

Accessibility Plan and Policies for BLR, LLP

This 2014-21 accessibility plan outlines the policies and actions that are in place to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

BLR, LLP has documented its policies, practices and procedures with respect to Accessibility and, upon request, shall give a copy of a document to any person.

POLICY

Statement of Commitment

BLR, LLP is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. When communicating with a disabled person we shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

We believe in integration and equal opportunity.

We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

BLR, LLP is committed to ensuring that its customer service accessibility guidelines, policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles

- **Dignity**
Service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
- **Independence**
Service is provided in a way that allows a person with a disability to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- **Integration**
Service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other clients, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access products and services.
- **Equal Opportunity**
Service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access BLR LLP's services in a way that is equal to that given to other clients.

BLR, LLP is committed to

- providing clients with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services
 - allowing clients with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a equitable way as other customers, and
 - providing a professional environment that promotes barrier-free access for all clients as laid out by applicable legislation.
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Communication

BLR, LLP will communicate in a manner that maintains an individual's dignity and respect to include

- take a person's disability into account
- be prepared to use different communication modes (e.g. using a pen & paper versus speaking aloud) when interacting with the customer
- use appropriate language (e.g. use "persons with disabilities" versus "handicapped")
- plan for the client session to ensure the appropriate accessibility is provided
- assist clients with wheelchairs, scooters, and such equipment by opening doors or removing obstacles such as chairs.

Service Disruptions

BLR, LLP will provide clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in all the facilities or services used by clients. Notices will include

- information about the reason for the disruption
- the anticipated duration of the disruption
- a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Notices will be placed at all public entrances, service counters located on the premises, and if appropriate, BLR, LLP websites and outgoing telephone messages.

We also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

Assistive Devices

BLR, LLP is committed to serving clients with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from its products and services.

BLR, LLP permits assistive devices on premises, and will not interfere with assistive devices without permission of the owner or user. Typical devices that clients may use include

- communication devices
- teletypewriters
- voice amplifiers
- voice output communication aids
- writing aids, and/or
- voice prostheses

Format of Documents

BLR, LLP will provide documentation or the information contained in a document in a format that takes into account a person's disability.

BLR, LLP and the person with the disability may agree upon the format to be used.

Service Animals & Support Persons

Persons with a disability who are accompanied by a guide dog/service animal may access all BLR, LLP premises that are normally accessible to clients. BLR, LLP will

- permit service animals on premises, and
- not interact with them without permission of the owner/handler.

Clients with a disability who are accompanied by a support person will have access to that support person while on BLR, LLP premises. BLR, LLP will

- permit support persons on premises
- allow support person, if requested by the client, to attend meetings
- request permission from client to discuss confidential account information in front of support person
- ensure the client and support person understands that the support person is there to accompany the client and therefore cannot direct or act for the client.

In this section,

- “guide dog” means a dog trained as a guide for a visually impaired person
- “service animal” means any animal that has been trained to assist people with disabilities.
- “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 or medical needs or with access to BLR, LLP services.

For the purposes of this section, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,

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

If you are called upon to assist an individual with a Guide Dog, here are some common principles:

- Some people who are legally blind have some sight, while others are totally blind.
- When meeting a visually impaired person; announce your presence, speak out, and then enter the area.
- Speak naturally and directly to the individual; do not shout.
- Don't be afraid to use words like "See," "Look," or "Blind."
- State the nature of the emergency; provide details to help the person to see and comprehend what is going on.
- Offer assistance but let the person explain what help is needed. Don't grab or attempt to guide them; ask first if they require assistance. Offer them your arm. The person will grasp your arm or shoulder lightly for guidance. As you walk, advise them of any obstacles. Be sure to mention approaching stairs, doorways, curbs and ramps, etc. in advance.
- If the person has a Guide Dog don't pet it unless the owner says it is OK to do so. A Guide Dog is NOT a pet. A service animal has been highly trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability.
- Do not give food or treats to the Guide Dog without the permission of the owner.
- Service animals come in all breeds and sizes. Most people are familiar with dogs that guide people. Many of the service dogs will be identified because they are wearing a special harness. Guide Dog owners are being encouraged to have written identification for their dogs.
- Plan to evacuate the Guide Dog with its owner. Do not separate them!
- Service animals may not be registered and may not have any ID, so trust its owner. However, if the animal is out of control or presents a threat to the individual or others, remove it from the site.
- Most community agencies instruct their shelter staff that, if there are any doubts as to the degree of a person's disability, wait until arrival at the destination and address the issue with the shelter supervisor in charge. The ADA and other managers may modify their "No Pet" policies to welcome persons who use service animals. A person who requires a service animal is not required to give you proof of a disability.

- When a dog is wearing its harness, it is on duty. In the event you are asked to take the dog while assisting the individual, hold the leash not the harness.
- Service animals will need to have access to dog food provided by the owner and clean water.
- A service animal must be in a harness or on a leash, but need not be muzzled.

Training of Staff (Partners, Employees and Contract Workers)

Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, volunteers and other staff members.

Where appropriate, BLR, LLP provides training to staff and contract workers whose duties involve interaction with the public or other third parties. Training includes

- the content of this document
- how to interact and communicate with person with various types of disabilities
- how to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- how to use equipment or devices available on BLR, LLP's premises or otherwise provided by BLR, LLP that may assist with the provision of services to clients with disabilities
- what to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provision of services.

Training will be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to this document and will be provided to appropriate staff and contract workers as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties.

Feedback

BLR, LLP is committed to serving clients in a way that is convenient to the client. To facilitate this BLR, LLP has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which it provides services to persons with disabilities.

The feedback process permits persons to provide their feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, or by delivering an electronic text by email or on diskette or otherwise.

The feedback process specifies the actions that BLR, LLP will take if a complaint is received.

Employment Standards

BLR, LLP is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

BLR, LLP will take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, BLR, LLP will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired.

- Noting on our website that we are an equal opportunity employer and the availability of accommodation for applicants in our recruitment processes
- BLR, LLP will notify applicants during recruitment process that accommodations for disable applicants are available upon request in relation to the materials and processes to be used.
- If accommodation is requested BLR, LLP will consult with the applicant on the applicant's accessibility needs due to disability
- BLR, LLP will notify successful applicants of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities
- BLR, LLP will notify employees whenever there is a change to existing accessibility policies

BLR, LLP will take the following steps to develop and put in place a process for developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees that have been absent due to a disability.

- Work with the employee to determine their needs and accommodate those needs to facilitate their return to work.

Design of Public Spaces

At BLR, LLP our public office space is designed to meet the Accessibility Standards when building or making major modifications to public spaces. Public spaces include:

- Reception area
- Meeting rooms
- Bathrooms

The building premises which BLR, LLP offers several parking spaces reserved for customers with disabilities.

Kiosks

BLR, LLP does not provide services and products via interactive electronic terminals and as such accessibility to such kiosks is not applicable.

PLAN

Information and communications

BLR, LLP is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. BLR, LLP will consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

By January 1,2016

BLR, LLP will take steps to ensure existing feedback processes are accessible to people with disabilities upon request.

BLR, LLP will take steps to ensure all staff are trained.

BLR, LLP will take steps to ensure all publicly available information is made accessible upon request.

By January 1,2017

BLR, LLP will take steps to develop employment standards on recruitment, information for employees and processes to accommodate employees.

File an Accessibility Compliance Report

By January 1,2018

Make new or redeveloped public spaces accessible.

By January 1,2020

File an Accessibility Compliance Report

By January 1,2023

File an Accessibility Compliance Report