

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy

Intent

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, all municipalities must meet the requirements of accessibility standards that are established by regulation. This policy establishes Standards for Customer Service for Conservation Halton, in accordance with Regulation 429/07, which requires all designated public sector organizations to be in compliance by January 1, 2010. Halton Region Conservation Authority has chosen to comply with this timeframe.

Eligibility

All employees.

Definitions

Accessible means customer service is provided in a manner that is capable of being easily understood or appreciated; easy to get to; capable of being reached, or entered; obtainable.

Assistive Device is a technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

Barrier as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, 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, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Disability, as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, is:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, 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,
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Service Animal – as defined by *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, is an animal that is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or

if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support Person – as defined by *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, in relation to a person with a disability, is 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.

Purpose

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians Disabilities Act, 2005*. It applies to the provision of goods and services to the public, not the goods themselves.

Conservation Halton's policy aims to ensure that persons with disabilities are given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from Conservation Halton's goods and services. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that our good and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities:

- a. The goods and services provided to persons with disabilities are integrated with the provision of goods and services to others unless an alternate measure is necessary to allow a person with a disability to benefit from the goods and services. The alternate measure may be temporary or permanent.
- b. Communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes the person's disability into account.
- c. People with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access Conservation Halton's goods and services. If a service animal is excluded by law from a premise, other measures will be made available for the person with a disability to access the goods or services.

Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices as required in accessing goods and/or services provided by Conservation Halton unless otherwise prohibited by law.

Support Persons

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their support person in areas/premises that are open to the public, when accessing goods and services provided by Conservation Halton.

Where admission fees for the support person are applicable, advance notice of the fee will be made available.

Conservation Halton may deem it necessary to require a support person for a person with a disability in order to protect the health and safety of that person or of others on the premises. This will only occur after consultation with the person with a disability and when it is the only means to allow the person with a disability to access Conservation Halton's goods or services.

Service Animals

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal and keep that animal with them in areas that are open to the public, when accessing goods and services provided by Conservation Halton, unless otherwise prohibited by law. In the event of an employee being uncertain of the service animal, the employee may ask to see written documentation from a physician or nurse validating such.

In the event that a service animal is prohibited from the premises, Conservation Halton will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from Conservation Halton goods and services.

Service animals must be supervised by their owners and kept in control when used to access Conservation Halton's goods and services.

Notice of Service Disruptions

In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities and services that are relied upon by people with disabilities to access Conservation Halton goods or services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance.

Notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities and services that may be available.

Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the provider of goods or services, or posted on the Conservation Halton's web site or by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.

In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

Notice of Availability of Documents

If Conservation Halton is required by *Ontario Regulation 429/07* to provide documents to a person with a disability, the document or the information contained in the document will be provided in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Conservation Halton will make reasonable efforts to respond to requests for documents in alternate formats in a timely manner.

Training

As required by *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, the following individuals will receive training on a number of topics outlined in the regulation:

- Employees, volunteers, agents/contractors and any other individuals who interact with the public or other third parties on behalf of Conservation Halton; and,
- Employees, volunteers, agents/contractors and any other individuals who participate in the development of Conservation Halton policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

The training will include the following topics:

- a review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of *Ontario Regulation 429/07*;
- how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, service animal or a support person;

- how to use the equipment or assistive devices available on Conservation Halton’s premises;
- what action to take if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing goods and services; and,
- Conservation Halton’s customer service policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities.

As required by *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, Conservation Halton will keep records of the training provided.

Feedback Process

Conservation Halton shall create and maintain a feedback process so that members of the public are able to comment on the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities.

The feedback process will allow for comments in person, by telephone, in writing or by delivering an electronic text by email, or otherwise.

The feedback process will specify the actions that will be taken by Conservation Halton.

If any complaints or suggestions are received through our feedback process, Conservation Halton will:

- Document any complaint or suggestion that we receive through our website, phone calls or visitation from any customer
- Any complaint/suggestion will be reviewed by Conservation Halton’s AODA Committee to:
 - Recommend suggestions, changes or alternative solutions moving forward to ensure the appropriate measures are addressed
- Any recommendation or suggestion reviewed by the AODA Committee is on an individual basis and any action will be independent of other complaints (unless similar in nature)

Review of the Accessible Customer Service Policy

The Accessible Customer Service Policy will be reviewed when additional accessibility related regulations are enacted by the Government of Ontario, or as required.