

# ReliAble Living<sup>®</sup>

## Accessible Customer Service Policies, Practices and Procedures

*Prepared by*



**Revised and updated**

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# ReliAble Living®

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## Accessible Customer Service Standard, Ontario Regulation 429/07

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### Accessibility Policies, Practices and Procedures

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## Executive Summary

ReliAble Living® is committed to improving the lives of people with disabilities at home, work and in their communities. By sourcing, selling, servicing and installing equipment to make any building, residential or commercial, a barrier-free environment, we enable people to live and work independently and with dignity. We are here to help people in three main areas:

1. By allowing people with disabilities to live independently in their homes;
2. By removing barriers at work and customizing workspaces to enable people to maintain their dignity by continuing to work;
3. And by removing the barriers that inhibit a business from providing equal access to their goods and services for everyone, a positive impact on both the consumer and the business.

## Mission Statement

ReliAble Living® is committed to working to improve access and opportunities for people with disabilities by identifying, removing and preventing any barriers that may interfere with one's ability to access our goods and services. We will continue to maintain our best efforts to operate a barrier-free environment for everyone.

## Barrier Identification

It is the obligation of each member of ReliAble Living® to be aware of, and help identify, potential and existing barriers to persons with disabilities. Every reasonable effort shall be made to lessen or remove such barriers, and to provide equal opportunity for their customers to access the products and services of ReliAble Living®. Where applicable, the management of ReliAble Living® may consult with persons with disabilities in the community in order to gather information and establish

best practices for providing customer service to clients with a wide variety of disabilities.

## **Guiding Principles**

When developing any policies, practices or procedures, the following four guiding principles must be considered:

**(The following definitions are from the Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.)**

### **Dignity**

What does the principle of dignity mean?

Policies, practices and procedures that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those designed to treat them as customers who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer. They do not treat people with disabilities as an afterthought or force them to accept lesser service, quality or convenience. Service delivery needs to take into account how people with disabilities can effectively access and use services and show respect for these methods.

### **Independence**

What does the principle of independence mean?

In some instances, independence means freedom from control or influence of others - freedom to make your own choices. In other situations, it may mean the freedom to do things in your own way. People who may move or speak more slowly should not be denied an opportunity to participate in a program or service because of this factor.

### **Integration**

What does the principle of integration mean?

Integrated services are those that 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. Integration means that policies, practices and Procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

### **Equal Opportunity**

What does the principle of equal opportunity mean?

Equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services it means that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods or services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain goods and services. They should also not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.

## **Application and Implementation**

The policies set forth within this Accessibility Plan will apply to all staff members, volunteers and contractors retained by ReliAble Living®.

- A. The accessibility policies of ReliAble Living® will be communicated through email, verbal notification or in hard copy. It is recommended that the documentation is made accessible to all staff at all times, via ReliAble Living®'s employee portal or similar vehicle, in reference manuals or by other means as deemed appropriate by the leadership team of ReliAble Living®.

ReliAble Living® will review any new policies, practices and procedures before instituting them. This will be done through the following steps to ensure that no undue hardship on ReliAble Living® is being created:

1. Discuss the proposed policy at the corporate level and decide on the viability of the policy.
2. Seek out recommendations from legal representation if required.
3. Seek out recommendations from the accounting department if required.
4. Seek out recommendations from different disability associations if required.
5. Seek out the recommendations of an accessibility consultant if required.
6. If the decision is made to implement the policy, commit the new policy, practice or Procedure to paper for inclusion in the Accessibility Policies, Practices and Procedures document, and for distribution throughout your organization.
7. Set a date for implementation of the new standard.
8. Distribute the new standard to the appropriate personnel and departments.
9. Implement the standard.

## **Continued Monitoring and Evaluation**

ReliAble Living® will work to ensure the continued monitoring and evaluation of their efforts to achieve total inclusion. To help achieve the goal of full inclusion the Policies, Practices and Procedures document will be reviewed on an annual basis.

# Policies, Practices and Procedures

## Accessible Customer Service Training

ReliAble Living® will ensure that all employees, volunteers or contractors, dealing either with the public, or with third party organizations (business to business), are trained under the requirements of the Accessible Customer Service Standard (429/07). Furthermore, ReliAble Living® will ensure that all new employees, dealing either with the public, or with third party organizations (business to business), will be trained under the requirements of the Accessible Customer Service Standard (429/07) within 90 days of their start date.

\*\*All employees of ReliAble Living® will be required to undergo training related to any changes or updates to these policies, practices and procedures and the Accessible Customer Service Standard.

