

TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 62

SUBJECT: ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

SECTION: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Effective: January 1, 2010

Applicable to: **Town Staff/Volunteers/Contractors as noted**

Authority: Council

1.0 Overview

Customer Service Excellence is a strategic priority of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. By establishing accessible customer service policies, procedures and practices as required under provincial legislation we reinforce our commitment to service excellence. By implementing the procedures and practices set out in this policy we increase accessibility to our goods and services for persons with disabilities, and strengthen our commitment to service excellence.

In fulfilling our mission, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* provides for the establishment of accessibility standards. Accordingly, Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessible Standards for Customer Service, was enacted. The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville whole-heartedly supports the spirit of the AODA and this Regulation, which requires the establishment of policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of our goods or services to persons with disabilities. In addition, we will use reasonable efforts to ensure that our policies, procedures and practices provide accessible customer services to people with various kinds of disabilities and that the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity, as defined herein, are respected.

2.0 Policy

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the Town's accessible customer service policies in support of and in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07. Corresponding guidelines have also been developed by the Town to provide further direction relating to accessible customer services.

2.2 Definitions

Assistive Devices means an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, hearing aides, oxygen tanks, portable chalk boards and electronic communication devices) to access and benefit from the goods and service offered by the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Barrier means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, attitudinal barrier, technological barrier, and a policy or practice that serves as an obstacle.

Disability as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, means any degree of physical disability including, but not limited to, diabetes, epilepsy, brain injury, paralysis, amputation, lack of coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device; mental impairment or developmental disability; learning disability or dysfunction in understanding or using symbols or spoken language; mental disorder; or injury for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Guide Dogs or Service Animals - a "guide dog" means a guide dog as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal of a person with a disability:

- a) If it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- b) If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Principles

Dignity - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.

Independence - when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

Integration - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same

or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.

Equal opportunity - service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access Town goods or services equal to that given to others.

Support Persons – means in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid support worker, a volunteer, a friend or a family member; the support person does not need to have special training or qualifications.

2.3 Policy Provisions

Accessible Customer Service Policies, Practices and Procedures

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices, as amended from time to time, are consistent with the following principles:

- a) The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b) The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- c) Persons with a disability must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

Communication

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville employees when communicating with a person with a disability shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability and considers his or her communication needs.

Assistive Devices

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville permits persons with a disability to use and keep with them their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services offered by the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Where Town owned assistive devices are available, appropriate staff within the applicable department(s) will be made aware of and trained in same. Staff will be available to assist with the Town owned assistive device if requested for use by an individual.

Service Animals and Support Persons

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville shall allow persons with disabilities, who require to be accompanied by a support person, into all Town premises that are owned or operated public facilities. Both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and the person with a disability will have access to their support person

In the event that admission fees are charged, advance notice concerning what admission, if any, would be charged to a support person shall be posted in a conspicuous place.

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville allows a person with a disability to be accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal onto all Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville owned and operated public facilities and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

If the service animal is excluded by law from the facility, the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's goods and services.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

A Notice of Service Disruption must be provided when there is a temporary disruption of a Town facility or service (planned or unexpected, in whole or in part) that is usually used by people with disabilities to access Town goods or services.

The Notice will include the following information:

- a) The reason for the disruption
- b) Anticipated duration
- c) Description of alternate facilities or services, if available
- d) Contact information

The notice will be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises, Town web-site and/or other method reasonable in the circumstances.

Training

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville will ensure that the following people will or have received training regarding the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities:

- Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Town, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise
- Every person who participates in developing the Town's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

The training must include but is not limited to the following:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disability
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, or require the assistance of a service animal or support person

- How to use the equipment or assistive devices available at Town premises that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing Town goods or services
- Town customer service policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities

Training must be provided to each person as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties. Training content may vary depending on the nature of the work and services the person is involved in. A training record shall be kept, including the dates that training is provided and the number of individuals who received the training.

Feedback

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville provides goods or services to persons with a disability; information about this process is available to the public.

The feedback process, set out in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Guidelines to the Accessible Customer Service Policy, permits persons to provide feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, online, on disk or by other method.

Notice of Availability of and Format of Documents

Notice shall be provided that the Town's policies, practices and procedures required under Ontario Regulation 429/07- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service are available upon request:

- **Town policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities** - including a policy on the use of personal assistive devices by people with disabilities to access Town goods or services
- **Service animals and support persons** - Policy, practice and procedures with respect to the entry of service animals and support persons to those areas of the premises that are owned or operated by the Town, where such are at are open to the public
- **Notice of temporary disruptions** - The steps that will be taken in connection with a temporary planned or unexpected disruption to facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access Town goods or services
- **Training** - description of the Town policy on providing training on accessible customer service
- **Feedback process** - description of the process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which the Town provides goods or services to people with disabilities

Should the Town be requested to provide a person with a disability any document noted in this section, the Town will give the person the document of the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability. If a person with a disability asks for a document in a different format, staff will discuss

what options are available to the individual and then agree upon the format the Town will provide.

Exclusions

This Policy shall not apply during any period where an emergency has been declared by the head of Council

3.0 Procedures

Procedures are set out in the companion document, *Guidelines to the Accessible Customer Service Policy*.

4.0 References

- Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- Compliance Manual: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- AccessOn: www.accesson.ca
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Guidelines to the Accessible Customer Service Policy
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Annual Accessibility Plan