for people with disabilities. We are committed to provide a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment to all individuals who seek access to our goods and services.

#### **Assistive Devices**

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

#### **Communication**

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

#### **Service animals**

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.

#### **Support persons**

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

#### **Notice of temporary disruption**

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities, Roots of Empathy will notify customers promptly.

The most common example of this would likely be our accessible washrooms. In this instance, Roots of Empathy will post a notice at the entry to the washroom. 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. In all instances, the notice will reasonably ensure that those persons potentially affected by the temporary disruption are notified in a manner that is accessible to them.

### **Feedback process**

Individuals who wish to provide feedback on the way Roots of Empathy provides goods and services to people with disabilities can contact Roots of Empathy at [mail@rootsofempathy.org](mailto:mail@rootsofempathy.org) or toll-free at 1-866-766-8763

All feedback will be tracked and logged and will be kept in strict confidence in the Communications Department. Feedback will be used to improve customer service.

The author of the feedback will be provided a response; as applicable, as defined by the legislation in the format requested (or the most appropriate form if no request was made). Individuals can expect to hear back in 10 business days. Complaints will be addressed according to our organization's regular complaint management procedures.

### **Training for staff**

Roots of Empathy will provide training to employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf. This training will be provided to staff as part of their orientation training at the outset of their employment.

Training will include:

- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- The Roots of Empathy 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 organization's goods and services.

Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our plan.

### **Notice of availability of documents**

This policy and any corresponding practices and procedures will be made available to any person on request. It will also be posted in a conspicuous place in high-traffic areas in our work environments.

### **Format of Documents**

Upon request, we will provide this policy and any other forms created pursuant to the Customer Service Standard in a format that takes into account the disability of the person submitting the request.

### Modifications to this or other policies

#### **Modifications to this or other policies**

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

### Policy Statement of Organizational Commitment

These policies have been established by Roots of Empathy (ROE) to meet the guidelines established under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, as well as related regulations.

These standards have been established to break down barriers, increase accessibility for persons with disabilities, treating them with equal opportunity, integration, dignity and independence. Roots of Empathy will use every effort to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, through the implementation of this policy and accessibility plan.

### Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Roots of Empathy will create, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan that describes the company's approach to prevent and remove barriers from its workplace, and to improve opportunities provided for persons with disabilities. The plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years.

Upon request, Roots of Empathy will provide a copy of the Accessibility Plan in an accessible format.

Roots of Empathy has implemented a policy governing supplying goods and services to those with disabilities, to ensure that customers with disabilities are treated with respect and dignity at Roots of Empathy.

#### **Training**

Roots of Empathy will provide training to associates on applicable accessibility laws and on human rights legislation as it relates to people with disabilities. This training will be provided by January 1, 2015.

#### **Accessible Emergency Information**

Roots of Empathy is committed to providing customers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. Roots of Empathy will also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

### **Information and Communications Standards**

Roots of Empathy is committed to create, provide and receive information and communication in ways that are accessible to people with disabilities. The following accessibility standards do not apply to products or product labels, “unconvertible” information or communications, and information that Roots of Empathy does not control directly or indirectly through contractual relationships.

Information and communications may be considered “unconvertible” if it is not technically feasible to convert it, or if the technology to convert the information is not readily available. When this is the case, Roots of Empathy will provide the person that requires the information with an explanation why the information or communications are unconvertible, and a summary of the unconvertible information or communications.

### **Feedback**

Roots of Empathy will take a number of steps to ensure that its feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request by January 1, 2015. This will require assessing the current form for company communication, implementing the accessibility requirements when creating new forms, and ensuring that customers and others are aware of how to participate by providing and receiving a response to feedback.

### **Accessible Formats and Communications Supports**

Roots of Empathy will take a number of steps to ensure that all its publicly available information is made accessible upon request by January 1, 2016. These steps will include accessing all forms of information provided to the public, determining what barriers may exist that would make it difficult for someone with a disability to read, see, hear or understand, and establish processes for ensuring alternative formats are available. Accessible formats and communications supports will be provided in a timely manner that takes into account the person’s accessibility needs, at a cost no more than regular costs charged to other persons.

### **Websites and Accessibility**

Roots of Empathy shall make its internet website and web content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, initially at level A, and increasing to Level AA. By January 1, 2021 all internet website and web content published after 2012 will conform to WCAG2.0 Level AA to the extent practicable other than criteria 1.2.4 (captions) and 1.2.5 (pre-recorded audio descriptions).

Note that WCAG2.0 requirements only apply to websites, web content and web based applications that an organization can control either directly or through a contractual relationship and where meeting the requirements are technically feasible, including considering the availability of commercial software or tools or both.

### **Employment**

Roots of Empathy is committed to fair and accessible employment practices. Roots of Empathy will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment, assessment and hiring processes, as well as during employment. Roots of Empathy will review its current recruitment policies, job descriptions, processes and communications – and amend as necessary to meet required integrated accessibility standards.

Roots of Empathy will develop and/or revise required individual accommodation plans and return to work policies for its employees who have been absent due to a disability.

Roots of Empathy will review performance management, career development and re-deployment processes and amend them as required to make sure the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are taken into account in connection with these processes.

Roots of Empathy will take the opportunity to identify and take any necessary steps to prevent and remove other accessibility barriers that may affect employment.

The suite of employment-related standards must be implemented by January 1, 2016.

### **For More Information**

This policy has been developed to break down barriers and increase accessibility for persons with disabilities, in the areas of information and communications and employment. The policies, plans, statements and standards may be reviewed and amended.

For more information about Roots of Empathy accessibility policies and plans, please contact us as follows:

Phone: 1-866-766-8763

Email: [mail@rootsofempathy.org](mailto:mail@rootsofempathy.org)

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This document is available in alternative format upon request.