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Toastmasters International
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Origin Date: February 17, 2006

POLICY ON MEMBERS WITH DISABILITIES

“No person shall be excluded from membership in a club because of ...physical or mental disability, so long as the individual, through his or her own effort, is able to participate in the program.” Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Art. III, Sec. 3.

Throughout the United States of America and other countries, various laws apply to facilities and organizations regarding their responsibilities, if any, to provide wheelchair access and other measures to support the participation of members and others with disabilities. In some situations, the laws do not apply because no “public accommodation” is involved.

It is the policy of Toastmasters International, and each of its subordinate units, including regions, districts, divisions, and areas, to comply with the applicable law of the jurisdictions in which meetings or other functions are held, regarding accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Toastmasters clubs are separate legal entities with very limited resources, and their legal obligations with respect to persons with disabilities may differ from the obligations of Toastmasters International, depending on national, state, or local regulations and the availability of facilities for meetings in their communities. Given the club’s need to use free or low-cost meeting space in certain locations, it may not be reasonable, feasible, or possible to provide wheelchair access or other forms of accommodation in every instance.

Where disability laws apply, it is the responsibility of the chief executive officer at the level for which an event is planned (e.g. the district governor for a district, the club president for a club) to determine what laws and regulations may apply regarding accommodations at the event facility for persons with disabilities.

If the responsible officer determines that an event facility must meet a certain standard of disability accommodation, he or she should obtain a guarantee in writing from the facility owner or operator that the facility will comply with that standard and will hold Toastmasters International or the club harmless if the facility should violate that standard. If a claim or suit is subsequently brought against Toastmasters International or the club regarding disability accommodation at such event, defense of the claim or suit should be tendered immediately to the facility owner or operator.

Toastmasters International and its clubs seek to make its programs available to as many people as possible, but sometimes there are practical limitations or unforeseen circumstances that may result in some obstacle, hindrance, or other difficulty for a person with a disability at an event. That is why Toastmaster organizations cannot and should not promise full participation in its programs to persons who may not be able to participate through their own efforts. Therefore,

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Toastmasters International and its clubs should not assume any duty to offer a higher level of disability accommodation at its events than the law of the pertinent jurisdiction actually requires.