

## Accessibility Client Service Policy

### **Intent**

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

All services provided by **George Brown Law** shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

### **Scope**

- This policy applies to the provision of series at all offices operated under the name of **George Brown Law**.
- This policy applies to all partners, employees, consultants, students and coop placements who deal with clients, potential clients or third parties on the behalf of **George Brown Law**, including when services occur off premises of **George Brown Law** such as: meetings with clients, discoveries, attendance at court or tribunal, marketing/sponsorship functions, Board meetings, etc.
- The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs, service animals and service dogs only applies to the provision of services that take place at the offices operated by **George Brown Law**.

### **Definitions**

Assistive Device – is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that clients bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or personal oxygen tank or other equipment that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing or reading.

Disability – the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005*, and other *Ontario Human Rights* code, refers to:

- 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 of speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- A condition of mental impairment of a developmental disability;

- A learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Guide Dog – is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in *Ontario Regulation 58* under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

Service Animal – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if;

- It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Service Dog – as reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562* a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- It is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability; or
- If the person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

Support Person – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to services.

## **General Principles**

In accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, this policy addresses the following:

1. The Provision of Services to Persons with Disabilities;
2. The Use of Assistive Devices;
3. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals, and Service Dogs;
4. The Use of Support Persons;
5. Client Feedback;
6. Training; and
7. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

### **1. The Provision of Services to Persons with Disabilities**

**George Brown Law** will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by;

- Ensuring that all clients receive the same value and quality;
- Allowing clients with disabilities to do things in their own ways, and at their own pace with accessing services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that clients with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- Taking into account individual needs when providing services; and
- Communicating in a way that takes into account the client's disability.

### **2. Assistive Devices**

Client's own assistive device(s):

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required with accessing services provided by **George Brown Law**.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of services. For example, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the client.

### **3. Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs**

A client with a disability that is accompanied by a guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to the office areas that are open to other clients.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability, **George Brown Law** may request verification from the client. Verification may include:

- A letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- A valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
- A certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

### **4. Support Persons**

If a client with a disability is accompanied by a support person, **George Brown Law** will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the offices together and that the client is not prevented from having access to the support person.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the client, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.

### **5. Feedback Process**

**George Brown Law** shall provide the client the opportunity to provide feedback on the services provided to the client with disabilities. Feedback will be accepted in written or verbal forms. Clients should direct feedback to **George Brown, at the head office of George Brown Law, 60 River Garden Private, Ottawa, Ontario, K1V 1M8.**

Clients that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

### **6. Training**

Training will be available to all members of the firm with respect to interaction with clients with disabilities.

### **7. Notice of Availability and Format of Documents**

**George Brown Law** shall make available to clients, if requested a copy of our policy related to Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. A copy will also be posted to our website. This policy will be reviewed as required in the event of legislative changes.