



POLICY

Accessible Customer Service

Department: Corporate
Policy #: C-001
Issue Date: January 12,
2009
Rev Date:
Rev #: 0
Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Smith", written over the "Approved by:" line.

Policy Statement:

The Corporation of the Town of St. Marys is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons that we serve.

Scope:

All Team Members who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Town, whether the person does so as a Team Member, member of Council or committee, agent, volunteer, student on placement or otherwise.

Background:

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (the "AODA") is a Provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

AODA, Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled "Accessibility Standards for Customer Service" came into force on January 1, 2008. This Regulation establishes accessibility standards specific to customer service for public sector organizations and other persons or organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the expectations of customer service for our residents and users to internal and external parties dealing with members of the public on behalf of the Corporation. Particular attention is paid to people with disabilities.

Definitions:

Assistive Device: a device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations.

Disabilities: as outlined in "AODA", Section 2 –
a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limited the generality of the foregoing,

includes diabetes, mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.

- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- d) a mental disorder.
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workers Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Service Animals: any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or where the person provides a letter from a physician confirming that he or she requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability; or a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

Support Person: a person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist him or her with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Responsibilities:

Management:

- shall establish and enforce practices and procedures
- shall provide training on the AODA and internal policies, procedures and practices
- shall evaluate and review policies, procedures and practices as required

Team Members:

- deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Town, whether the person does so as a employee of the Town, member of Council or committee, agent, volunteer, student on placement or otherwise
- shall treat all users and residents with dignity and respect
- shall offer a variety of communication methods to persons with disabilities

- shall have an understanding of the nature and scope of the services the Town offers
- shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and / or services
- shall allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal, unless the animal is excluded by law. Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the persons with disabilities.
- Explore with the person with a disability what reasonable alternative arrangements can be made when in the event the Town is unable to allow a guide dog or service animal onto the premises

Person with a Disability:

- to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times
- to ensure that his or her service animal is under their care and control at all times

Guidelines and Procedures:

To ensure accessible customer service, the Town will use reasonable effort to ensure that all policies, procedures and practices related to the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities are consistent with the following principles:

Dignity

- Goods and services will be provided in a way that allows people to maintain self-respect and the respect of others.
- People with disabilities are as valued and as deserving of full and effective services as any other customer.

Independence

- Goods and Services will be provided without unnecessary help or interference from others
- Independence means freedom to make one's own choices and decisions

Integration

- Integrated services are those that are designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities
- People with disabilities will be able to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar ways as other customers
- In some cases alternative measures to integration will be provided

Equality of Opportunity

- Goods and services will be provided in such a way that a person with a disability will have the same opportunity to benefit from our goods and services as other customers
- A person with a disability should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain our goods and services and should not have to accept less quality or more inconvenience

Team Members, Volunteers, contractors, students, members of advisory groups, and Council can improve their level of customer service by incorporating the following points:

- Asking how you can help or assist
- Offering a variety of communication methods
- Understanding the nature and scope of the services the Town offers

Admission Fees:

A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, using or benefiting from the Town's goods and services, will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee is applicable. The exception is when a support person is personally consuming a service or good (for example meals, theatre tickets). Admission fees for Support Persons will be posted in a conspicuous place within each location providing a service.

Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities:

The Town is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to our residents and users. However, temporary disruptions in the Town's services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the Town's control or knowledge.

The Town will make reasonable effort to provide notice of disruption to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any that may be available. The Town will make reasonable effort to provide prior notice of planning disruption if possible, recognizing that in some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruption, advance notice will not be possible. In such cases, the Town will provide notice as soon as possible.

When service disruptions (either temporary or unexpected) occur within the Town's services or facilities, the Town will provide notice electronically on the Town Website under "Service Disruptions" and written notice which will be posted in a conspicuous place within the facility experiencing the service disruption.

Feedback:

The Town of St. Marys is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all users and residents. The Town welcomes feedback from our users and residents as it may identify areas that require change and encourages continuous improvements to service.

Feedback can be given to one of the following points of contact:

Email:	Accessibility@town.stmarys.on.ca
Website:	www.town.stmarys.on.ca/accessibility
In-Person / Mail	Clerk's Office Town of St. Marys 175 Queen Street East PO Box 998 St. Marys, ON N4X 1B6
Telephone	519-284-2340 ext 241
Fax:	519-284-3881

The Clerk's office will respond either by writing, in-person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging the receipt of the feedback within 2 business days. The Clerk's office will forward any constructive criticism, comments or ideas to the relevant department to respond. The Clerk's office will follow up with the respondent as quickly as possible by their choice of communication.

A record of the feedback received will be retained by the Clerk's office.

Service Animals:

Service animals, such as guide dogs, offer independence and security to many people with various disabilities.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the Town may ask the person with a disability for a letter from a physician confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability. The Town may also, or instead, ask for a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized training school.

Support Person(s):

Support people assist person with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an intervener sign language interpreter, or as a Personal Support Worker providing physical assistance. A support person may also be a friend or relative that will assist and support the customer. The support person must remain with the individual at all times.

Assistive Devices and other Measures that Assist with Accessibility:

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the Town's goods and services.

Difficulty Accessing Services:

If a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing Town services or goods, we will work with the person to develop a solution that will address their needs.

Training:

The Town will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The amount and format of the training given will be tailored to suit each person's interactions with the public and his or her involvement in the development of policies, procedures, practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services.

The content of the training will include:

- a review of the Accessibility Ontario Disability Act (AODA)
- the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429 / 07)
- Town policy and procedure
- best practices on how to provide goods and services to persons with disabilities
- how to interact and communicate with users who have various types of disabilities
- how to operate Town equipment and assistive devices
- how to interact with users who require the assistance of assistive devices, service animals or support persons
- what to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the Town's goods or services
- how to post a service disruption

The method and amount of training will be geared to the Team Member's role in terms of accessibility.

Training sessions for Team Members moving into new roles or are new to the organization will be trained on a quarterly basis throughout the calendar year.

Human Resources will retain the training record outlining the training date, trainer and attendees.

Documentation:

The Town of St. Marys will, upon request, provide a copy of the policy, procedure and best practices required under the Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service to any person. A copy of Town’s policy and procedure can be viewed on line at www.townofstmarys.on.ca or at the Clerk's Office –Town Hall. Upon request documents will be made available in alternative forms based on the needs of the individual upon request.

References:

Accessibility Ontario Disabilities Act 429/07
Notice of Service Disruption
How to Post a Service Disruption
Accessible Customer Service Brochure

End of Document

Revision #	Date	Reason	Manager of HR	CAO / Council
0	12-Jan-10	Inception	<i>K Richardson</i>	<i>R Brindley/ J Hahn</i>