

Healthy Start for Mom & Me – Operational Policies and Procedures Manual

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ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES FOR PARTICIPANTS POLICY	
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Accessibility to all participants

Healthy Start for Mom & Me is committed to comply with the *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service* under *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*. We will apply this act with dignity for individuals seeking our services.

As much as possible, we will work with participants to remove barriers faced by people accessing our program. If not possible, we will work to provide our program in an alternative way to meet the participant's needs.

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, board members, and volunteers.

All employees will discuss accessibility needs with: the participant, teams at drop-in, and supervisor to determine how we can accommodate the participant's needs.

1. Meet communication needs

We will work to meet the communication needs of our participants

Practice

- When appropriate, we will offer communication in different ways, such as writing things down, reading things out loud and taking extra time to explain things
- Offering a quieter space, a chair, paper & pen to write things down
- Sitting down to engage with someone using a wheelchair
- We will develop resources that are written in plain language for all participants
- We will also offer our written resources in alternative formats if requested (e.g. larger font)

2. Accommodate the use of assistive devices

We accommodate the use of assistive devices participants use when accessing our program

Practice

- We don't touch or move assistive devices without the permission of the participant
- We are trained on how to use the assistive devices that we provide (e.g. automatic doors, doorbells, etc.)
- In cases where assistive devices present health or safety concerns, we will offer our services in an alternative format (e.g. in their home or in the community where they feel comfortable)

3. Welcome support persons

We welcome support persons. We will let participants know in advance if support people need to pay an admission or fee for any events outside of our regular groups.

Practice

- We address the participant and not the support person unless directed by the participant to do otherwise

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- We welcome, make space and ensure the participant has access to their support person at all times

4. Allow service animals

We allow service animals at our groups.

Practice

- Service animals are identified by the harness or vest and by the assistance the animal provides the participant
- If we have concerns whether this is a trained service animal, we can ask if the animal has been trained to help a person with a disability-related need but we do not inquire about the disability
- They are working animals and we do not distract the service animals from its job by petting, feeding or playing with it, unless given permission from the participant
- If another law prohibits the service animal, we will explain why and offer the participant our service in another way
- Participants with service animals are expected to maintain control of the animal at all times:
 - If service animals show signs of not being controlled (e.g. barking, whining or wandering), we may provide a warning to the handler to control the animal
 - If the service animal continues to misbehave, we may ask the participant to leave and explain that we can offer our service in an alternate format (e.g. in their home or in the community)

5. Maintain accessibility features

We will make every effort to ensure barrier-free access to facilities where we hold our groups. Limitations of accessibility may exist beyond our control; community facilities where we hold our drop-ins are not owned and operated by our organization.

Practice

- We will organize our drop-ins so there is room for people with wheelchairs, scooters and walkers
- Our seating will make every effort to accommodate participants of varying size and abilities
- We will provide our program in an alternative location (e.g. another community facility or their home) when our drop-ins are not accessible
- We will endeavor to house our drop-in programs in community facilities that are accessible for all participants

6. Let participants know when and why an accessibility feature is unavailable

We will let participants know when and why an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable, how long it will be unavailable and alternative ways to access our goods and services.

Practice

- If a drop-in has temporary accessibility features that are unavailable, we will call, email or post on social media the nature of the disruption, how long it will last, and how we will provide alternative access to our program

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7. Welcome and respond promptly to feedback

We welcome and respond to feedback we receive on the accessibility of our program.

Practice

- Participants can provide feedback to Healthy Start staff at drop-ins who will bring it back to supervisors
- Participants can also call our office and ask to speak to a supervisor or emailing us and we will respond to feedback
- The supervisors will notify the Executive Director and the participant will be notified that we received their feedback and when appropriate, we will let them know what action(s) we will take to address their feedback
- We will respond to feedback in a way that meets the communication needs of the participant

8. Provide the required training to employees and volunteers

We provide required training on accessible customer service to employees, volunteers and management. We are trained on:

- How to interact and communicate with people who face barriers to accessibility, use assistive devices, are assisted by a support person and/or service animal
- How to use equipment or assistive devices
- An overview of *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*, *The Human Rights Code* (Manitoba and the Customer Service Standard)
- Our organization's policies and practices, including updates or changes

Practice

- Our staff and volunteers will be asked to review our Accessibility Services for Participants policy within 1 month of working with us
- We will aim review our policy every two years, or sooner if required
- We will allow time for discussion & feedback on the accessibility of our program at our staff meetings

9. Keep a written record of our accessibility and training policies

We keep a written record of our accessibility and training policies.

We let the public know that our written policies are available on request.

Practice

- We let the public know that our accessibility and training policies are available upon request through our website or social media
- We provide our policies within 2 weeks, at no cost, and in a format that meets the needs of the individual

Approved by: Board of Directors

Date of approval: Oct 31, 2018