

<b>STATEMENT of POLICY and PROCEDURE</b>			
Manual:	Accessibility Standards	SPP No.	<b>AS 2.02</b>
Section:	Customer Service	Issued/re-issued:	Dec. 4, 2017
Subject:	<b>Communicating with people with disabilities</b>	Effective:	January 1, 2012
Issue to:	All Employees and Customers of First Reference Inc.	Page:	1 of 8
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## **1 POLICY**

- 1.01 First Reference is committed to communicating with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability and in keeping with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.
- 1.02 This policy provides guidance in considering how to improve communication with people with a disability through general communications, involvement of people with a disability in consultation, or in meetings, during a transaction and producing business documents in accessible formats.
- 1.03 This policy applies to all First Reference Inc's communications with the public, including in relation to consultation, and the development of pamphlets, flyers, letters, memos, emails, websites, brochures, invoices, papers and reports, among others, when it is reasonable and feasible to do so.
- 1.04 All oral and written communication should seek to be inclusive of and positive toward people with disabilities.

## **2 PURPOSE**

- 2.01 The purpose of this Statement of Policy and Procedure is to ensure that persons with disabilities have communication access that is effective as that provided to persons without disabilities. To be equally effective, an aid, benefit or service need not produce the identical result or level of achievement for disabled and non-disabled persons; it must afford the person to whom it is provided equal opportunity to achieve equal results, gain equal benefit and reach the same level of achievement. While communicating with a person with a disability, First Reference will take into account the person's disability.

## **3 SCOPE**

- 3.01 This policy applies to all employees and all facilities of First Reference Inc in Ontario.

## **4 RESPONSIBILITY**

- 4.01 It is the responsibility of managers, immediate supervisors and/or department

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heads to ensure that all employees follow the guidelines set out in this policy.

- 4.02 Each manager, immediate supervisor and/or department head is responsible to ensure all employees are trained under Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and this policy.

## 5 DEFINITIONS

None

## 6 REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

**Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005  
Integrated Accessibility Standards, ON. Reg. 191/11**

## 7 PROCEDURES

- 7.01 **Terminology:** the terminology we use can influence the way we see people and may unintentionally create a negative perception. The words we use can be very powerful. However unintentional, many words used to describe the nature of a disability can be demeaning and disrespectful. Please refer to the terminology chart to assist you in making your communication with or without people with disabilities more successful.
- 7.02 The words “disability” and “disabled” are more appropriate than “handicap” or “handicapped.”
- 7.03 Remember to put people first. It is preferable to say “person with a disability” instead of “disabled person.”
- 7.04 **Considering an individual’s disability in communication:** A key aspect of communication is taking into consideration the specific needs of an individual. Employees may need to utilize a variety of different techniques to best interact with a person with a disability in order to effectively provide goods and services to that individual.

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7.05 To assist people with disabilities access our services, employees should utilize the following general guidelines:

- a) Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration you offer everyone else.
- b) If you're not sure what to do, ask the individual, "May I help you?"
- c) Ask before you offer to help; don't just jump in. People often have their own way of doing things. Individuals with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- d) If you don't know someone, or if you are unfamiliar with the disability, it's better to wait until the individual describes his or her situation to you, rather than to make your own assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.
- e) Some disabilities are not visible. Take the time to get to know the individual's needs.
- f) Speak normally, clearly and directly. Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their interpreter or someone who is with them.
- g) Be patient; give the individual time to explain him or herself.
- h) Utilize the materials provided in the Overview of the policy manual to assist you with individual/specific situations, techniques, best practices and alternative communication methods to assist with the provision of goods and services based on the needs of the individual.

7.06 First Reference Inc does not currently have a TTY (teletypewriter) number.

7.07 We will give careful consideration to whether consultations, meetings, and transaction methods are inclusive of people with disabilities.

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- 7.08 When organizing meetings, we will make attempts to use facilities that cater to people with disability; e.g., ramps, handrails and lifts for people with mobility disabilities, inductive loop or radio systems to assist people with hearing disabilities. We will consider whether it is appropriate to hire an interpreter to assist in presentations at meetings. When holding public events offsite, and such services are available, they will be advertised as part of the information about the location of the meeting.
- 7.09 When organizing consultation meetings, First Reference will consider the environment available for any person with a disability attending the meeting; e.g., physical access to the building and meeting room, access to toilets, lighting in the room, external noise.
- 7.10 When preparing material intended to be distributed to the public to promote our goods and services, we will consider the format of the material and its accessibility to the target audience. In particular, we will consider whether alternative formats are required in order to facilitate access by a person with a disability.
- 7.11 First Reference will avoid excessive cost by carefully targeting the audience. Options for making accessible formats available may include:
- a) Distributing standard formats, and developing and providing alternative formats only upon request.
  - b) Providing business communication and documents in an accessible format, and supplementary documents upon request.
  - c) Advertising the availability of certain alternative formats. Where only standard formats are distributed, consideration should be given to advertising the availability of alternative formats upon request. Customer service staff will be made aware of the availability of alternative formats, and particular formats First Reference Inc is willing to provide upon request.

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7.12 First Reference will consider one or more of the following formats may be appropriate for development to improve accessibility:

- a) Internet: The Internet is a highly suitable medium for many people with hearing, vision, mobility and manipulatory impairments. To make the document or material most compatible to software that assists people with a disability, it should be posted on the Internet in HTML or ASCII format.
- b) CD or DVD: Providing information in a portable electronic format may be suitable for people with hearing, vision, mobility and/or manipulatory impairments. The document or material should be converted to ASCII format to make it most compatible with accessibility computer software.
- c) Audio cassette, digital audio file, podcast: Audio is used by a wide range of people although it is often targeted to people with vision impairment. These formats are relatively easy and cost-effective to produce and post and may be considered by First Reference in certain circumstances.
- d) Braille: This format is used by people with severe vision impairment who have learned the Braille alphabet. First Reference may provide a text file of documents and material to the person upon request, to convert the document or material in braille.
- e) Large and illustrated print: Large print is mainly targeted to those with low vision. It refers to any printed matter that uses a font that is 14 point or larger. Illustrated print is designed to provide a quick visual outline of a message. It is often preferred by people with an intellectual disability, people with some visual impairment and can also assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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- f) Easy English: This format is useful if specifically providing information to people with intellectual disabilities or limited reading skills. The information is summarized and expressed in short sentences that each convey a single idea or concept.
- g) Provide information about events and services in a variety of media (for example, publicize telephone and fax numbers, provide print information and radio notices).
- h) Provide sufficient notice of events to ensure there is time to arrange transport or other requirements.

7.13 We will provide targeted information for people with disabilities, their families, support person and service providers for no additional charge.

7.14 We will ensure all facilities have clear signs that include internationally recognized symbols and indicators for persons with disabilities.

7.15 The assessment of the current policy is an ongoing process and must be scheduled when needed.

7.16 This policy will be reviewed at least annually or when there are changes to the law or to procedures, or when an incident or breach occurs.

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