



City of Niagara Falls

Accessible Customer Service
Standard Compliance Policy
January 2010

And

Accessible Customer Standard
Training Brochure
November 2009

Corporate Services	Date Effected January 2010	Accessible Customer Service Standard Compliance Policy
Human Resources	Last Revised	Support Services & Training Requirements

SECTION 400.41

PURPOSE:

The Corporation of the City of Niagara Falls is committed to being responsive to the diverse needs of all its residents by striving to provide equal access to its programs, services and facilities, including people with disabilities.

RATIONALE:

The Corporation of the City of Niagara Falls will develop policies, procedures and practices which address integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity, to comply with the legislative requirements prescribed under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and to promote accessibility. The policy is a complement to the Corporation's existing Customer Service policy (400.30).

SCOPE:

This policy applies to the Council and staff of the Corporation of the City of Niagara Falls, including volunteers, contractors, agents and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties, on behalf of the City.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES:

If a person with a disability requires assistive devices to access goods or services from the City, they are allowed to use such devices. The City does provide assistive devices at some of its facilities (ie. Wheelchairs).

GUIDE DOGS, SERVICE ANIMALS:

Service dogs can assist adults and children who are visually impaired, have autism, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mobility related disabilities, hearing problems and seizure disorders, amongst other disabilities.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the City will permit the person to enter the premises with the animal and keep it with him or her, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. If the service animal or guide dog is excluded by law from the premises, the City will look to other available measures to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the City's goods and services.

SUPPORT PERSONS:

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 City 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.

Where fees for goods and services are advertised or promoted by the City, it will provide advance notice of the amount payable, if any, in respect of the support person.

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DISRUPTION OF SERVICES:

If there is a disruption in a particular facility or service used to allow a person with a disability to access goods or services, the City will give notice of the disruption to the public by posting the reason for the disruption. Further, the City will provide notice on the anticipated duration of the disruption and, notify if any alternative facilities or services may be available.

This posting will be in a conspicuous place on the premises of the affected City building, or by other reasonable methods in the circumstances. If the disruption is anticipated, the City will provide a reasonable amount of advance notice of the disruption and provide notice in a local newspaper. If the disruption is unexpected, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

TRAINING:

The City will provide training about the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities. All City employees, volunteers, agents, contractors and others who deal with the public or other third parties, and those involved in developing customer service policies, practices, and procedures, will receive Accessibility Awareness Training within six months of beginning their duties. The City will also provide ongoing training with respect to changes in its policies, practices, and procedures to those individuals who require such training as soon as practicable. Lastly, the City will keep records of all staff who have received training (ie. dates, trainer etc).

Accessibility Awareness Training will include the following:

- (a) How to provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- (b) How to interact and communicate with persons in a manner that takes into account their disabilities;
- (c) The process for people to provide feedback to the City, its provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, and how the City responds to the feedback and takes action on any complaint;
- (d) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog, service animal or a support person to access goods and services;
- (e) Information on other Municipal policies, practices, and procedures dealing with the AODA;
- (f) A review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- (g) How to use equipment or devices available on City premises or provided by the City that may help with the provision of goods and services;
- (h) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the City's goods and services.

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FEEDBACK PROCESS:

The public can provide feedback on the accessibility of the provision of goods and services by the Corporation of the City of Niagara Falls through the Mayor's Disability Advisory Committee:

- (a) by mail addressed to: 4310 Queen Street, Niagara Falls, ON, L2E 6X5
c/o the Mayor's Disability Advisory Committee
- (b) by phone to: 905 356-7521 ext. 4294, 4271 or 4202
- (c) in person at: 4310 Queen Street, Niagara Falls, ON, L2E 6X5
- (d) by email to: accessibility@niagarafalls.ca

Feedback will be responded to within three business days of its receipt by the City.

DEFINITIONS:

Assistive Devices

Auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).

Disabilities

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 coordination, 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")

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Employees

Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Corporation of the City of Niagara Falls, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

Persons with Disabilities

Individuals who are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Service Animals

Any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

Support Persons

Any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

What to do if someone with a disability is having difficulty accessing our services.

- 1) Review the City of Niagara Falls Accessible Customer Service Standard Compliance Policy on the City's website or employee intranet system.
- 2) Speak with your supervisor or manager.
- 3) Review the resources found on the Access On website: www.accesson.ca
- 4) Use assistive services such as a TTY and Bell Relay Service, or book a sign language interpreter.
- 5) Review any additional Resources found on the Mayors Disability Advisory Committee.
- 6) Contact the **Mayors Disability Advisory Committee** at:
4310 Queen Street
Niagara Falls, ON, L2E 6X5
Phone: 905-356-7521 (ext) 4294 or (ext) 4271
Email: accessibility@niagarafalls.ca



*I have read and understood the City's
Accessible Customer Service brochure.*

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature _____

www.niagarafalls.ca

How May I Help You? Accessible Customer Service



The City of Niagara Falls is committed to providing excellent customer service to all residents and visitors, and treating everyone with dignity and respect. To do this, we must recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents, including the needs of individuals with disabilities.



The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 (AODA) requires that all public and private sector organizations in Ontario identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessible customer service. It also outlines a number of requirements the City of Niagara Falls must follow, including providing notification of temporary service disruptions. Additionally, it also states that all staff, Council Members, volunteers, third party contractors, board and advisory committee members must be trained on how to provide accessible customer service.

Did you know?



1.5 million
people
in Ontario
have a disability

This guide will give you tips on how to best interact with a person with a disability so that you can provide excellent customer service.

www.niagarafalls.ca

General Tips on Serving People With Disabilities

Treating all customers with individual respect and courtesy is at the heart of excellent customer service. The following are some tips that will assist you in serving your customer's:

- 1) Start by asking your customer "May I help you".
- 2) If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- 3) Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it is an emergency.
- 4) Patience, listening carefully, and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- 5) There may be assistive devices in your work location. Ask your Supervisor how to use any assistive devices.
- 6) Do not make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities a customer may have.

Accessible Customer Service is about providing service to citizens, customers and clients with disabilities in a manner that:

- Respects their dignity and independence.
- Is integrated as fully as possible into the method of service delivery.
- Ensures that equal opportunity is given to all customers to obtain, use, and benefit from our goods and services.

Mobility

- Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, unnecessarily unless it's an emergency.
- Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to ensure clear passage.

Hearing

- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example, using a pen and paper.
- Don't put your hands in front of your face when speaking
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.
- Speak directly to your customer, not his or her interpreter.



Vision

- Identify yourself when you approach your customer and do not walk away without saying good-bye.
- If you are giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you are approaching a door or an obstacle, say so.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Do not touch or address service animals—they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

Speech or Language

- Do not assume the customer has an intellectual or developmental disability if they have difficulty speaking. If you are able, ask questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' response.
- Do not interrupt or finish your customer's sentences.
- Wait for them to finish.

Mental Health

- You may not necessarily know your customer has a mental health disability unless you are informed.
- Create a safe environment. Be calm and professional, and ask your customer to tell you the best way you can be of assistance.

Learning

- A learning disability may interfere with your customer's ability to receive, express or process information.
- Therefore, take some time and be patient with your customer. Individuals who experience learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- If you are dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.



Did You Know?

Service animals are used for many different reasons, including mobility assistance, sound alert, and autism assistance. Some people with disabilities may also use assistive devices or require the assistance or a support person.

If you have access, visit the Ministry of Community & Social Services website at www.mcscs.gov.on.ca for more information on how to interact with customers who use assistive devices, service animals, or have a support person.