

Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy Township of Springwater

Approved: September 21, 2009	Department: All Departments
Effective: January 1, 2010	Subject: Accessible, Customer Service
Next Review: January 2015	Policy Number: A09 AC

A. Authority

As of January 1, 2008, Ontario's Customer Services Standard became the law. Businesses and organizations that provide goods or services to people are required to make their customer service operations accessible to those with disabilities. Businesses and organizations will become accessible by the identification and removal of barriers in customer service through operational practices, policies and procedures, communications and staff training.

The Accessible Customer Service policy shall be by the endorsement of the Township of Springwater Accessibility Committee and approved by the Council of the Township of Springwater.

B. Policy Statement

To accomplish the required compliances of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the Township will:

1. Document in writing all policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and meet other document requirements set out in the standard.
2. Notify customers that documents required under the Accessible Customer Service Standard are available upon request.
3. When providing documents under the Accessible Customer Service Standard to a person with a disability, the information will be provided in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

All departments at the Township of Springwater will use reasonable efforts to ensure that the policies, procedures and practices established in the Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy are consistent with the following core principles:

- **Dignity**
- **Independence**
- **Integration** (except when alternate measures are not necessary to meet the needs of people with disabilities), and

- **Equal Opportunity**

C. Definitions

“Accessible Communications” – means depending on the situation and the person’s needs, the format of communication may be altered to better suit the customer. The communication can be made more accessible in various ways including, but not limited to, changing the usual method of communication or using an assistive device for service.

“Alternate Services” – means serving people with disabilities in ways that are not completely integrated into the regular business activities of the Municipality. For this reason, it may be necessary that goods or services are provided to people with disabilities in a different place or in a different way than other customers, such as using email to communicate with customers who are deaf or have speech impairments.

“Communication” – means the process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information.

“Council” – means the Council for the Corporation of the Township of Springwater.

“Customer Service” – means the provision of goods or services that members of the public are allowed to use.

“Disability” – means:

- a) 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, include 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;
- 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, or;
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

“Personal Assistive Device” – means an assistive device that those with a disability may bring with them, such as a walker or a personal oxygen tank, which aid in their day-to-day functions.

“Principles of Dignity” – means that policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as customers and clients who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer.

Service delivery needs to take into account how people with disabilities can effectively access and use services and show respect for these methods.

“Principle of Equal Opportunity” – means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services, people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the provision of goods and services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service and they should not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience. Equal opportunity can best be reached by taking steps to ensure that individual needs are taken into account when providing goods or services. Principles may need to be balanced in order to achieve the outcomes that meet the needs of the person with a disability.

“Principle of Independence” – means freedom from control or influence of others and the freedom to make your own choices. It may also mean the freedom to do things in your own way.

“Principle of Integration” – means services that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers. Integration means that policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities. At times when integration does not serve the needs of all people with disabilities, it may be necessary to use alternate measures to provide goods or services.

“Providing Services” – means providing goods or services to members of the public.

“Service Animal” – means:

- a) An animal, for the purpose of this policy, is a service animal for a person with a disability;
- b) It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or;
- c) 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” – 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, medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

“Township” – means the Corporation of the Township of Springwater.

D. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide consistent accessible customer service to all members of the public who seek the services of the Township.

This policy will also assist in accomplishing the goal of making Ontario completely accessible by 2025.

E. Scope

As per the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, this policy applies to all employees of the Township including Council, full time employees, part time employees and volunteers.

F. Compliance to the Accessible Customer Service Standard

1. The following standard applies to all business and organizations that provide goods or services to the public, and have at least one employee. The standard is for businesses and organizations in the private, non-profit and public sector.
2. Nothing in this policy or any other regulation diminishes in any way the legal obligations of the Government of Ontario or of any person or organization with respect to persons with disabilities that are imposed under this policy or otherwise imposed by law.
3. If a provision of this policy, an accessibility standard, or any other regulation conflicts with a provision of any other Act or regulation, the provision that provides the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings, structures or premises shall prevail.
4. This policy does not replace or change what must be done under other laws relating to accessibility such as the Ontario Building Code Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code.
5. Where the standard sets different rules than other laws, the Township may be required to comply with both.

G. Procedures

1. Communication and Alternative Forms of Communication

Communication is the process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. Depending on the situation and the person's needs, there are a variety of ways to make communications more accessible. These include:

- Making the original communication more accessible;
- Changing the usual method of communication; and,
- Using assistive devices or services

Communication should be offered in a way that takes the person's disability into account. All employees will consider how the disability affects the way that the customer expresses, receives or processes communication.

The goal is to communicate in an effective way.

Communication Needs

Taking someone's disability into account requires an employee to take that particular individual's needs and circumstances into consideration. Assumptions are not to be made based on his or her disability.

Different people with the same disability may communicate in different ways because of different skills or resources. Where possible, it will be helpful to ask the person directly how to best communicate with them.

Where appropriate, documents are to be created in plain language so that it will be easier to read for those with certain learning disabilities.

Alternate Forms of Communication

To meet individual communication needs, the information may be offered in a different medium. Examples of different mediums of communication may include, but are not limited to:

- Large print for people who have low vision;
- Braille;
- Strategies to offer phone service rather than in person service;
- Allowance of email rather than postal notices; and;
- Easy-to-read, simplified summaries of materials for people with development or intellectual disabilities.

If a customer requires an alternative method of communication, notice must be provided to the Township to allow an opportunity to re-create the necessary documents.

Website

The Springwater Township Website is a key channel of communication for the Township. Many people with disabilities use computers and the internet. Some people with disabilities use assistive devices such as screen readers (devices that speak the contents of the screen), speech input systems (which allow you to talk into a microphone to control the computer and enter text) and a variety of other devices that operate with computers.

