

## **Accessible Customer Service – Support Persons**

### **1.0 Purpose**

To ensure that people with disabilities seeking/using goods and services provided by Cornerstone continue to have the assistance of, or have access to their support person.

### **2.0 Definitions**

For the purpose of this policy, a support person is defined as another person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help him or her with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

### **3.0 Policy**

Cornerstone is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. People with disabilities have the right to have access to their support person while accessing goods and services of Cornerstone.

If confidential information is going to be discussed, the person with the disability shall be asked if they prefer their support person to remain present. If the support person is present when confidential information is to be disclosed, signed consent must be received from the person with the disability. A signed confidentiality agreement shall also be obtained from the support person.

If Cornerstone charges an admission fee in connection with a support person's presence at an event or function or for a service, Cornerstone shall post a notice, providing information in advance about the amount, if any, that is payable by the support person accompanying a person with a disability.

Cornerstone may request that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises. This will only occur after consultation with the person with a disability and when it is the only means to allow the person with a disability to access Cornerstone's goods or services. The following criteria shall be used in consulting with the tenant/customer:

- i) When the risk is greater than the risk associated with other tenants/customers;
- ii) When there is a clear and significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or others;
- iii) When the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means;
- iv) When the assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the nature and severity of the potential harm, the duration of the risk, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur and how imminent the potential risk is;

- v) When the assessment of risk is based on the person's actual characteristics, not on perceived risk that is based on generalizations, misconceptions or fears about a disability.

#### **4.0 Responsibilities**

Board of Directors/Property Manager/Other Designated Manager will ensure all staff, contractors, volunteers and others dealing with the public (tenants, applicants, visitors or other members of the public):

- are trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person;
- know when it is appropriate to request signed consent verifying that a support person can be present during the discussion of confidential information;
- know when it is appropriate to request a signed confidentiality agreement from a support person verifying that the information discussed with the person with a disability will not be communicated or shared.
- know if an admission fee will be charged in connection with a support person's presence at an event, function or for a service and where, when and how to post notice of fees for support person attendance.
- know the process for circumstances when it may be necessary to discuss with the tenant the need for a support person to accompany a person with a disability when a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others.

#### **5.0 Procedure and Practices**

Staff, volunteers and third party contractors will allow individuals with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on parts of the premises open to the public or third parties.

- Staff, volunteers and third party contractors will ensure a person with a disability is not prevented from having access to their support person while on the parts of the premises open to the public or third parties.
- Unless otherwise requested by a person with a disability, staff, volunteers and third party contractors will permit the support person to remain with the person with a disability throughout the entire duration when the individual is obtaining, using, or receiving services.
- A person with a disability might not introduce his or her support person. Staff shall take the lead and ask "Is this your support person or interpreter?". Staff shall then speak directly to the person with the disability, not the support person.
- Staff, volunteers and third party contractors will use appropriate communication methods when a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person including speaking and looking directly at the person with a disability, even if a message may be coming from a support person.

- If a person with a disability attends a meeting, event or attempts to access service with a support person in attendance, staff, volunteers and third party contractors will make a reasonable effort to accommodate both the person with a disability and the support person within the available space.
- When staff, volunteers and third party contractors discuss confidential information with a person who is accompanied by a support person, the person with a disability will be asked whether the support person may remain present, prior to discussing any confidential information. If the person with the disability chooses not to have the support person present, staff will offer a close and comfortable location where the support person can wait.
- If the person with the disability chooses to have the support person present during the discussion or disclosure of confidential or personal information, staff volunteers and third party contractors will obtain a signed consent form. The consent form will acknowledge the person's agreement to have a support person present while confidential information is being discussed. The signed consent form will be maintained in the tenant/applicant file.
- Signed consent from the tenant/applicant with a disability will be obtained for each separate meeting where confidential information is to be discussed and a support person is present, as it is recognized that circumstances may change between meetings and based on the nature of the proposed discussion.
- If the support person is present when confidential information is to be disclosed, a signed confidentiality agreement shall be obtained from the support person. This confidentiality agreement shall be maintained within the tenant/applicant file. For each support person, only one signed confidentiality agreement is required.
- Staff, volunteers and third party contractors responsible for organizing events, functions or services are responsible for providing notice, in advance of the event or function, if there is an admission fee and the amount of the fee payable by the support person accompanying a person with a disability. This information could be provided on posters, in brochures, included on telephone recordings, etc. or other means used for advertising the event or function.