

	Section: 01 Administration	Pages: 4	Policy Number: 01-24
	Subject: Accessibility Policy		

POLICY:

Banyan is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration, and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. This will be achieved by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and by meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) and Ontario’s accessibility laws.

Banyan also is committed to meeting it’s current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

Banyan understands that obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limits its obligations under the Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to fulfill requirements set out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) (2005), regulation 429/07 (Accessibility Standards for Customer Service) and regulation 191/11 (Integrated Accessibility Standards) to establish a policy for Banyan that governs the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities, and that demonstrates Banyan’s commitment to removing and preventing barriers so that people with disabilities can fully participate in the community.

A. DEFINITIONS:

- **Assistive Devices:** Any auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).
- **Barrier:** as defined by the AODA, means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his/her disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communication barrier, attitudinal barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.
- **Disabilities:** The same as definition of disability found in the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- **Persons with Disabilities:** Individuals that are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- **Service Animals:** Any animal trained to provide assistance to a person with disability. They are individually trained to assist people with disabilities in the activities of normal daily living, to enhance quality of life, and mitigate their disabilities. A service animal is afforded access to all places the public is invited when accompanying their human partner, except where excluded by law Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. If it is not clear if an animal is a service animal, staff may ask for documentation from a Regulated Health Care professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons related to their disability.

- **Support Persons:** Any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend that accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs or with access to services.

B. PROCEDURES:

1. Providing Goods and Services Banyan provides goods and services in the following ways to persons with disabilities

2.1. Assistive Devices

- Banyan is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. Banyan will ensure that staff realize that persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices to access goods and services.

2.2. Service Animals

- Banyan is committed to welcoming people with disabilities and their service animals on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties and will permit the person to keep the service animal with them. Banyan will also ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies have been trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.
- Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the person(s) with disabilities, and other reasonable arrangements to provide services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.
- When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting, or other harmful behavior) an employee may ask the person(s) with disability to remove the animal from the area or discontinue / refuse access to services. In this event, other reasonable arrangements to provide services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.

2.3. Support Persons

- Banyan is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Banyan's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on Banyan premises.
- A fee will not be charged in relation to a support person's presence on Banyan premises.

2.4. Notice of Temporary Disruption

- In the event of planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for clients with disabilities (i.e. an entrance way that is under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, or technology that is temporarily unavailable), Banyan will notify clients promptly.
- Notice shall be provided as soon as possible through local media, on the website, and posted at all public entrances of our premises.
- This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

3. Information and Communication

- #### **3.1.** Banyan will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

- 3.2. Staff will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support.
- 3.3. When asked Banyan will provide documents about our organization and services, including public safety information, in an accessible format or with communication support. This information will be provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost
- 3.4. If the organization determines that the information or communication is unconvertable, the person requesting the information will be advised the reason why the information cannot be converted and provided with a written summary of the unconvertable information or communication.
- 3.5. We notify the public and clients about the accessibility of our communication and information on the organization's website.
- 3.6. Accessible Websites and Web Content: Banyan will ensure that its Internet websites, including web content, conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, at Level AA except where this is impracticable.

4. Feedback Process

- 4.1. Feedback regarding the way Banyan provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by email, on the Website Contact page or verbally to:
Banyan Community Services
688 Queensdale Ave. East, Suite 2B
Hamilton, ON L8V 1M1
Phone: 905-545-0133
www.banyancommunityservices
email: HRAdmin@banyancs.org
- 4.2. Other accessible formats and communication supports can be arranged upon request.
- 4.3. The Director/designate in charge of Human Resources shall respond either in writing, in person, by e-mail or by telephone, within 10 business days.

5. Training Requirements

- 5.1. Banyan will provide training on AODA to all employees, students volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.
- 5.2. Training must include a review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the Customer Service Regulation and instruction about the following matters:
 - How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.
 - How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.
 - What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.
- 5.3. Training will be provided at orientation.
- 5.4. Ongoing training on changes to policies, procedures, and new equipment shall be provided.
- 5.5. The method and amount of training shall be geared to the employee's role in terms of accessibility.

6. Notice of Availability of Accessible Customer Service Documents

- 6.1. This policy and any other document related to the delivery of services shall be made available, upon request, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.
- 6.2. Notwithstanding the above, this policy will be made available on the Organization's website.

- 6.3. Banyan will provide documents related to accessible customer service in an accessible format or with communication support, on request.
- 6.4. Staff will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support.
- 6.5. Banyan will provide the accessible format in a timely manner and, at no additional cost.

7. Employment

- 7.1. Banyan is committed to fair and accessible employment practices and:
- Communicates the availability of accommodation to all internal and external applicants living with disabilities.
 - Ensures all internal and external job postings state the availability of accommodation for applicants living with a disability.
 - Includes a written offer of accommodation in all offers of employment.
 - Actively reviews and updates interview questions to remove barriers.
 - Provides every employee returning to work from a leave of absence where they were ill/injured with an accommodation/return to work meeting.
 - Where necessary, develops Individual Employee Emergency Response Plans. Refer to Site specific Emergency Evacuation Plans.
- 7.2. Banyan’s performance management and talent management takes into account the accessibility needs of all employees

8. Modifications to this or other policies

8.1. Banyan is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. Banyan will consider the modification or removal of any policies that do not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities on an ongoing basis.

C. REFERENCE SOURCES:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 - O Regulation 429-07

D. CROSS REFERENCES:

- 01-24-1 Banyan Community Services Accessibility Plan

E. REVIEW DATE: This policy is to be reviewed every 3 years.

Approved By:	Senior Management Team
Effective Date:	September 2015
Revised Date:	August 2018, July 2021, November 2023
Reviewed Date:	