



June 7, 2019

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Malcolm Bromley
General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Leisure Access Program & Frontline Staff Training**

Dear Commissioners,

In response to a Commissioner enquiry, the purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of the Leisure Access Program and the training provided to frontline staff responsible for administering it.

Program Overview

The Leisure Access Program is the result of the Park Board's [Economic Access Policy](#), which ensures that Vancouver residents have access to core programs and services provided by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, regardless of their ability to pay.

In 2015, the Leisure Access Program underwent a year-long review to simplify applications and reduce participation barriers. The review resulted in expanded eligibility options for the Benefits, Third Party Referral, and Self-Referral applications. Following are examples of the changes made under these application categories:

Benefits Application

- *Former Process:* Red Compass Bus Pass and the Income Assistance cheque stub were only accepted to receive Leisure Access
- *Current Process:* Guaranteed Income Supplement, Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters, and Income Assistance Confirmation of Assistance letter are now accepted to receive Leisure Access

Third Party Referral

- *Former Process:* Ministry of Social Development social workers and the Immigrant Services Society could refer individuals for Leisure Access
- *Current Process:* 85 agencies including Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver School Board can refer individuals for Leisure Access

Self-Referral

- *Former Process:* Minimum income of \$5000 was required;
Household income defined as all relatives living in one structure;
Before tax income of all individuals was applied to a low income threshold.
- *Current Process:* No minimum income required;
Adopted Statistics Canada definition of family:
 - Couple with or without dependents 17 and under
 - Single parent with dependents 17 and under
 - Individuals 18 and older with no dependents apply as individualsFamily combined after-tax income applied to low-income threshold.



In 2016, the Board approved [revisions to the Economic Access Policy](#) to support and align with the Leisure Access Program updates. The broadening of eligibility criteria resulted in an increase from 7969 applications at community centres in 2015, to 10,840 applications in 2018. As well, introducing streamlined administrative processes at the centralized Leisure Access office resulted in applications being processed in 2 weeks instead of 8 weeks, which was typical before 2015.

Frontline Training

In 2017, a further audit of frontline practices took place and recommendations for improvement in service and ease of access were made including:

- development and distribution of a Front Desk Guide was made available online and in print at each location, accompanied by specific staff training;
- frontline staff were directed to take the “customer’s word” and process passes immediately.

In 2019, frontline training will include the following:

- implementation of Non-violent Crisis Intervention (NVCI) training;
- understanding of trauma informed practices and Mental Health First Aid;
- roll-out of a training video produced in partnership with the City of Surrey and Canucks Autism Network on customer service practices for folks with Autism (supporting the related [Board motion approved on Nov 14/16](#)).

Improving the customer/patron experience at community centres remains a priority for the Recreation Leadership Team, with the recognition that staff training is a key factor for success.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Malcolm Bromley'.

Malcolm Bromley
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

dr/jl/pc/rm/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PB Recreation Leadership Team
PB Communications