

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF ADJALA – TOSORONTIO

POLICY/PROCEDURES/PRACTICES

Subject Title: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy

Date Approved By Council: Monday November 2, 2009

Motion No: By-law 09-34

POLICY STATEMENT

A policy to set out procedures and practices on providing services to people with disabilities within the Township of Adjala – Tosorontio.

PURPOSE

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service O. Reg. 429/07 requires a Municipality to adopt and maintain policy, procedures and practices governing the provision of its services to persons with disabilities. The purpose of this policy is to set out policies, procedures and practices for providing services in a manner that:

- Respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- Provides for the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities.
- Provides an equal opportunity to obtain, use or benefit from the Township's goods and services.
- Provides notice of temporary or emergency disruption of services to persons with disabilities.

DEFINITIONS

“assistive devices” – means devices used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by this standard. Assistive devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, reading machines, visual aids, recording machines, hearing devices and devices for grasping;

“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, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice; (“obstacle”);

“contractor” means a company or person with a formal or informal contract to do a specific job on behalf of the Corporation of the Township of Adjala – Tosorontio.

“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 insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”)

“guide dog” - means a guide dog as defined in section 1 of the Blind Persons Rights’ Act;

“service animal” - means an animal described as follows:

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; 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.

“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 or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

DOCUMENTATION

All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, including the Township’s policy, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to MFIPPA.

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

The Clerk shall be responsible for the review process and any subsequent amendments to this policy document. Review and amendments shall take place within the first year of each term of Council.

BEST PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Feedback

Feedback from our customers gives the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio opportunities to learn and improve. The Township recognizes that it is the right of our customers to make a complaint, compliment or make suggestions on ways to improve our services.

To assist the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio in ensuring that the delivery of goods and services to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the customer is invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, in person, e-mail, disk, or telephone, addressed to:

Township Clerk
Township of Adjala-Tosorontio
7855 Sideroad 30, R.R. #1
Alliston, Ontario L9R 1V1
Phone: 705-434-5055 Ext. 221
e-mail bkane@townshipadjtos.on.ca

In order to assist in a proper response, customers will be asked to provide their name, address, phone number and any other contact information necessary.

The comments provided will be reviewed by staff and the Clerk will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of the feedback and will set out the actions to be taken in response to any complaint or suggestion.

Service Disruption – Notice

It is possible that from time to time there will be disruptions in service, such as an accessible washroom or an automatic door that is under repair. If a disruption in service is planned, and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

Whether a planned or unplanned disruption, notice of the disruption will be posted on the affected door or doors.

Training

The following person(s) requires training on providing customer service to people with disabilities:

- Every person who participates in developing the policy, practices and procedures under Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.
- Every person who deals with the public on behalf of Township of Adjala-Tosorontio, including 3rd parties i.e. employees, agents, volunteers, management.

- Current employees, agents, volunteers, management, etc. shall receive training by January 1, 2010.
- New employees, agents, volunteers, management, etc. shall receive training as soon as “practicable”, after being assigned.
- Ongoing training on changes to policies, procedures and new equipment shall be provided.

And shall consist of any or all of the following:

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- How to provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- The process for people to provide feedback to the Township about its provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, and how the Township responds to the feedback and takes action on any complaint.
- Township of Adjala-Tosorontio’s policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Townships goods and services.

Training Records

Training records shall be kept, including dates when the training is provided, number of individuals to whom the training was provided. The names of individuals trained will be recorded for training administration purposes, subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act “MFIPPA”.

Methods of Communication

The Township of Adjala – Tosorontio’s approach to communicating with customers with disabilities will be as follows:

- Listen to the customer.
- Maintain eye contact without staring.
- Make the customer feel comfortable.
- Treat the customer with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- Ask the customer to tell you the best way to help. If unsure, we always ask.
- When offering assistance, wait until the person has accepted our offer or has given instructions before you help.
- Deal with unfamiliar situations in a calm, professional manner.
- Allow for extra time if necessary.
- Be relaxed.

- Speak directly to the person rather than through a companion or personal assistant who might be present.

The Township of Adjala – Tosorontio’s general principles to the following disabilities are as follows:

Deaf or hearing-impaired

Hearing loss can cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words. A person who is deaf, deafened or hard of hearing may be unable to use a public telephone, understand speech in noisy environments or pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by a stranger.

Here are some tips on providing service to people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Attract a deaf person’s attention, wave your hand or tap them on the shoulder or elbow while they are in our line of vision.
- Speak clearly, slowly and in a normal tone of voice, as exaggerated speech can distort lip movements.
- Face the light source and reduce any background noise if possible (i.e. meet in a separate room).
- Use written notes if needed.

Blind or visually impaired

Vision disabilities reduce one’s ability to see clearly. A person with vision loss can result in difficulty reading or seeing faces, maneuvering in unfamiliar places.

Here are some tips on providing service to people who are visually impaired:

- Always identify yourself and others by name when you greet the customer.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice and identify your movements when you move from one place to another.
- When offering assistance, allow them to take your arm rather than taking theirs.
- When offering assistance, place the person’s hand on the back or arm of the seat.
- Describe anything you point to.
- Offer the use of a magnifying device.

Speech disabilities

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. A person with a speech disability can result in problems with pronunciation, pitch and loudness, stuttering or slurring.

Here are some tips on providing service to people with a speech or language impairment:

- Allow extra time for communicating and be patient to allow the person to understand.
- Encourage rather than correcting and do not speak for the person.

- Use notes where necessary and never pretend to understand something when you do not understand it.
- Use clear and simple words.
- Give exact instructions.

Physical disabilities

Physical disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through muscle weakness, tremors and paralysis. A person with a physical disability may have problems performing manual tasks, moving around independently, reaching, pulling or manipulating objects.

Here are some tips on providing service to people with a physical disability.

- Try to be at eye level for those in wheelchairs.
- If you must stand, step back slightly so the person does not have to strain their neck to look at you.
- When calling an individual, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for the person to reach the phone.
- Offer assistance if the individual appears to have difficulty opening a door.
- Offer a place to sit if the individual appears to have difficulty standing.
- When offering assistance, allow them to take your arm rather than taking theirs.

Support Persons

Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person while accessing good and/or services.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, they are permitted to enter the premises together and are not prevented from having access to each other while on the premises.

The Township may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on its premises, 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 on the premises.

Here are some tips on providing service to people accompanied by a support person:

- Speak directly to the person, not their companion or attendant

Service animals

Service animals, such as guide dogs, offer independence and security to many people with various disabilities. Some laws generally prohibit animals in certain areas – such as food preparation areas; however services animals are permitted in most public situations.

Every employee shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal unless the animal is excluded by law. Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the person with disabilities. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.

When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting, or other harmful behaviour) an employee may ask the person with disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods and services. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.

Here are some tips on providing service to people accompanied by a service animal:

- Do not touch or speak to the service animal.
- Do not feed or deliberately startle a service animal.
- Do not separate or attempt to separate a person from his/her service animal.
- Do not initiate conversation about service animals.

Assistive Devices

Assistive devices are used by people with disabilities to help with daily living.

Persons using assistive devices will be allowed to use their own devices to access our services. However, it should be noted, it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure his/her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Staff will be trained with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods and services. The Township of Adjala – Tosorontio will also ensure that staff know how to use the assistive devices which are available on our premises.