



**FIREFLY
POLICY ADM # 1**

Section: ADMINISTRATION
Policy Name: Accessibility
Approved by: Chief Executive Officer
Effective Date: November 1, 2023
Next Review Date: November 1, 2026

POLICY

Whenever possible, FIREFLY is committed to providing services that are accessible to all persons who wish to use the Agency’s services, resources, and facilities.

DEFINITIONS

“Barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, attitudinal barrier and other supports that facilitate effective communication.

“Disability” means:

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

“Emotional Support or Therapy Animal” means an animal that provides its owner with companionship and emotional support. These animals do not have training for specific tasks and do not qualify as Service Animals under the AODA and its regulations.

“Guide Dog” means a dog trained for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations found in the Blind Person’s Rights Act, 1990.

“Service Animal” is a working animal that has been trained to assist and perform tasks for persons with disabilities. Under the legislative authority, an animal is considered to be a Service Animal if:

- a. the animal is required by a person with a disability for assistance; or
- b. the person has documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability;
 - i. A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
 - ii. A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
 - iii. A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
 - iv. A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
 - v. A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
 - vi. A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
 - vii. A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
 - viii. A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

Examples of the kinds of tasks performed by Service Animals include but are not limited to; guiding persons with vision impairments, alerting individuals with hearing impairments to sounds or dangers, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving items, alerting them to seizures or low blood sugar, opening/closing doors etc.

Guiding Principles

1. FIREFLY is responsive to the needs of its users.
2. Services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
3. FIREFLY strives to provide services for all people to the greatest extent possible, within the Agency’s limitations to do so.
4. All service locations are accessible by persons with disabilities.
5. When communicating with a person with a disability, the Agency staff will do so in a manner that takes into account the person’s disability.

Temporary Service Disruptions

The Agency will make reasonable efforts to provide notice of planned or unplanned disruption of service to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative service, if any, that may be available.

Assistive Devices

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of accessing or using FIREFLY services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the Agency has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or to the health and safety of others on the premises. In these situations, the Agency may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist them to use the services.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that any assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Service Animals and Guide Dogs

Persons with a disability may enter the FIREFLY premises accompanied by a service animal if the animal is not otherwise excluded by law.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that the service animal or guide dog is kept in control at all times.

Where it is not readily apparent that the animal is in service to an individual, FIREFLY may request that the individual provide acceptable documentation from one of the parties listed in the Definitions section of this Policy. The documentation must confirm that the individual requires a Service Animal for reasons related to their disability or functional limitation and must contain the following information:

- a. Name and credentials of the professional or evaluator;
- b. Description of the current relevant functional limitations of the individual;
- c. Specific tasks the Guide Dog or Service Animal will perform to meet the accommodation needs of the individual or assist with the functional limitations.

Note: an individual is not required to disclose their disability and will only be asked to provide information that is necessary to verify that the animal is required to accompany them due to a disability-related need.

If an individual is accompanied by more than one (1) animal, separate documentation will be requested to be provided for each animal.

It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure:

- a. The animal is accompanied by them at all times.
- b. The animal is properly trained in their specific task(s) to assist the individual with their functional limitations.
- c. The animal is under their care and control and compliant with any commands made to them.
- d. The animal is housetrained and properly groomed.
- e. The animal's needs are met (food, water, hygiene).
- f. Any waste left by the animal is cleaned up immediately.
- g. The animal is leashed/harnessed/muzzled/contained as required.

Note: The animal must not be prevented from performing its function; for example, if the service animal must retrieve objects as part of its role, then the animal cannot be muzzled or contained.

It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that the animal is properly trained and under their care and control at all times. Any aggressive behaviour (i.e. barking, growling) exhibited by an animal will not be tolerated and should the animal display any of these behaviours the individual may be asked to remove the animal to another location or from the premises entirely. If any adverse events such as bites, scratches or other injurious behaviour occur the individual will be required to remove the animal from the area immediately.

If there is a conflict between an individual accessing FIREFLY services or facilities, with a medical condition or need that is impacted by the presence of a Service Animal, FIREFLY will work with both the individual and the person accompanied by the animal to ensure fair and equitable access for all parties involved. If a Service Animal prevents an employee from providing service (for example because of an allergy or phobia), the employee will arrange to have another staff member assist the individual.

Therapy and Emotional Support Animals

As per the Definitions section of this Policy, Emotional Support or Therapy Animals are animals that provide their owner with companionship and emotional support. These animals do not qualify as Service Animals under the AODA and its regulations and therefore are not permitted in FIREFLY facilities except:

- a. where acceptable documentation can be provided in accordance with the Service Animal documentation requirements.
- b. The animal is a Therapy Dog or Therapy Cat and meets the requirements as laid out in Policy ADM 35 – Therapy Dogs/Cats at FIREFLY.

Support Persons

A person with a disability may use the services of a support person to access and/or use the

services of FIREFLY.

Due to the confidential nature of the services provided by FIREFLY, the user may be requested to provide authorization for the release of confidential information to the support person, if deemed necessary.

Training

FIREFLY will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies, (i.e. staff, students, etc.) receive training as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Accessibility training is part of the Agency's orientation process. A record of the training will be kept by Human Resources.

Related Policies

ADM 35 – Therapy Dogs/Cats at FIREFLY

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