## Accessible Customer Service

ReliAble Living® will ensure that all employees are diligent in identifying and removing potential barriers to Accessible Customer Service, where applicable, and without undue hardship being incurred by the organization. This will be done using the following methods:

- A. When a customer with a visible mobility disability enters the premises via the ground floor, the greeting staff, either from ReliAble Living® or Marilyn's, will ask: "How can I help you?" Based on the individual's response, the staff should determine the most appropriate course of action, which may include:
  1. Offering the customer one of the available methods of reaching the ReliAble Living® Centre and demonstration area on the second floor, including lift, elevator or stairs if appropriate.
  2. If the individual is unable to access the second floor show room for whatever reason, a staff member from ReliAble Living® should meet with the individual on the ground floor and make an alternate arrangement, such as:
    - Arranging an appointment at a future time and date to meet and demonstrate product/s
    - If possible, arrange a time to conduct an in-home demonstration at the customer's home

- Demonstrate any product/s on the ground floor if possible
- Utilize a virtual demonstration through pictures, videos etc
- Any other mutually agreeable arrangement, whereby no undue hardship is incurred by ReliAble Living®

B. If a customer using a mobility device experiences significant difficulty demonstrating any products, including difficulty transferring, reaching or operating equipment, and where the potential for injury to the customer is evident, the staff at ReliAble Living® may ask to make an alternate arrangement, such as a future appointment with a support person present to assist the customer, or a signature absolving ReliAble Living® of any responsibility should an injury occur.

C. ReliAble Living® will accommodate persons with a visual impairment using the following guidelines: (Remember: Vision loss is often an invisible disability. If an individual self-identifies to a staff member that they are visually impaired, the same guidelines for Accessible Customer Service will apply.)

1. If a customer with a visible visual impairment enters the premises, the greeting staff from ReliAble Living® or Marilyn's will identify themselves, briefly explain the environment and offer to assist the customer in locating the stairs or elevator.
2. Where possible, staff will demonstrate products using a hands-on approach.
3. When movement within the centre or show room is required, the staff member will ask the customer for the best way to lead, (I.E. sighted guide, verbal direction, simply by following etc.)
4. Staff will be prepared to verbalize any written product information, including pricing, warranties or fact sheets. (Product manuals, or other lengthy documents, can be offered electronically, or as an audio disc, where no undue hardship is incurred by ReliAble Living®.)

D. ReliAble Living® will accommodate Deaf or deafened persons, or those hard of hearing, by providing one of the following aides with respect to receiving service:

1. ReliAble Living® will identify whether any employee is trained in American Sign Language for the purpose of communicating with Deaf or deafened customers. If yes, all staff will be made aware of this employee's ASL designation, and will be able to refer clients to them if needed.
  2. If it is apparent that a customer is hard of hearing, the staff person will offer to communicate using one of the assistive devices located in the Centre. In conjunction, if there is background noise in the environment, the staff may offer to move to a quieter location, if available.
  3. Staff will always be prepared to offer a pen and paper, assistive devices such as hearing loops and transmitters, a computer, or other means of written communication.
- E. Daily diligence to ensure that routes of travel are clear and free of obstacles which may impede someone's mobility in and around the Centre.
- F. If maintenance or other requirements will cause areas of the Centre to have limited or restricted access for a significant period of time, the staff of ReliAble Living® will ensure that notification of disruption of services protocol will be followed.
- G. Ensure that any modifications or changes to common areas are done with accessibility in mind.

## **Feedback Process**

It is the goal of ReliAble Living® to comply with the spirit of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. To this end, a feedback process will be developed to enable the team at ReliAble Living® to respond to feedback received by the organization regarding accessible customer service. When a complaint has been put forth, the team at ReliAble Living® will review the scenario and make every effort to accommodate the requests of the individual or group in a manner that is satisfactory to all parties, without causing undue hardship to ReliAble Living®.

The feedback process is to take into account the individuals disability, and will be made available through a variety of methods such as:

- In person
- On the telephone



- In writing
- By E-mail

When feedback is received the following actions will be taken:

- Feedback form will be distributed to the *correct individual or department.*
- Calling the complainant and discussing the remedial action using a manner that takes into account the complainants disability.
- If required, seeking the recommendations of legal representation.
- If required, seeking the recommendations of the accounting department.
- If required, seeking the recommendations of an association relevant to the disability in question.
- If required, seeking the recommendations of an accessibility consultant.
- If action is to be taken, the Policies, Practices and Procedures document will be updated to reflect the corrective action.
- Once a course of action has been developed, a call will be placed to the individual that initiated the feedback to inform them of the solution.

\*\*For an example of a Customer Feedback Form see Appendix A

ReliAble Living® will respect the individual's right to privacy under Ontario's Privacy Information Protection Act (PIPA) and will abide by the rules of PIPA regarding any request for information.

## **Communication**

Any communication between ReliAble Living® and their customers or the public will be conducted in a manner that takes into account an individual's disability. An understanding shall be reached on how it is best to communicate with a person with a disability on a case by case basis. This may include, but will not be limited to, the following methods:

- Verbal communication
- Written communication
- Digital communication which may include electronic text, video or audio
- Hand gestures

## **Telephone Communication**

ReliAble Living® is committed to providing accessible telephone communication. This will be done through training in Accessible Customer Service, and the management and staff are expected to communicate with all customers by speaking clearly, directly and using plain language. When available and appropriate, technological aides will be used to assist with communication. When clear and precise communication over the telephone is not possible, alternative arrangements will be made.

