



Township of Blandford-Blenheim

Corporate Policy Manual

Title: Accessible Customer Service Policy
Date: January 1, 2010
Applies to: Council, Employees, Volunteers, Contractors
Approved by: Council Resolution #12 - March 17, 2010

PURPOSE:

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Section 6 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), permits the Provincial government to make regulations establishing accessibility standards which are applicable to public and private sector organizations. It is intended that accessibility standards will address the following: customer service, transportation, communication and information technology, built environment, and employment. The objective of these standards is to ***“achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, and premises on or before January 1, 2025.”***

Regulation 429/07 – Customer Service Standard

The first standard issued by the Province addresses customer service and was made on July 25, 2007 and became effective on January 1, 2008. This standard, as with all standards to come, was developed by a Provincially-appointed committee, released to the public for comment, and finalized by the government. The purpose of this regulation is to establish accessibility standards for the delivery of customer service by the broader public and private sector. For the broader public sector, including the Township of Blandford-Blenheim, the standard must be complied with by January 1, 2010; compliance for the private sector will be required as of January 1, 2012.

The customer service regulation requires that the municipality develop policies, procedures and, practices, on the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities and must address the following:

- The use of assistive devices;

- The use of service animals and/or support persons;
- Training of employees on the provisions of the AODA and this standard;
- Provision of notice when services are disrupted; and,
- Municipal reporting to the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario

The following constitutes the Township of Blandford-Blenheim's policy on the provision of goods and services offered by the municipality to persons with disabilities.

Overriding Principles

It shall be the policy of the Township of Blandford-Blenheim where goods and services offered by the municipality shall be provided in a manner that:

- ***Respects the dignity and independence of persons with a disability;***
- ***Shall be integrated with others, unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or permanently, to enable persons with a disability to obtain or benefit from the good or service;***
- ***Persons with a disability shall be given equal opportunity to that given to others to obtain, use, and benefit from the goods and services; and***
- ***When communicating with a person with a disability, a provider shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.***

The subject policy is delivered in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and is applicable to all policies, procedures and processes of the Township of Blandford-Blenheim.

POLICY

1. Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities shall be permitted to obtain, use of benefit from goods or services though the use of their own assistive devices.

In the event a person with a disability is hindered from accessing goods or services and after consulting with the customer, the Township of Blandford-Blenheim will accommodate the customer by using any other assistive measures available such as but not limited to providing temporary access to other assistive devices or a Support Person.

2. Service animals

Service animals, such as but not limited to Guide dogs, Hearing dogs, Seizure Response dogs, other certified service animals shall be permitted entry to all Township facilities and meeting rooms which are open to the public. A service animal is defined as:

“Any animal where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability and if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse or other government issued certification confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.”

Service animals are not permitted:

- Where food preparation is being undertaken; or
- as otherwise disallowed by law.

Where a Service Animal is to be denied access to a facility or meeting room, other accommodations may be afforded, such as:

- alternate meeting format, such as teleconference/videoconference, where technology permits;
- deliver the goods or service at an alternate time or location;
- any other assistive measures available to deliver a good or service to ensure equality of outcome.

Owners of Service Animals may receive information from staff as to the location of fresh water for the service animal and where service animals may be walked to relieve themselves.

3. Support Persons

Support Persons shall be permitted entry to all Township facilities and meeting rooms which are open to the public, except:

- when there are fees applied against participants by a third party; and
- the Support Person was not pre-registered; and
- no vacancy exists.

If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to a third party, the Support Person is permitted to attend the event at their own cost.

If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to the Township of Blandford-Blenheim, the Support Person is permitted to attend at no cost.

Where 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, the person with a disability shall be accompanied by a Support Person when on the premises.

The customer shall determine whether a Support Person is necessary, however where an employee believes that a Support Person should be in attendance to protect the health and safety of the customer or others, the following criteria shall be used in consulting with the customer:

1. when there is a significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or others (the mere possibility of risk is insufficient);
2. when the risk is greater than the risk associated with other customers;
3. when the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means;

4. when the assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the duration of the risk, the nature and severity of the potential harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm; and
5. when the assessment of the risk is based on the individual's actual characteristics, not merely on generalizations, misperceptions, ignorance or fears about a disability.

4. Notice of Service Disruptions

In the event a temporary service disruption occurs that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to township facilities, goods or service, the Township will post notice or otherwise make the disruption known to customers in the following methods/places:

- Website; and
- Notice on entrance doors; and
- with Delivery Agents.

If an unexpected disruption occurs, persons with disabilities will be accommodated by the use of other means possible to deliver the goods and service, such as:

- the goods and service delivery agent may provide the goods or service directly to the person with a disability at an alternate place and time, as deemed appropriate; or
- If appropriate or required, deliver the goods and service to the person's place of residence; or
- Any other assistive measures available and deemed appropriate to deliver goods and services.

All notices of disruption shall include:

- the name of the event/service;
- the normal service location being impacted;
- alternate service locations;
- alternate service methods;
- hours of service availability;
- contact information; and
- any other information deemed appropriate to deliver a good or service.

As a guide, sample notices are attached to this policy as Appendix A and B.

5. Training

All employees and agents of the Township of East Zorra-Tavistock providing direct service to persons with a disability shall be trained in the various aspects of accessible customer service delivery.

All training, regardless of format, shall have regard for:

- An overview of the purposes of the AODA and an awareness of the subject Regional policy;
- Instruction on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- Instruction on interacting with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or a support person;
- Instruction on the use of equipment or devices available, such as wheelchairs and TTY;
- Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.

Depending on the services provided, the Department Manager and Supervisor can select from a variety of training options, including but not limited to:

- Review/Training of this policy with employees
- Use of the East Zorra-Tavistock - Accessible Customer Service – Training Manual (copy attached)
- Online Training <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca>
- 3rd Party Training Courses & Seminars
- Combination of the above

Training shall be mandatory for all new employees upon their initial orientation. In addition all employees should receive “refresher” training on a regular basis and more comprehensive training should there be changes to this policy.

Training records shall be maintained for all training completed under this Policy.

6. Feedback process

Feedback may be provided by a person with a disability in the manner deemed most convenient to them, such as in person, by telephone, in writing, or by delivering an electronic text by email or on diskette or otherwise.

Feedback may be provided directly to the service provider or:

CAO/Clerk

47 Wilmot Street South, Box 100

Drumbo ON N0J 1G0

Phone: 519-463-5347 Fax: 519-463-5881

Email: generalmail@twp.bla-ble.on.ca

All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and used to improve customer service. In addition, the author of the feedback will be provided a response in the format in which the feedback was received outlining actions deemed appropriate, if any.

7. Notice of Availability of Documents

This policy and any other document deemed to be a key in the delivery of goods and service will be made available upon request in a format that takes into account the person's disability to any person to whom it provides goods or services.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy will be made available on the Township of Blandford-Blenheim's website, and made available to any person to whom it provides goods or services by any other method or format as is reasonable in the circumstances.