

SMART & BIGGAR

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Accessible Customer Service Policy

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PURPOSE

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standards included in the Integrated Accessibility Standards under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. It applies to the provision of services to the public or other third parties, not to the services themselves.

All services provided by Smart & Biggar (the “Firm”) shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

Smart & Biggar is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for all stakeholders including our clients, employees, job applicants, suppliers and any visitors who may enter our premises, access our information, or use our services. As an organization, we respect and uphold the requirements set forth under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)*, and its associated standards and regulations.

Smart & Biggar understands that we have a responsibility for ensuring a safe, dignified, and welcoming environment for everyone. The Firm is committed to ensuring our organization’s compliance by incorporating accessibility legislation into our policies, procedures, equipment requirements, training, and best practices. The Firm will review these policies and practices annually, as organizational changes occur, or in anticipation of compliance deadlines. In addition, we will strive to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner.

Providing an accessible barrier-free environment is a shared effort, and as an organization, Smart & Biggar is committed to working with the necessary parties to make accessibility for all a reality. For more detailed information please see the policy below or contact a member of your local Joint Health & Safety Committee.

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DEFINITIONS

Assistive Device: is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that clients bring them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

Barrier: is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Disability: the term “disability” as defined the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

- 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;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Guide Dog: Is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

Service Animal: an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

1. the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person’s disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
2. the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:
 - A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
 - A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
 - A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario;
 - A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
 - A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario;
 - A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
 - A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
 - A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario; or
 - A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

Service Dog: as reflected in the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562* a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- It is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or
- The person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

Support Person: a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to services.

Team Member: all regular full time, regulate part time, temporary full time, temporary part time employees, Associates, Partners and counsel of Smart & Biggar.

THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Firm will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- Ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality;
- Allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- Taking into account individual needs when providing services; and
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability. This means looking at how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications and considering other means for making the communication more accessible. Examples of how this can be accomplished may include converting documents to an alternate format, incorporating plain language into a document, or considering technology or services that support the communication.

THE USE OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing good or services provided by the Firm.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of services. For example, where elevators are not present or out of service and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the client. Should an individual with a disability be unable to access our services through the use of their own personal assistive device, the Firm will determine whether the service is inaccessible and assess the potential service options available to meet the needs of the individual.

THE USE OF GUIDE DOGS, SERVICES ANIMALS AND SERVICE DOGS

A client with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. "No pet" policies do not

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apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs.

Exclusion Guidelines

If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law (see applicable laws below) Smart & Biggar will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access services, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

Applicable Laws

Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pitbulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the client for reasons relating to his or her disability, the Firm may request verification from the client.

Care and Control of the Animal:

The client who is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all time.

Allergies

If a health and safety concern presents itself for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, the Firm will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

THE USE OF SUPPORT PERSONS

If a client with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the Firm will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person.

There may be times where seating and availability prevent the client and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations the Firm will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the client, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.

NOTICE OF SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of Smart & Biggar. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that clients with disabilities rely on to access or use the Firm's services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

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Notifications will include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- Services that are disrupted or unavailable;
- Reason for the disruption;
- Anticipated duration; and
- A description of alternative services or options.

Notification Options

When disruptions occur Smart & Biggar will provide notice:

- By posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the Firm's website.
- By contacting customers with appointments.
- By verbally notifying customers when they are making a reservation or appointment.
- By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

Smart & Biggar shall provide clients with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to clients with disabilities. Information about the feedback process is available on our website or by one of the contact methods listed below (mail, email, telephone). Feedback forms along with alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email), will be available upon request.

Submitting Feedback

Clients can submit feedback to:

Michael Gore, Director of Operations
 55 Metcalfe Street
 Suite 900
 P.O. Box 2999, Station D
 Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5Y6
 Telephone: (613) 232.2486
 Email: talentservices@smart-biggar.ca

Clients who wish to provide feedback by completing an onsite customer feedback form or verbally can do so to any Smart & Biggar Team Member.

Clients who provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

Privacy will be respected and all feedback will be reviewed for possible action that can be taken to improve the Firm's services. Feedback received will be redirected to an appropriate contact person.

TRAINING

Training will be provided to:

- Every person who is a team member of, or a volunteer with the Firm.
- Every team member who participates in developing the provider's policies.
- Every other person who provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of the Firm.

Training Provisions

Regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- A review of the requirements of the Customer Service Standards.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- Smart & Biggar's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

Training Schedule

Smart & Biggar will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new team members, volunteers, agents and/or contractors during the new team member onboarding process. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures, policies, and/or practices.

Record of Training

Smart & Biggar will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY AND FORMAT OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Smart & Biggar shall notify clients that the documents related to the Customer Service Standards are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the client's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information on its website (www.smart-biggar.ca).

ADMINISTRATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy or its related procedures please contact:

Michael Gore, Director of Operations
 55 Metcalfe Street
 Suite 900
 P.O. Box 2999, Station D
 Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5Y6

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Telephone: (613) 232.2486

Email: talentservices@smart-biggar.ca

This policy and its related procedures will be reviewed as required in the event of legislative changes or changes to company procedures.