## **Notice of Temporary Disruption of Service**

ReliAble Living® will ensure that any temporary disruption of service, whether **expected or unexpected**, will be identified and relayed to their customers in a timely manner, through the following means:

1. Staff will refer to the Policies, Practices and Procedures document for instructions
2. Notification of disruption will be indicated in writing and placed on the entrance of the Centre. (Priority and consideration will be given to any security issues).
3. When answering phones, staff will identify the disruption of service to incoming callers as soon as possible.
4. Whenever possible, notification of disruption of service will be posted on ReliAble Living®'s home page at [reliableliving.com](http://reliableliving.com).
5. The information surrounding the disruption will be communicated with the staff at Marilyn's, so they may inform customers who enter the premises via the store front on the ground floor.

The Notification of Temporary Disruption of Service will include the following information:

1. The reason for the disruption of service.
2. The date of the disruption of service.
3. The expected length of the disruption of service.
4. A description of alternate services if available.

## **Assistive Devices and Mobility Aids**

ReliAble Living® will ensure that all its employees or required contractors will adhere to the following guides when interacting with customers that require assistive devices:

1. Ask if the individual requires assistance.

2. If assistance is required, the representative of ReliAble Living® will listen to the customer's instructions, and then repeat them back to the individual to ensure clear understanding and execution.
3. If, for whatever reason, an individual's assistive device cannot be utilized within the premises of ReliAble Living®, other reasonable arrangements for access to the goods and services of ReliAble Living® shall be made.
4. All employees or contractors of ReliAble Living® will be notified and aware of areas that must be kept clear of assistive devices, due to safety regulations (i.e. fire exit routes). Alternative arrangements to access goods and services will be made, if required.

### **Mental or Developmental Disabilities**

ReliAble Living® will treat any individual that has been identified as someone with a mental or developmental disability with the same respect and accord given to any customer. In accordance with the required training program, representatives of ReliAble Living® will adhere to the following procedures:

1. Ask if the individual requires assistance.
2. Provide more time for the individual to respond to questions.
3. Listen intently and paraphrase the question or response back to the individual to ensure full comprehension. If unclear, ask the individual to repeat themselves. Always exercise patience.
4. Offer aids such as a pen and paper, if required, to communicate. (In regards to third party business to business, clients and suppliers, keep records of such communications.)

### **Service Animals**

ReliAble Living® will train its employees, or required contractors in the treatment and rules pertaining to the use of service animals.

At no time will the representatives of ReliAble Living® prevent an individual requiring the use of a service animal from accessing the service animal while on the premises, except where a pre-existing law prohibits the animal and the following conditions are not met:

- The animal is an obvious service animal, wearing a harness or identifying coat.
- The person requiring the service animal can produce a letter from an attending physician, nurse practitioner or Ministry of the Attorney General requiring the use of the service animal.

## **Support Persons**

ReliAble Living® will train its employees, or required contractors in the treatment and rules pertaining to the use of support persons.

At no time will the representatives of ReliAble Living® prevent an individual requiring the use of a support person from accessing the services of the support person while on the premises.

ReliAble Living® employees or contractors will treat every individual with all due respect, and will direct all attention towards the customer. The support person will be addressed only if required, or invited.

If an event is to be held where an admission fee is to be charged the admission policy is as follows:

- The same fee charged to the general public will be charged to the support person.
- The option to offer a reduced rate or full removal of the rate for support persons will rest with the ReliAble Living® staff member collecting the fee.

## **Alternate Formats of Communication**

If requested, ReliAble Living® will endeavour to provide, under reasonable circumstances, alternate formats of information and communication. These formats may include, but are not limited to, such communication structures as:

- audio disc
- large print or Braille
- electronic text
- oral communication

ReliAble Living® is not responsible for producing all communications in all alternative formats, since this would cause undue hardship on the organization. However, upon request, every reasonable effort shall be made to accommodate an individual's needs on a case by case basis.

## **Contact Information:**

Ronny Wiskin  
ReliAble® Barrier Free Living Centre  
200 Spadina Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
M5T 2C2  
Toll Free Phone: (866) 690-7145  
Local Phone: (416) 502-9200  
info@reliableliving.com\_

Kyle Rawn  
Accessibility Professionals of Ontario  
84 Silverbirch Place  
Whitby, Ontario  
L1R 1X5  
(647) 477-8745  
kyle@accesspros.ca

# Feedback Form Template

ReliAble Living® would like to thank you for taking the time to fill out our Accessible Customer Service feedback form. The Management and staff at ReliAble Living® are committed to removing the barriers which may impede any individual from accessing our goods and services, in the same manner as the rest of the community. ReliAble Living® will review your feedback/suggestions, and if changes can be adopted without creating an undue hardship, action will be taken at the earliest opportunity. Please email this form to us at: [info@reliableliving.com](mailto:info@reliableliving.com) or call (866) 690-7145 to make an alternate arrangement.

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information (optional)

Phone Number

Email

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the customer service provided to you today?

Very good       Good       Average       Below average       Poor

Comments:

How was your experience with the accessibility of our facilities?

Very good       Good       Average       Below average       Poor

Comments:

Did you have any communication issues and if so how could they be improved;

Yes       No

Comments:

Any additional comments;

We at ReliAble Living® would like to thank you for taking the time to help us with our accessibility policies and we look forward to servicing your needs to the best of our ability