

AODA 110 CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

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Last Modified -

1. Purpose and Background:

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005* is a Provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing an enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by January 1, 2025.

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service came into effect on January 1, 2008. The 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, addressing the following:

- The provision of goods and services;
- The use of assistive devices;
- The use of service animals;
- The use of support persons;
- Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
- Training;
- Customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services; and,
- Notice of availability and format of documents.

This policy establishes the accessibility standards for customer service for the County of Prince Edward, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to all persons who provide goods and services to members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County of Prince Edward, whether the person does so as an employee, member of Council, agent, volunteer or student and all persons who participate in developing the municipality's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

3. Definitions:

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

“Accessibility Standard” means the Ontario Regulation 429/07 created under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* which provides for standards to enhance the accessibility of an organization (“the Standard”).

“Agent” means one who is authorized to act or do business for another; one who represents a government agency.

“Assistive Device” means any device that is designed and/or adapted to assist a person to perform a particular task (For example, canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, personal sound amplification devices, ventilators, etc.)

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

“Disability” means

- a) Any degree of physical 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 impairment, 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 insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

“Equal Opportunity” means access to goods or services equal to that given to another.

“Independence” means doing things on your own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

“Integration (integrated)” means benefiting from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar manner as another.

“Nurse” means a Registered Nurse, Registered Practical Nurse or Nurse Practitioner who is a registered member in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

“Physician” means a physician who is a registered member, in good standing, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

“Public Service” means those services provided externally to the public including customers, clients and members or other third parties including other businesses and organizations. The customer service standard does not apply to services provided internally within the organization.

“Service Animal” means

- a) A “guide dog”, as defined in Section 1 of the *‘Blind Persons Rights’ Act* R.R.O. 1990, or
- b) A “service animal” for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,
 - i. If it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for the reasons relating to their disability; or
 - ii. 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” means a person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist them with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or service.

4. Policy Statement:

The County of Prince Edward is committed to providing accessible service for its customers. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all customers. The provision of services to persons with disabilities will be integrated into standard operating customer services procedures wherever possible. Persons with disabilities will be given opportunities equal to those given to others, to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services provided by and on behalf of the municipality.

5. Implementation:

a) Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

Service Animals:

- i. If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the County of Prince Edward will ensure that the person is permitted to enter all municipally owned and operated facilities that provide service to the public with the animal and to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.
- ii. The County of Prince Edward identified two service delivery locations where service animals are not included by regulation:
 1. Landfill and Transfer sites
 2. Food preparation and food service areas that are open to the public
- iii. Where a service animal is not included by regulation, the County of Prince Edward will adopt specific procedures to ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use and benefit from the County of Prince Edward's goods and services. Two examples of laws that specifically exclude animals are regulations under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Food Safety Quality Act, 2001*.
- iv. It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure the care and control of the service animal at all times. To ensure service animals may be appropriately accommodated, people will be encouraged to advise the County of Prince Edward ahead of time when they will be accompanied by a service animal, and of any special accommodations that will be needed.
- v. If a service animal is not immediately recognizable as such, a letter certifying that it is a service animal signed by a physician or nurse may be requested before allowing entry. The County of Prince Edward 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 guide dog or service animal training school.

Support Person:

- i. If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the County of Prince Edward will ensure that the support person is allowed entry, and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person. The County of Prince Edward may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others.
- ii. A support person may accompany participants who use the facilities or programs free of admission charge where they are assisting the person with a disability and not participating directly in the activity or program. When traveling on accessible public transit the regular fee or fare will not apply to the support person.

b) Notice of Temporary Disruptions

- i) Temporary disruptions of municipal services may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the municipality's control or knowledge. The County of Prince Edward will make every reasonable effort to provide notice of disruption to the public as soon as it is reasonably possible to do so.
- ii) The notice will include a description of the service that is unavailable, the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of any available alternative services along with information on how to access these.

If possible, notice of the disruption will be conspicuous, and will be provided as follows:

- written posted signage at the location of the disruption, and at the entrance door to the facility in question;
- posting on the County of Prince Edward's accessible website; and,
- verbal communication when possible;
- any other method as is determined reasonable in the circumstances and agreed upon by the customer and employee.

c) Accessibility Training Policy

- i) Every person who deals with members of the public or who participates in developing the County of Prince Edward's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of

goods and services to the public; including County of Prince Edward staff, volunteers, agents, contractors and others who provide service on behalf of the County of Prince Edward will receive training regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.

- ii) The training will include the following information:
 - 1. the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005;
 - 2. instruction on the County of Prince Edward's Accessible Customer Service policy and resulting procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
 - 3. how to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device, or require the assistance of a service animal or support person;
 - 4. information about the equipment or devices made available by the County of Prince Edward to help people with disabilities to access goods and services; and
 - 5. what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the County of Prince Edward's goods and services.
- iii) Training in accordance with the Ontario Regulation 429/07 created under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 will be provided to each person according to his or her needs and duties and as soon as is practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties.

An accessible Customer Service Training component will be included in the employee orientation process.

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

A record of the training provided and to whom it is provided will be kept.

d) Feedback Process

- i) The County of Prince Edward has a feedback process through which people with disabilities are encouraged to provide information and feedback about the goods and services they receive. Feedback can be received in a variety of ways, in person, by mail or email, by telephone, fax, or otherwise.

- ii) The feedback process is promoted on the County of Prince Edward's website at www.pecounty.on.ca. A copy of the feedback process and feedback form is available upon request.
- iii) Feedback information will be affixed with a tracking sheet and will be forwarded to the Chief Administrator's office for recording and forwarded to the appropriate department for action or input. Follow-up will be provided when requested.
- i) Information collected through the Feedback Process will be presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee according to their mandate from Council.

e) Notice of Availability of Documents

- i) All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, including the County of Prince Edward's Accessible Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training statistics and written feedback process are available upon request (subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.)

f) Format of Documents

- i) If the County of Prince Edward is required, by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, the County of Prince Edward will take into account the person's ability to access the information and will provide the document or information contained in the document in a format that meets those needs as agreed upon with the person.

g) Assistive Devices

The County of Prince Edward will allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the municipality.

Should a person with a disability be unable to access the municipality's services through the use of their own assistive device, the municipality will ensure the following measures:

- a) Determine if service is inaccessible, based on individual requirements;
- b) Access service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual;

- c) Notify person with disability of alternate service and how they can access the service, temporarily or on a permanent basis.

g) Accessible Elections

The Clerk shall establish procedures to ensure the independence and dignity of electors and candidates in the municipal election process.

h) Related and Supporting Documentation

Procedures and practices are documented and will form appendices to the policy document. Future changes to procedures and practices will require CAO approval upon a written recommendation from the appropriate Commissioner.

6. Review-

Policies are reviewed by the Senior Management Team every four years, concurrent with the beginning of a new term of Council.

The Customer Service Standard Policy Statement is restated annually by Council.

7. Acknowledgments-

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
Ontario Regulation 429/07
Municipal Elections Act, 1996 as amended by the Good Government Act, 2009 (Bill212)