
Subject:	Accessible Customer Services	Policy Number:	TOB-2009-001 ACC
Date Approved:	December 16, 2009 (09-DS-167)	Date Modified:	May 14, 2014 October 24, 2018
Lead Department:	Planning and Development	Branch:	N/A

PURPOSE

1. This Policy is intended to meet the requirements of the AODA, 2005 and all related provisions relative to the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service in order to ensure that persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunities within a standardized service delivery model.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 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.
3. The AODA Accessibility Standards address the following five areas:
 - 3.1. Accessible Customer Service;
 - 3.2. Accessible Information and Communication;
 - 3.3. Accessible Transportation;
 - 3.4. Employment Accessibility; and
 - 3.5. Accessible Built Environment.
4. The first standard is the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07, which came into force on January 1, 2008. The purpose of the regulation was to establish qualitative accessible standards to improve the provision of customer service for people with disabilities by the broader public and private sector.
5. All public sector organizations with more than twenty employees were required to comply with the Standard by January 1, 2010. The Town of Bracebridge's first Customer Service Policy was approved in 2009.
6. In June 2016, as a result of a review of the standard, the Province of Ontario included the Customer Service Standard in the Integrated Accessibility Standards in Ontario Regulation 165/16.

7. This Policy has been developed in accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and addresses the following:
 - 7.1. The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities,
 - 7.2. The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities,
 - 7.3. The use of service animals by persons with disabilities,
 - 7.4. The use of support persons by persons with disabilities,
 - 7.5. Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
 - 7.6. Employer Training on the AODA and related corporate policies;
 - 7.7. Communication to persons with disabilities;
 - 7.8. Customer service feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, and
 - 7.9. Notice of availability and format of documents.

POLICY STATEMENT

8. The Corporation of the Town of Bracebridge is committed to being responsive to the diverse needs of all its residents by eliminating barriers and providing accessible, quality customer service, in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

APPLICATION

9. This Policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Town of Bracebridge, whether the person does so as an employee, member of Council, agent, volunteer, student on placement or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing the Town's policy, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

DEFINITIONS

10. The following definitions shall apply to this policy:

Accessibility: The degree with which people with disabilities are able to access the functionality and possible benefit of some system or entity. Refers to the potential for a product or service to be beneficial to as many people as possible.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA): Provincial legislation enacted in June, 2005 which provides the framework by which certain accessibility standards will be developed to ensure that businesses and organizations maintain practices and provide goods and services in a manner that is accessible to everyone including people with disabilities. The legislation is comprised of five core standards which will be developed by Standards Development Committees and enacted as Ontario Regulations under the AODA: Customer Service (Reg. 429/07 currently in place), Transportation, Information and Communications, Built Environment and Employment. The goal of the AODA is to build on the framework of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) 2001, and establish qualitative standards in order to assist in developing a "fully accessible" province by 2025

Assistive Device - Any auxiliary tool, aid, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating or lifting; assist in accessing goods or services and helps the person to maintain their independence. Examples include but are not limited to, communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids, and medical aids..

Barrier: Anything that stops, impedes prevents or causes difficulty for a person to obtain, use or benefit from a provider's goods or services. A barrier can be physical, architectural, attitudinal, technological, relate to information and communications, et al.

Customer: Includes both external and internal customers. External customers relate to residents of the Town, business owners, community groups and organizations, visitors to the Town of Bracebridge volunteers, vendors and other levels of government. Internal customers include Town of Bracebridge employees, agents and Council.

Disability - As per the Ontario Human Rights Code, 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, 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,
- 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 Plan established as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Service Animal – As reflected in O. Reg 165/16 an animal is a service animal for 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 as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or hardenss worn by the animate; or
- b) if the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal relating of the disability:
 - A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
 - A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario
 - A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario
 - A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
 - A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario
 - A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
 - A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
 - A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario

- A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.
- c) 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.

Support Person - A support person could be a hired or trained personal support worker, family member or friend, selected by a person with a disability to provide assistance with his or her mobility, communication and/or other medical needs. A support person is necessary if a person with a disability is unable to otherwise access goods or services and/or maintain the safety of their own person and/or others on the premises.

Temporary Disruption of Service: Any disruption to a service or facility that may create a barrier for a person with a disability in that they would be otherwise able to fully use or access such service or facility.

Third Party: An individual or group who is not a member of the public or service user. A third party may be a volunteer or agent of the municipality, a temporary support staff, a technician, a business associate and/or any other stakeholder who is not an employee or service user.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Provision of Goods & Services to Persons with Disabilities

11. The Town of Bracebridge will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:
 - 11.1. The Town's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
 - 11.2. The provision of the Town's goods and services to persons with disabilities are integrated with those provided to persons who do not have a disability unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Town's good and services. Alternative measures will only be employed when a service cannot be integrated and is the only means of providing customer service to a person with a disability.
 - 11.3. Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from the Town's goods and services.