The Township website is to be developed in a way that considers how assistive devices operate and how people with disabilities use them. The site will be accessible to people with disabilities.

A more comprehensive Accessible Communication and Information Policy may be developed in the future.

2. Use of Personal Assistive Devices, Service Animals and Support Persons

Personal Assistive Devices

Those with a disability may use personal assistive devices to access the Townships goods and services.

Personal assistive devices may include, but are not limited to, things such as walkers, white canes, note-taking devices and personal oxygen tanks to assist breathing.

Service Animals

A person is permitted to be accompanied by his or her guide dog or other service animal on Township premises.

Presently, there are no Municipal By-laws restricting certain breeds of animals or dogs from the Municipality.

Support Persons

Some people rely on support persons for certain services or assistance. A support person may be a paid professional, a volunteer, a family member or friend of the person with a disability.

Those persons with a disability are permitted to be accompanied by his or her support person on Township premises that are open to the public. The support person may be hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Admission Fees

Where admission fees are charged, the Township will provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability. Notice could be provided through various outlets including:

- Posting on public boards at various Township facilities;

- On the Township website in the appropriate areas; and
- Included on any advertisement promoting the specific event where an admission fee may be charged.

3. Disruption of Service Notice

The Township will provide proper and adequate notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use are temporarily disrupted.

When the Township is aware of the disruption, notices will be posted two (2) weeks prior to the start of the disruption. If the disruption is unexpected, the notice will be posted as soon as possible.

Notices of temporary disruption must include:

- Reason(s) for the disruption;
- Length disruption it is expected to last;
- Alternative facilities to use (if applicable); and,
- Other alternative measures (if applicable).

Notices may be posted:

- At appropriate doors/boards of applicable facilities;
- On the Township website, and;
- If appropriate, in various media outlets such as local newspapers.

4. Training for Staff and Volunteers

Training will be given to everyone in the organization (including volunteers) who:

- Deal with members of the public; and
- Develop policies, procedures and practices for the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties.

Third parties are required to also be trained in accessible customer service.

Note: After January 1, 2012, all classes of organizations as defined by the Accessible Customer Service Standard will be required to provide accessible customer service training to their employees.

Initial training will be provided by an external third-party representative. A comprehensive Customer Service Training program that includes accessible customer service may be established in the future. This program will be offered through an internal training program.

Content

The content of the training will include:

- A review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act;
- Requirements of the Accessible Customer Service regulation;
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- Instructions on how to interact with persons with a disability who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person;
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability; and
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.

Timing of Training

Training will be provided to each person as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties.

Training will be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Note: All current employees are required to receive Accessible Customer Service training prior to this standard coming into effect (January 1, 2010).

Records of Training

Records of employee training will be kept in the employees personnel file. The record will include the date the training was provided.

Review

Due to the continually evolving changes in accessibility, the training program will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance with the latest accessible methods. Staff will be required to upgrade their accessibility training annually.

5. Customer Feedback

If anyone has a concern regarding the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities they can complete the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form.

If a member of the public would like to make a comment regarding the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities and would not like to complete the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form, they can dictate their

comments to members of staff (in person, over the phone, via email etc.). The member of staff who receives the comments will write the comments on the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form and submit it to the appropriate departmental Senior Staff member.

Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form

This form will be located:

- On the website
- At the front desk at all Township office's (Administration Centre, Fire Hall, Arena etc.); and
- At all library branches.

A notice will be placed on the website where the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form can be located.

All Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Forms should be addressed as follows:

ATTN: Accessible Customer Service Comments

Delivery of Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form

The Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form can be **mailed to:**

Township of Springwater
2231 Nursery Road
Minesing, ON
L9X 1A8

The Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form can be **emailed to:**

info@springwater.ca

The Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form can be **faxed to:**

705-728-6957

The Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form can be **hand delivered** to any Township representative.

Receipt of Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form

Upon receipt of an Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form, the form will be delivered to the member of Senior Staff from the appropriate

department identified. The Senior Staff member, in consultation with the CAO, and any other appropriate staff members, will address the content of the form and attempt to resolve the concern. The comment form will also be copied to the Springwater Accessibility Advisory Committee who will offer assistance with the concern addressed when possible.

If appropriate, the comments noted will be received formally by Council following proper procedural guidelines.

If appropriate, the member of Senior Staff or their designate, will contact the author of the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Comment Form to discuss the resolution of the concern.

When communicating with a person with a disability, the member of Senior Staff will take into account the person's disability and respond in a way that is appropriate.

The comment forms will be reviewed after their use to ensure that they are fulfilling their objective of providing an accessible outlet for concerns regarding accessible customer service within the Township.

H. Availability of Accessible Customer Services Standards Policy

1. Copies of this policy will be available at all Township facilities open to the public including:
 - The Administration Centre (Midhurst);
 - All Libraries (Midhurst, Minesing and Elmvale);
 - The Arena (Elmvale); and
 - The Fire Hall (Minesing).
2. A copy of this policy, appropriate documentation and updated will also be posted on the Township website.
3. Specific formats – such as large font – for any of the documents included in this policy will be available upon customer request. The Township may require a certain amount of time to produce the specialized format requested.

I. General

1. This Policy shall be administered by all Township departments.

Township of Springwater
Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy
Resolution No. C-506-2009

2. This Policy shall be referred to as the “Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy”
3. This Policy shall come into force and effect on January 1, 2010.
4. This Policy is to be reviewed every five (5) years. Through the revision process, the Township will continue to evaluate their customer service practices to better serve those with disabilities. Any new techniques in customer service training, accessibility options or any other new advancement throughout the Township are to be incorporated through the review process.