

**TOWN OF  
AMHERSTBURG**



**POLICY NO.:**

**SOURCE:** Access to Affordable Recreation

**SECTION:** Recreation and Culture

**DATE ENACTED:** January 7, 2013

**DATE OF AMENDMENT:**

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**1. POLICY:**

The Town of Amherstburg recognizes and promotes the full participation of all Amherstburg residents in recreational programs and services regardless of financial circumstances. Programs and services will be planned, delivered and evaluated to ensure they are affordable, inclusive and responsive to need.

**2. OBJECTIVE:**

- 2.1 Provide guidelines for the development of introductory, universal and more affordable programs and services.
- 2.2 Establish a standardized procedure for administering financial assistance for recreational programs and services where a participant is not able to afford the user fees.
- 2.3 Establish criteria for the review and approval of requests for financial assistance for recreation programs and services and delegating such authority to staff.
- 2.4 Provide guidelines for the development of partnerships and agreements that provide affordable access to recreation for low income families.
- 2.5 Document the approaches the Town of Amherstburg will take to enable community organizations using municipal recreational facilities to respond effectively to requests for financial assistance.

**3. SCOPE:**

- 3.1 This policy extends to eligible programs and services directly delivered by the Department of Recreation & Culture.
- 3.2 This policy excludes contracted program agreements with individuals/organizations delivering programs in partnership or on behalf of the Town unless language related

to affordable access is incorporated into the Agreement. It also excludes programs and services where discounts and subsidies already exist (students/seniors).

#### **4. DEFINITIONS:**

- 4.1 Recreation Program - Activities of a recreation, sport, art or cultural nature that may be self-directed or instructional, providing skill development in a particular leisure pursuit. Programs may be introductory or specialty and are of an on-going nature. User fees are often charged to offset the costs associated with the provision of the activity.
- 4.2 Pay-As-You Go Activities - Recreational services available through the purchase of pay-as-you-go activities including but not limited to aquatics and skating.
- 4.3 Universal Programs - Activities and community events provided at no cost or minimal cost either directly by the Town or through partnerships/service agreements with an agency/program provider.
- 4.4 Financial Assistance - Refers to an approved reduction in user fees charged by the Department of Recreation & Culture for participation in a program or service.
- 4.5 Amherstburg Community Services - Amherstburg Community Services is a voluntary, non-profit charitable organization, registered with Canada Revenue Agency that helps find solutions to social, legal, health, governmental, and environmental problems by providing information or by referring inquires to the appropriate service available in the community.
- 4.6 Targeted Outreach Programs - Refers to specialized programs designed for a specific audience and/or geographic community in order to help engage residents or as a component of a broader community initiative.
- 4.7 User Fees – the cost of participating in a program or activity.

#### **5. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES:**

- 5.1 **Service Planning:** All programs and services will meet the community's need. Annual service planning will incorporate census data relevant to a changing and diversifying community. Information will assist staff in the development and delivery of programs and services, community development strategies and agency/funding partnerships.

Staff will evaluate the development and continuation of programs and services using the following criteria:

- historical use
- customer feedback

- awareness to identified populations' (low income, children, youth, seniors, inactive) needs
- strategic priorities
- affordability and market trends

5.2 A range of programs and services will be provided to the community directly by the Department of Recreation & Culture or through partnership agreements/contracted service agreements. Section 5.3 sets out the categories of programs and services common in most municipal recreation departments.

5.3 Recreation programs and services are categorized as follows:

- 5.3.1 Introductory programs
- 5.3.2 Recreational/pay-as-you-go programs
- 5.3.3 Specialty programs
- 5.3.4 Universal programs
- 5.3.5 Partnership programs
- 5.3.6 Targeted/outreach programs

5.4 Programs offered at a subsidized fee or at no cost to participate are traditionally recreational/drop-in pay-as-you-go, universal or in some cases targeted outreach programs.

5.5 The Town will directly deliver programs and seek out and maintain partnerships with community agencies to deliver partnership programs in order to retain and enhance universal recreational opportunities primarily for children, youth and families

## **6. USER FEES:**

6.1 Recreation programs and services will be priced according to a market rate analysis to help determine fees. User fees are intended to recover the direct operating costs of a program or service. Program fees may however be established below the cost recovery threshold where the program is deemed to provide significant community benefit.

## **7. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:**

7.1 The availability of financial assistance will be communicated to residents via the Department of Recreation and Culture's website, Activity Guide and the Town's website.

7.2 The process of obtaining financial assistance will be non-intrusive, eliminate stigma and respect a person's dignity and confidentiality. The Department of Recreation and Culture will work with Amherstburg Community Services (ACS) to identify potential financial assistance candidates.

- 7.3 Staff will discuss options with any individual experiencing difficulty paying the non-subsidized portion of the user fee. Options may include staggered payments and/or a referral to external agencies (e.g. Canadian Tire Jumpstart, Pathways to Potential).
- 7.4 Where discounts already apply, financial assistance may not be available. Requests will be assessed on a case by case basis.

## **8. PROCESS FOR PROGRAM INCLUSION**

- 8.1 Staff will determine “break even” and capacity levels for all recreation programming offered by the Department of Recreation and Culture. “Break even” levels are determined by calculating the total costs associated with the program (i.e. Instructor fees, equipment costs, and advertising costs) and dividing by the registration fee for the program.
- 8.2 The set-up of a program is based on numbers 48 hours prior to the first class of the program. Should the “break even” level not be reached, then the program is cancelled. Only programs reaching the “break even” level will run during the programming session.
- 8.3 When a program reaches or exceeds the “break even” level but doesn’t reach the capacity level 48 hours prior to the start of the program, staff will determine the number of spots available for financial assistance through ACS.
- 8.4 Staff will contact ACS and offer the vacant spots, free of charge, to be used to fill the program space and to allow residents who would not be able to afford to enrol the opportunity to take part in recreation programming. Determination of who is eligible for a vacant spot is based on Community Services’ requirements.

## **9. GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING UNIVERSAL AND PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMMING:**

- 9.1 The Department of Recreation & Culture will continually look to increase partners and research possible funding opportunities for the delivery of affordable recreation programming.
- 9.2 To support outside agencies and partnerships, the Department of Recreation and Culture may provide resources to assist in the delivery of recreation-based services and programs. Providing such support minimizes costs to the user and builds awareness of opportunities to the broader community.

9.3 Staff will monitor and report attendance at all recreational programs delivered directly which are pay-as-you-go and will request attendance statistics on a quarterly basis from any partner delivering recreation programs.

**10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION:**

10.1 The Department Recreation & Culture will undertake an evaluation of the Affordable Access to Recreation Policy within one year after it is fully implemented to assess its effectiveness and to identify amendments if required.

10.2 Any proposed substantive amendments will be submitted to Council for consideration and approval.

10.3 The Town will regularly monitor the effectiveness of the Policy.