



TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2010

DATE OF LAST REVISION: January 1, 2010

BACKGROUND

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (“AODA”) 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.

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled “Accessibility Standards for Customer Service” came into force on January 1, 2008. This 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. Designated public sector organizations, including the Town of Richmond Hill, must comply with this standard as of January 1, 2010.

PURPOSE

This policy has been prepared in accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and addresses the following:

- the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities;
- the use of service animals by persons with disabilities;
- the use of support persons by persons with disabilities;
- notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
- training;
- customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities; and
- notice of availability and format of documents.

This policy is supported by procedures which outline the detailed processes and accommodations pursuant to this policy. The supporting procedures include the following:

- Procedures for Customer Service and the Use of Assistive Devices
- Procedures for the Use of Service Animals

- Procedures for the Use of Support Persons
- Procedures for Providing Notice of Temporary Disruptions
- Procedures for Receiving Feedback

DEFINITIONS

Accommodation

The special arrangement made or assistance provided so that customers with disabilities can participate in the experiences available to customers without disabilities. Accommodation will vary depending on the customer's unique needs.

Assistive Device

A technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

Customer

Persons to whom the Town provides goods and services and those who access Town facilities for the purpose of conducting business with the Town. This definition excludes those who perform duties for the Town, or on behalf of the Town such as staff, volunteers, elected officials or agents.

Disability

- 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*.

Guide Dog

A guide dog as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons Rights' Act* is a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having qualifications prescribed by the regulations under the *Blind Persons Rights' Act*.

Service Animal

Any animal used by a customer with a disability for reasons relating to the disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability; or where the customer provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the customer requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability; or where the customer

provides a valid identification card or training certificate from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

Support Person

A person who accompanies a customer with a disability in order to assist him or her with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Town

The Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill, including its boards and committees.

APPLICATION

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

POLICY STATEMENT

The Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all customers that we serve.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Communication with Customers with Disabilities

When communicating with a customer with a disability, the Town will do so in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

The Provision of Goods and Services to Customers with Disabilities

The Town of Richmond Hill will use reasonable efforts to ensure that the provision of its goods and services are consistent with the following principles:

- the Town's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of customers with disabilities;
- the provision of the Town's goods and services to customers with disabilities are integrated with those provided to customers who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a customer with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Town's goods or services;
- customers with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of customers without disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from the Town's goods and services.

Assistive Devices

A customer with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the Town's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the Town has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a customer with a disability or the health and safety of others.

In these situations and others, the Town may offer a customer with a disability other measures to assist him or her in obtaining, using and benefiting from the Town's goods and services, where the Town has such other measures available.

It is the responsibility of the customer with a disability to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Service Animals

Where the Town provides goods and services, customers with a disability may enter premises owned and/or operated by the Town, accompanied by a service animal and may keep the service animal with them if the public has access to such premises and the service animal is not otherwise excluded by law. If a service animal is excluded by law, the Town will use reasonable efforts to ensure that alternate means are available to enable the customer with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Town's goods and services.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the Town may ask the customer with a disability for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the customer requires the service animal for reasons relating to his or her disability.

It is the responsibility of the customer with a disability to keep their service animal in control at all times.

Support Persons

The Town, where it provides goods and services, will ensure that a customer with a disability may enter premises owned and/or operated by the Town with a support person and have access to their support person while on Town premises.

At times, the Town may require that a customer with a disability be accompanied by a support person while on Town premises. This will be required where it is deemed necessary to protect the health and safety of the customer with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

In situations where the confidential information of a customer with a disability is to be discussed, the Town may require a statement of permission and/or consent from the customer with a disability allowing their support person to be present. The Town may require the support person to sign a agreement where confidential Town matters are being addressed.

Where a fee is charged for admission to an event, service or in connection with the customer's presence on Town premises, the Town will provide advanced notice of the amount, if any, charged to the support person.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

The Town is aware that the operation of certain services and facilities is important to customers with disabilities. However, temporary disruptions in services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the Town's control or knowledge.

The Town will make reasonable effort to provide notice of the disruption to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available. The Town will make reasonable effort to provide prior notice of planned disruptions, recognizing that in some circumstances such as in the situation of an unplanned temporary disruption, advance notice will not be possible. In such cases, the Town will provide notice as soon as possible.

When temporary disruptions occur to the Town's services and/or facilities used by customers with disabilities, the Town will provide notice by posting the information in visible places, or on the Town's website (<http://www.richmondhill.ca>), or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances, as soon as possible.

Training

The Town will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies receive training as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07). The frequency and format of training will be tailored to suit each person's interactions with the public and his or her involvement in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services.

The content of the training will include, but is not restricted to the following:

- a review of the purpose of the AODA;
- a review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07);
- how to interact and communicate with customers who have various types of disabilities;
- how to interact with customers with disabilities who require the assistance of assistive devices, service animals, or support persons;
- how to use assistive devices or equipment provided by the Town that may help customers with disabilities to access the Town's goods and services;
- what to do if a customer with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Town's goods and services; and
- instruction on the Town's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to customers with disabilities.

Training will be provided as soon as practicable and on an on-going basis as changes are made to the Town's policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods and services to

customers with disabilities and to the assistive devices or equipment made available by the Town.

The Town will maintain records of the required training. These records will include the number of individuals trained and the dates on which training occurred. The names of individuals trained will be recorded for administration purposes, subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (“MFIPPA”), as amended.

Feedback

The Town of Richmond Hill is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all members of the public it serves. Feedback from the public is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of goods and services to customers with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other methods.

Information about the feedback process will be available to the public and notice of the process will be posted on the Town’s website (<http://www.richmondhill.ca>) and at all Town facilities.

Notice of the Availability of Documents

Notice of the availability of all documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service will be posted on the Town’s website, and be made available through the Office of the Clerk.

Availability and Format of the Documents Required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service are available upon request.

When providing a document to a customer with a disability, the Town will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes the customer’s disability into account.

Policy Review

The Office of the Clerk shall be responsible for reviewing the policy on an annual basis and/or at any time legislative changes are imposed.