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**POLICY P.121.GOV**

**TITLE: ACCESSIBILITY**

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**1.0 OBJECTIVES**

- 1.1 To ensure that all reasonable efforts shall be made to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility for all members of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) community.
- 1.2 To support the implementation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)* and associated Regulations made under the Act.

**2.0 DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 **Accessibility** means creating an environment in which systemic barriers to the full participation of people with disabilities are reduced or eliminated through reasonable efforts so that there is equitable access for all (e.g., services, systems, and policies).
- 2.2 **Assistive device** means any device used by people with disabilities to help with daily living. Assistive devices include a range of products such as wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, electronic communication devices.
- 2.3 **Accommodation** is a means through reasonable efforts of preventing and removing barriers that impede individuals with disabilities from participating fully in the District. Accommodation involves three principles:
  - (a) Respect for Dignity
  - (b) Individual Accommodation
  - (c) Inclusion and Full Participation
- 2.4 **Barriers to Accessibility** (outlined in Attachment 1) mean anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of the District. This includes, but is not limited to, a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.
- 2.5 **Community** is composed of students, parents/guardians, trustees, staff, and volunteers of the school and feeder schools/family of schools as well as the community of people in businesses and organizations that are served within the District.

2.6 **Customer** means all members of the public who have disabilities and may require particular considerations in order to avail themselves of the services provided by a school board.

2.7 **Disability** means,

- (a) any degree of physical disability, 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,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go.

2.8 **Reasonable Efforts** vary depending on each situation. The OCDSB is expected to use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the following principles:

- (a) dignity
- (b) independence
- (c) integration (except when alternative measures are necessary to meet the needs of an individual with a disability or disabilities)
- (d) equal opportunity.

The principles may need to be balanced in order to meet the individual needs of the person with a disability.

2.9 **Service Animals and Support Persons** are used by people with various disabilities.

**Service Animals:** Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who are blind, hearing alert animals for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety.

**Support Person:** Means in relation to a person with a disability, a support person is another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid professional, a volunteer, a family member or friend.

### 3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 It is the policy of the Board that the District shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices established for the implementation of the Ontario regulations under *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)* are consistent and shall be governed by the following principles:
- (a) respect for the integration of services to allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers, or alternatively, the provision of alternate measures necessary to meet their needs;
  - (b) respect for the independence of people with disabilities allowing them freedom from control or influence of others, freedom to make their own choices, and freedom to do things in their own way;
  - (c) respect for the equal opportunity and dignity of people with disabilities to have the same opportunities, benefits and intended outcomes as others.
- 3.2 It is the policy of the Board that the District shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that both visible and invisible barriers are identified and removed to ensure the full participation of people with disabilities. This shall include:
- (a) promoting inclusive design in facilities, programs, policies, practices and services to provide equal access for people with disabilities;
  - (b) providing a relevant accommodation process that ensures shared responsibility to support the unique needs of people with disabilities;
  - (c) addressing attitudes and stereotypes which pose a substantial barrier to people with disabilities;
  - (d) taking into account the impact on people with disabilities when purchasing new equipment, designing new systems or planning a new initiative.
- 3.3 The Board shall welcome all members of the school and broader community to the District facilities by committing staff and volunteers to providing services in a manner that respects the independence and dignity of people with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of assistive devices and service animals.
- 3.4 To ensure greater awareness and responsiveness to the needs of people with disabilities, the Board shall provide appropriate training for all staff who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of the Board.

#### **4.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

- 4.1 The accessibility policy sets clear directives that apply to all members of the OCDSB community in the area of accessibility. Board procedure PR.666.GOV Accessibility (Customer Service Standards) outlines responsibilities in the area of customer service.
- 4.2 As specific standards and regulations are approved by the province, related procedures shall be developed in the following areas:
- information and communications;
  - built environment;
  - employment;
  - transportation.
- 4.3 A process shall be established for consulting with frontline staff, community members and volunteers who have a role in implementing the expectations and procedures established under this policy to review its effectiveness.
- 4.4 An information report shall be provided annually to the trustees with respect to the OCDSB's compliance with this policy.

#### **5.0 APPENDICES**

Attachment 1 – Barriers to Accessibility

#### **6.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*  
Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service  
Accessibility Standards for Customer Services, Ontario Regulation 429/07 Guide January 2008 –  
Ministry of Community and Social Services  
Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: Summary of Requirements, March 2008  
Board Policy P.125.SCO: School Board Code of Conduct  
Board Procedure PR.666.GOV: Accessibility (Customer Service Standards)

**BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY**

- a) **Architectural or structural** barriers may result from the design of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout.
- b) **Information and communications** barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that is not clear or plain can all cause difficulty.
- c) **Technology**, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers.
- d) **Systemic** barriers can occur through policies and procedures. These are any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities – for example, denying access to a person with a service animal.
- e) **Attitude** is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or non-visible disabilities or they simply discriminate against them because of stereotypes. Some may feel that they could offend an individual with a disability by offering help or in some cases they will ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether.