




WorldStrides[®]
Educational Travel & Experiences

Customer Accessibility Policy





WorldStrides Canada Customer Accessibility Policy

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1. Introduction

WorldStrides Canada 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. We will do so by removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting our accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's accessibility laws.

WorldStrides Canada is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

WorldStrides Canada understands that obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

WorldStrides Canada is committed to excellence in serving and providing goods or services to all customers including people with disabilities.

Our accessible customer service policy is consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

2. Our Vision, Mission, and Values

WorldStrides' vision is rooted in education and personal growth. We aim to be the leader in experiential learning for students of all ages throughout their lifetime learning journey.

Our mission is as follows:

- * We enable students to see beyond the classroom and to see the world—and themselves—in new ways.
- * We help them grow as people...by developing independence, leadership, problem-solving skills, worldliness, and maturity.
- * We help them grow as citizens...by building compassion, understanding, connections and perspectives that transcend boundaries and borders.

Our core values are:

- * Act as one team with integrity, respect, transparency, and inclusion.
- * Do the right thing to deliver exceptional results to every customer.
- * Build education and learning into everything we do.
- * Care for our people and communities.

3. Training for Staff

WorldStrides Canada conducts customer service training for all employees who provide services, and who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices, and procedures.

We are committed to training all employees in accessible customer service, as well as other Ontario accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

In addition, we will train:

- a) All persons who participate in developing the organization's policies; and
- b) All other persons who provide goods or services on behalf of the organization.

Training of our employees on accessibility relates to their specific roles.

Training includes:

- * The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards.
- * Our policies related to the Customer Service Standards.
- * How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- * How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- * How to use the equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
- * What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing WorldStrides Canada's goods and services.

We train every person as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect to any changes to the policies.

4. Assistive Devices and Transportation

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our goods or services.

In cases where the assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern or may not be permitted for other reasons, other measures will be used to ensure the person with a disability can access our goods or services.

With respect to specific devices and modes of transportation:

Wheelchairs: Persons using wheelchairs are welcomed on WorldStrides Canada tours. We request that participants let us know well in advance of their departure so the company can accommodate their needs. Participants should know that WorldStrides Canada tours are fast-paced and physically demanding, and that tour buses are not necessarily wheelchair accessible overseas. For North American tours, a limited number of buses offer wheelchair accessibility.

In North America, most hotels and venues are wheelchair accessible. That is not always the case overseas, though, where some hotels are often without elevators. Participants and/or their Program Leaders should contact WorldStrides Canada to discuss their specific requirements so that we may liaise in the effort to meet those needs. WorldStrides Canada cannot provide wheelchairs, therefore participants should bring their own. The wheelchair must be collapsible for local transportation overseas, and in North America, with the exception of wheelchair accessible buses in North America.

The following information will be helpful for the Operations Team and Tour Director to know pre-tour:

- * The wheelchair's size and ability to fold.
- * Will there be a chaperone dedicated to assisting the participant?
- * Is the participant bound to the wheelchair, or can they walk short distances to board the bus, etc?

Cruises and Ferries: Participants on WorldStrides Canada tours should note that, generally speaking, the vessels that are used on tours are not wheelchair friendly. There are no special facilities in the cabins or bathrooms overseas. In North America, certain cruises are wheelchair accessible but may have restrictions on allowing electric wheelchairs on board due to safety concerns. Specific questions about the accessibility of the ships should be directed to WorldStrides Canada using the contact information at the end of this document.

Public Transportation: WorldStrides Canada's overseas and certain North American tours rely heavily on public transportation in major cities. Most public service stations have no facilities for wheelchairs, and buses may not be accessible in all locations overseas. In North America, most stations are wheelchair accessible. Participants should therefore be prepared to take taxis when necessary, at their own costs.

