Support Persons for Persons with Disabilities Policy

Policy Statement:
The City of Hamilton welcomes and is committed to ensuring equitable access to all goods, services, programs and opportunities for persons with disabilities, who are accompanied by support persons. There may be a need to require a person with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with disability or the health and safety of others on the premise.

Definitions:
A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability, to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods, services, programs and opportunities.

Responsibility:
It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants, to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

Procedures:

1. Both the person with a disability and their support person will be provided with access to all public areas, in a respectful manner.

2. There will be no fees charged for support persons for any City of Hamilton services, programs and opportunities, while supporting a person with a disability.

    2.1 In all circumstances, where admission or entry fees are charged, the fees for entry of the support person will be waived.

    This policy regarding waived fees for support persons must be documented and communicated to all staff who routinely collect and/or supervise the collection of such fees from the public.

2.2   Persons with disabilities will be informed of the waived fee, in accessible formats, including but not limited to the website, large print, Braille, information desks and, where applicable, posted on entrance doors.

2.3   HSR currently administers a program to assess and prepare identification cards, for persons with disabilities, who use support persons. These cards are currently being used on all HSR buses.

3.   The person with a disability may choose not to introduce the support person.

4.   Where confidentiality is important, because of the sensitivity of information discussed, staff may, in appropriate circumstances, require the support person to sign a confidentiality agreement. Each department shall develop a confidentiality agreement that is suitable to the services that they provide and the needs of their staff, clients and patrons.

5.   Once the staff member has determined the individual to whom they are providing the service (which individual is the person with a disability), the staff member must address the person with the disability directly, rather than the support person, unless directed otherwise by the person with the disability.

6.   Staff may request a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if, after consulting with the person with a disability and considering the available evidence, determines that,

     6.1   a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises; and

     6.2   there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and the health or safety of others on the premises.

7.   Staff will be trained to understand respectful ways to interact with a person with a disability, who is accompanied by a support person. It would be disrespectful to ask for written confirmation stating that the individual is a support person or to ask for an explanation about the type of support being provided.