



1. Policy Statement

1.1 The Township of Southgate recognizes and promotes the full participation of all 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. Policy Objective

2.1 Provide guidelines for the development of introductory, universal and more affordable programs and services.

2.2 Provide guidelines for the development of partnerships and agreements that provide affordable access to recreation for low income families.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy extends to eligible programs and services directly delivered by Recreation & Culture.

3.2 This policy excludes contracted program agreements with individuals/organizations delivering programs in partnership or on behalf of the Township 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).

3.3 Definitions:

3.3.1 *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.

3.3.2 *Services*: Refers to recreational services available through the purchase of memberships and pay-as-you-go activities including but not limited to Fitness, Aquatics, and Skating.

3.3.3 *Universal Programs*: Activities and community events provided at no cost or minimal cost either directly by the Township or through partnerships/service agreements with an agency/program provider.

3.3.4 *Financial Assistance*: Refers to an approved reduction in user fees charged by Recreation & Culture for participation in a program or service.

3.3.5 *Low Income Cut Off (LICO)*: Refers to income thresholds (determined by analyzing family composition and expenditure data) below which families will devote a larger share of income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family would. (Statistics Canada).

4. User Fees

4.1 Recreation programs and services will be priced according to the Council approved "Annual Review of User Fees and Charges" policy.

4.2 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.

4.3 The Township 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.

4.5 Affordable access to municipal recreation space will continue to be managed through the Council.

5.0 Financial Assistance

5.1 The availability of financial assistance will be communicated to residents via the Community Recreation and the Town's website.

5.2 The process of obtaining financial assistance will be non-intrusive, eliminate stigma and respect a person's dignity and confidentiality.

5.3 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). In exceptional situations, the waiving of the full fee may be approved by the Council.

5.4 Subsidy levels will be reviewed annually and will be established based upon Recreation & Culture's operating budget capacity.

5.5 Where discounts already apply, financial assistance may not be available. Requests will be assessed on a case by case basis.

6.0 Guidelines for Developing Universal and Partnership Programming

6.1 Recreation & Culture will continually seek out and engage partners and seek out funding for the delivery of affordable recreation programming.

7.2 Space, in-kind support and/or promotional resources will be made available, wherever feasible, to support agencies and partnerships delivering recreation based services and programs.

7.0 Community Organizations Utilizing Township of Southgate's Facilities

7.1 Recreation & Culture will provide support to assist community organizations to develop approaches to respond to requests for subsidized access to sport and recreation programs they deliver.

7.2 Referrals to other sources of funds (e.g. Canadian Tire Jumpstart and Salvation Army) will be utilized wherever possible to support families and community organizations.

8.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

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

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

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