

A.4.2 CLIENT SERVICE (formerly A.8)

South Essex Community Council is committed to providing services in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. SECC has the responsibility to ensure the provision of equitable and supportive client services.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to describe the policy of the Board of Directors regarding the provision of service to clients of the Council.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the South Essex Community Council to provide services in a friendly and supportive environment that respects the dignity of each individual regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, citizenship, creed, marital status, receipt of public assistance, record of offences, age or disability.

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public on behalf of South Essex Community Council, whether the person does so as an employee, volunteer, board member, student on placement or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of programs and services to members of the public.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:

The implementation of this policy shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director and the Manager of Human Resources who shall develop operational policies for all staff in accordance with agency standards and other legislative requirements as outlined by the Province of Ontario (i.e. AODA).

Approved September 28, 2010

Updated January 8, 2013

Updated January 13, 2017

Updated August 15, 2022

PROCEDURE

South Essex Community Council will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

1. Programs and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability;

2. Alternate measures such as translation/interpretation services or measures that assist with accessibility will be used to deliver services in order to ensure access for all individuals;
3. Programs and services will always be provided in a prompt, courteous and efficient manner; and
4. All interactions with persons accessing programs and services will be considered confidential and will be discussed only in a professional context.

Standards

1) Timeliness/Efficiency

Programs and services will always be delivered in a timely and efficient manner.

Consumers can expect the following:

- Someone will always be present at the Front Reception Desk to greet them. They will always be asked: *“How may I help you?”*
- If placed on hold, consumers will wait no longer than 2 minutes to have their call transferred and picked up by the appropriate person. If that person is not available after that initial 2 minutes, the consumer will be given the option to remain on hold, leave a message on the staff member’s voice mail or speak to another individual
- Voice mail messages will be returned with 24 hours or before the end of the next business day.
- E-mails will be responded to within 48 hours or within 2 business days.
- If a consumer is told to expect a product (i.e. resume, response to inquiry, application, appointment) within a certain amount of time, SECC staff will adhere to that timeline.
- Appointments with consumers will only be cancelled in the following circumstances: inclement weather, staff illness or accident, or other extreme circumstances. If a cancellation is due to SECC’s operations, policies or procedures, the cancellation will only occur once. Whenever possible, scheduled appointments will be re-distributed to other available staff to ensure quality service and customer convenience.

2) Quality

SECC Programs and Services will be delivered by qualified, well-trained staff who adhere to the organization’s commitment to continuous improvement and on-going education/training.

SECC staff will not respond to requests or inquiries with *“I don’t know”*. Rather, if staff are presented with an inquiry or question to which they do not know the answer they will respond with *“Let me look into that for you”* and will proceed to seek out the appropriate answer.

3) Cooperation

SECC staff will work together to provide the best possible service to clients. Service will always be provided with the client in mind, and in cooperation with the client in order to ensure their needs are met.

4) Communication and Correspondence

SECC strives to be clear in its communication and respond to inquiries, concerns and questions in a professional and timely manner.

Customers can expect the following:

- All written correspondence will be professional and timely. Whenever possible, agency letterhead will be utilized.
- Communication will always take place with clients taking into consideration unique circumstances such as language, disability and culture. Clients may utilize translators/interpreters, support persons, assistive devices, service animals and other supports to assist in acquisition of programs and services.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services may occur due to reasons beyond SECC's control. SECC will make reasonable efforts to provide notice of any disruptions in service, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available. When such disruptions occur, notice will be posted through a variety of means including: local media, website, posted notices and e-mail notification.

Persons with Disabilities

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled "Accessibility Standards for Customer Service" came into force on January 1, 2008. That regulation establishes accessibility standards specific to customer service for public sector organizations and other persons or organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public.

South Essex Community Council is committed to providing quality programs and services that are accessible to all persons that we serve.

Persons with disabilities can expect the same customer service standards as outlined above.

When communicating with persons with a person with a disability, SECC will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from SECC's programs and services. It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Persons with a disability may enter SECC premises accompanied by a service animal and keep the animal with them. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, SECC staff may ask the person with a disability for documentation confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept in control at all times.

A person with a disability may access SECC programs and services with the assistance of a support person and have access to the support person while on the premises or while participating in SECC programs and services. SECC may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on SECC premises in situations where it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from SECC's programs and services, will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee or user fee is applicable.

Training

SECC will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies receive appropriate training which includes:

- General Customer Service procedures and expectations as they pertain to SECC programs and services
- Customer Service Best Practices
- Purposes of the AODA and Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)
- Instruction on SECC policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of programs and services to persons with disabilities
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities, and how to interact with persons using assistive devices, support persons or service animals
- Information about equipment, devices or services that may help with the provision of programs and services to persons with unique or special service needs

All employees will receive customer service training. All employees hired after January 1, 2010 will receive the training listed above as part of their New Employee Orientation.

SECC will keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided. This will be maintained by the Manger of Human Resources. Record of training and/or certificates of completion will be kept in each employee's personnel file.

Feedback and Complaint Resolution

SECC is committed to providing high quality programs and services to all members of the community it serves. Feedback is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback from a member of the community about the delivery of programs and services may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other methods.

Information about the feedback and complaint resolution process is available upon request at any SECC location and notice of the process will be posted on SECC's website (www.secc.on.ca).

Documents pertaining to SECC's Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, training records and written feedback processes are available upon request. When providing a document to a person with a disability, SECC will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes the person's disability into account.

REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

- B.4.1 Ethics and Conduct Policy (Governance)
- B.4.2 Conflict of Interest Policy (Governance)
- B.4.3 Confidentiality and Privacy (Governance)
- D.5 Ethics and Professional Conduct Policy (Human Resources)

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