Buses: A participant with physical disabilities might need more than one seat on the bus. This information should be shared with WorldStrides Canada well in advance of the tour so that proper arrangements can be made. Additionally, the steps of many coaches are often too narrow for assisting participants into the coach. Best efforts will be made by WorldStrides Canada in such cases.

Flights: Airlines have varying regulations and restrictions regarding accessibility. Often the airline will ask for the size/weight of the participant in order to determine their need for a second seat. If a second seat is required, the participant is responsible for any associated costs. It is the responsibility of the participant to contact the airline directly 48 hours prior to departure to address any special needs.

When WorldStrides Canada staff members are made aware of any participant with disabilities who may be interested in travelling on a tour, the participant will be sent a letter outlining some of the possible restrictions and challenges with respect to accessibility. Many such restrictions are beyond WorldStrides Canada's control, and it is therefore important that Program Leaders (eg. those teachers who are responsible for a group, including participants with disabilities) and participants understand these conditions in advance of travelling with us. Assistive device-related costs will be passed on to the participant.

5. Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

Persons with disabilities may bring their service animal to WorldStrides Canada's offices that are open to the public or other third parties. WorldStrides Canada will ensure that all staff, volunteers, and third parties dealing with the public are trained in how to interact with persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

On rare occasions, a manager may determine that a service animal cannot enter an area of the premises consistent with other laws. In these instances, managers will suggest appropriate alternatives and provide assistance.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask for documentation (template, letter, or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person (e.g., sign language interpreters, attendants) will be allowed to enter WorldStrides Canada's offices that are open to the public or other third parties with their support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises.

When support persons are required to assist persons with disabilities on WorldStrides Canada tours, the participants are responsible for all related expenses and fees. WorldStrides Canada will make best efforts to minimize such expenses where possible.

6. Communication

WorldStrides Canada will communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will work with persons with disabilities to determine what method of communication is best for them. Upon request, we can provide materials, documentation, and communication that supports their needs and allows them the same/equal access to our goods and services. Staff will communicate in a means that enables persons with disabilities to communicate effectively for purposes of using, receiving, and requesting WorldStrides Canada goods and services.

WorldStrides Canada will train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.

This training includes but is not limited to the use of assistive devices and/or the use of varied communication methods: verbal, non-verbal, written, auditory, visual, etc.

7. Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities, WorldStrides Canada will notify customers promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

8. Feedback Process

The ultimate goal of this policy is to meet service-delivery expectations while striving to provide equal access and opportunity to all, regardless of ability. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Staff will let customers know what methods are available for giving feedback. If a method is not suitable, customers may request an alternative method. Privacy will be respected, and all feedback will be reviewed for possible action that can be taken to improve our policy. Feedback received from customers will be directed to and reviewed by a WorldStrides Canada's Human Resources Manager.

Where possible, complaints will be addressed immediately. However, some complaints may require more effort to address and must be reviewed for action, possibly at a higher level. In accordance with WorldStrides Canada's service level agreement, customers can expect an acknowledgement of verbal/telephone feedback within two business days, or a response to a mailed/emailed complaint within fifteen business days of the receipt of the complaint. If a mailed/emailed complaint cannot be responded to within 15 business days, an interim acknowledgement must be sent to the customer. The acknowledgement must indicate when the matter will be addressed and when the customer will be notified, and staff will follow up with any required action within the timeframe noted in the acknowledgement. Feedback/response will endeavour to be in a format that is accessible to the complainant. Please refer to Section 10 for information about how to best get in touch with us.

9. Modifications to This or Other Policies

WorldStrides Canada and our staff are committed to ensuring that our customer service policies, practices, and procedures respect and promote the dignity and independence of all persons with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on persons with disabilities.

WorldStrides Canada will make best efforts to review and modify any operational policy affecting customer service that does not respect and promote the dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity of persons with disabilities.

10. Questions About This Policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. This document is publicly obtainable, and accessible formats are available upon request. If anyone has a question about the policy, if the purpose of this policy is not understood, or to receive a copy of this policy, please contact:

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