Communication with Persons with Disabilities

12. When communicating with a person with a disability, the Town will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. Consideration will be given to the way in which individuals express, receive and process information without making assumptions about a particular disability. The Town will continue to review the nature, manner and methods with which it communicates to people with disabilities, in an attempt to improve accessibility of information and services.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

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

14. The Town will make reasonable effort to provide notice of the interruption to the public, including information about the reason for the interruption, its anticipated duration of interruption and a description of alternative services or facilities that may be available. If possible, the Town will make reasonable effort to provide prior notice of a planned interruption. In the event of an unplanned interruption, advance notice is not possible and in such cases the Town will provide notice as soon as possible. Additional information such as a contact person or time with which the notice will be updated may also be included where reasonable.
15. When temporary interruptions occur to the Town's services or facilities, the Town will provide notice as soon as possible by posting the information in visible places or on the Town's website at (www.bracebridge.ca) or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

Assistive Devices and Measures that Assist with Accessibility

16. The Town of Bracebridge will make reasonable efforts to ensure that any person with a disability may utilize his or her own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and/or benefiting from the Town's goods and services unless otherwise prohibited by law. The Town may offer reasonable alternatives in order to accommodate and assist a person with a disability in obtaining, using and/or benefiting from the Town's goods and services.
17. A person with a disability shall ensure that his or her assistive device is operated with the consideration for the health and safety of themselves and others.

Service Animals

18. Persons requiring Service Animals are permitted to be accompanied by a service animal when in areas open to the public, except when excluded by applicable law (for example the Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990 or the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001). Where a service animal is prohibited by law, the Town will make reasonable efforts to ensure access to goods and services are available by alternative means.
19. A customer that is accompanied by the service animal shall be considerate of the health and safety of themselves and others.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability, the Town may request documentation from the customer from a regulated health professional. The documentation must confirm that the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Support Persons

20. People with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a support person in any area that is open to the public. The Town will ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises at the same time and that the person with the disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises.
21. The Town may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on Town premises, but only if, after consulting with the person with a disability and considering the available evidence that the Town determines that,
 - a) the support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises; and,
 - b) there is no other reasonable way to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability and the health or safety of others on the premises.

22. If an amount is payable for a person's admission to the premises or in connection with the Town's goods and services, the Town will ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, payable in respect of/for the support person.
23. A support person will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee is applicable when assisting a person with a disability to use, obtain or benefit from the Town's goods and services.

Customer Feedback

24. Any individual has the opportunity to submit feedback regarding the provision of accessible customer service through regular mail, email, telephone, facsimile, or by using the Town's Accessible Customer Service Form, which is available to all staff and via the Town's website. Alternative formats and communication supports will be provided or arranged on request.
25. Customer Feedback Forms are directed to the Chief Administrative Officer who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide details on what actions will be undertaken when feedback is received.

Training

26. Accessible Customer Service training will be provided to every employee who interacts with the public on behalf of the Town of Bracebridge. The depth and format of the training given will be based on the requirement for interaction with the public and involvement in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services.
27. The Town of Bracebridge will ensure that all persons to whom this Policy applies receive training as required by the Ontario Regulation 165/16 Integrated Accessibility Standards;
28. The training will include
 - 28.1. An overview of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Services (Ontario Regulation 165/16),
 - 28.2. Instruction on the Town's policies, practices and procedures pertaining to the provision of customer service to persons with disabilities;
 - 28.3. Instruction on how to communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
 - 28.4. Instruction on how to accommodate a person with a particular type of disability who is having difficulty accessing the Town's Goods and Services;
 - 28.5. Instruction on the how to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal;
 - 28.6. How to provide instruction for the use of equipment or devices available on the Town's premises that may assist with the provision of customer service to persons with disabilities, if applicable; and
 - 28.7. Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Town's services.

Timeline for Training

29. Initial training will be provided as soon as practical for all persons to whom this policy applies. Training will be provided on an ongoing basis as changes occur to the Town's Accessible Customer Service Policy and other policies, procedures and practices related to the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Records of Training

30. The Town will keep records outlining training, including the date on which training is provided and the number of those trained. The record for training administration purposes of the names of persons trained will be subject to (MFIPPA) *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Notice of the Availability of Document and Alternate Formats

31. All documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*, including the Town's Accessible Customer Service Policy, procedures and practices, notices of temporary interruptions, training records and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to (MFIPPA) *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
32. When providing a document to a person with a disability, the Town shall make every effort to provide the document or information in a format that takes the person's disability into account.
33. Notice of the availability of all documents required by the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service will be posted on the Town's website and will be available through the Town of Bracebridge Corporate Services Department.

EFFECTIVE DATE

34. This policy shall become effective immediately upon approval by Town Council.

POLICY REVIEW

35. This policy shall be reviewed by Town Council at least once within each term of Council and at such other times as may be required to up-date and amend the Policy in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
36. Any policies of the Town of Bracebridge that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.