



ACCESSIBILITY

POLICY:

In accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and the *Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation(IASR)*, Thrive Counselling has established the following policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of its services to persons with disabilities. The services are designed to conform to Ontario Regulation 429/07, “Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.”

PROCEDURE:

Thrive makes every effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures for accessible services are consistent with the principles described in the *AODA*, namely:

- The services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the services.
- Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the services.

Assistive devices

Persons with disabilities who rely on assistive devices will be permitted access to and benefit from their devices when they are using Thrive’s services. If necessary, Thrive will provide other measures to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from Thrive’s services.

Service animals

Persons with disabilities, including members of the public or third parties, who rely on guide dogs or other service animals, will be permitted to enter Thrive's premises and keep their animal with them, unless the animal is otherwise legally excluded from the premises. If the animal is legally excluded, Thrive will provide other measures to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from Thrive's services.

Support persons

Persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person will be permitted to enter Thrive's premises with their support person, and Thrive will ensure that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to their support person while both are at Thrive.

Temporary disruptions

If Thrive is required to disrupt its particular facilities or practices that usually accommodate a person with a disability, Thrive will provide notice to the public of the disruption on our website as well as at the affected office. The notice will include the reasons for the disruption, the duration of the disruption, and a description of alternative facilities or services that may be available at the respective office.

Training

Thrive staff will be trained in the provision of services to persons with disabilities. The training shall include:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability, including those who rely on assistive devices, service animals or support persons;
- How to use any of Thrive's equipment that is available for persons with disabilities; and
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing Thrive's services.

Thrive will maintain a record of its training efforts.

Feedback

Staff members are encouraged to direct persons who wish to comment on Thrive's provision of services for persons with disabilities to the Director of Clinical Services by phone or by sending an email to info@thrivecounselling.org. Clients can expect to hear back within three business days. Alternatively, we can be reached by phone at 905-845-3811.

Copies of this policy

If Thrive is requested to provide a copy of this policy to a person with a disability, Thrive will give the person this document, or the information contained in it, in a format that takes into account the person's disability. Alternatively, the person with a disability and Thrive may agree on a different format for the document or information. Client Accessibility Survey Forms will be made available to clients regarding Thrive's services (Appendix B).

Training Tips

Treat people with disabilities with respect and consideration.

- Patience, optimism, and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Smile, relax and keep in mind that people with disabilities want to experience helpful service.
- Don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities a person has.
- Some disabilities are not visible. Take the time to know the person's needs.
- Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- If you're not sure what to do, ask, "How may I help you?"
- If you can't understand what someone is saying, just politely ask again.
- Ask before you offer to help- don't just jump in. The individual with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- Find a good way to communicate. A good start is to listen carefully.
- Look at the person, don't stare. Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their interpreter or someone who is with them.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- Don't touch or address service animals-they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Ask permission before touching a wheelchair or a piece of equipment.
- Every business should have emergency procedures for individuals with disabilities. Make sure you know what they are.

