



PORT COLBORNE

CITY OF PORT COLBORNE

**ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE
HANDBOOK**

December 21, 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005	1
What is the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act?.....	1
CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD,	2
O. REG. 429/07	2
Who must comply?.....	2
What are the requirements of the Customer Service Standard?.....	2
Principles of Accessible Customer Service	2
HOW TO INTERACT AND COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES	3
General tips on providing service to customers with disabilities.	3
Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have vision loss.	4
Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.	5
Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have physical disabilities	5
Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have mental health disabilities	6
Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have intellectual or developmental disabilities.....	7
Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have learning disabilities	7
Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have speech or language impairments.....	8
PORT COLBORNE'S ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY	8
Service Animals	8
Support Persons	8
Assistive Devices	9
Temporary Disruption to Services and Facilities	9
Feedback Process	9
WHAT TO DO IF A CUSTOMER WITH A DISABILITY IS HAVING DIFFICULTY ACCESSING GOODS OR SERVICES	10

EMPLOYEE ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE CHECKLIST 11



UNIT 1 | ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005

What is the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act?

- ✓ A law in Ontario that allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them.
- ✓ Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians in order to:
 - Achieve a fully accessible Ontario by 2025
 - Develop accessibility standards
 - Enforce the standards
 - The AODA will apply to public and private sectors

Why?

- Approximately 1.8 million Ontarians (15.5%) live with a disability
- This is increasing as the population ages
- In 2026, approximately 16% of people in Canada will have a disability

“disability” means,

- *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,*
- *a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,*
- *a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,*
- *a mental disorder, or an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997;*

Who must comply?

Compliance is mandatory for public sector organizations including municipalities. For all organizations, both public and private, that provide goods or services to other organizations in Ontario and that have at least one employee, compliance is mandatory by January, 2012.

What are the requirements of the Customer Service Standard?

- ✓ Develop policies, procedures and practices including: Provision of goods and services, assistive devices, service animals, support persons, notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities, training, feedback process, availability of documents.

Principles of Accessible Customer Service

- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Dignity
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Equal Opportunity
- ✓ Integration

Terminology is Important!

When referring to someone with a disability it is extremely important that you put the person FIRST.

- *a person with a physical disability*
- *a person with a hearing impairment*
- *a person with a vision impairment*

General tips on providing service to customers with disabilities.

- ✓ If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "How may I help you?" Your customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- ✓ Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to his or her support person or companion.
- ✓ Avoid stereotypes and assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities the person has. Some disabilities are not visible and customers are not required to give you information about any disabilities they may have.
- ✓ Don't assume what a person with a disability can or can't do.
- ✓ Take the time to get to know your customer's needs and focus on meeting those needs.
- ✓ Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take longer to understand and respond.
- ✓ Learn appropriate language and terminology to use when referring to people with disabilities.
- ✓ If you cannot understand what your customer is saying, politely ask them to repeat themselves.
- ✓ Don't touch or speak to service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- ✓ Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission.
- ✓ Consider offering interactive devices or alternate services.
- ✓ Consider including people with disabilities in the evaluation of your communication services.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have vision loss.

Vision disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity to total blindness.

- ✓ Don't assume the individual can't see you.
- ✓ Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to him.
- ✓ Offer your elbow to guide the person. If he accepts, walk slowly but wait for permission before doing so. Lead – don't pull.
- ✓ Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Guide the person to a chair or comfortable location.
- ✓ Identify landmarks or other details to orient him to the environment.
- ✓ Be clear and precise when giving directions, ie., two steps behind you, a metre to your left, etc.
- ✓ If you're uncertain about how to provide directions, ask the person how to do so.
- ✓ Do not be afraid or embarrassed to use words such as "see", "read" and "look". People with vision loss also use these words.
- ✓ If you need to leave your customer, let him know you are leaving and will be back.
- ✓ When providing printed information, offer to read, summarize it or describe it. For example, verbally itemize the bill.

Vision loss can result in: Difficulty reading or seeing faces, difficulty manoeuvring in unfamiliar places, inability to differentiate colours or distances, a narrow field of vision, the need for bright light or contrast, night blindness.

Types of assistance your customer might use: Braille, large print, magnification devices, white cane, guide dog / service animal, support person such as a sighted guide.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

- ✓ Attract the customer's attention by using a touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- ✓ Ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- ✓ Move to a well-lit area, if available, where your customer can see your face.
- ✓ Don't put your hands in front of your face when speaking. Some people read lips.
- ✓ If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, ie. writing.
- ✓ Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate.
- ✓ Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Confirm that your customer understands you.
- ✓ If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area, if possible.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

Hearing aid, paper and pen, personal amplification device, phone amplifier, relay service, teletypewriter (TTY), hearing ear dog, support person such as a sign language interpreter.



Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have physical disabilities

- ✓ If having a conversation with a person in a wheelchair, consider sitting to make eye contact.
- ✓ Ask before you help.
- ✓ Let your customer know about accessible features in the immediate area.

- ✓ If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to:
 - Wait for and follow the person’s instructions,
 - Confirm that your customer is ready to move
 - Describe what you’re going to do before you do it
 - Avoid uneven ground and objects
 - Don’t leave the person in an awkward or dangerous position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting.

Types of assistance: Elevator, mobility device (i.e., wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches), support person.



Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have mental health disabilities

- ✓ Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- ✓ Be patient.
- ✓ Be confident and reassuring and work with your customer to try to meet their needs.
- ✓ If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.

Mental health disabilities are not as visible as many other types of disabilities. Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, as well as bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.

A person with a mental health disability may have difficulty with one, several or none of these: Inability to think clearly, hallucinations, depression or acute mood swings, poor concentration, difficulty remembering, apparent lack of motivation.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have intellectual or developmental disabilities

- ✓ Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- ✓ To confirm if your customer understands, consider asking him to repeat the message.
- ✓ If you cannot understand what is being said, simply ask again.
- ✓ Provide one piece of information at a time.
- ✓ Be supportive and patient.

Intellectual or developmental disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit the person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs.

Types of assistance your customer might use: Communication board, speech generating device, service animal, support person.



Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have learning disabilities

- ✓ Allow extra time if necessary - people may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- ✓ Remember to communicate in a way that takes into account the customer's disability.
- ✓ Be patient and be willing to explain something again, if needed.

The term "learning disability" describes a range of information processing disorders that can affect how a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains, understands or uses verbal or non-verbal information.

Types of assistance your customer might use: Alternative technology for writing, calculator, scanning or reading technology, tape recorders, mini pocket recorders.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have speech or language impairments

- ✓ Don't assume that because a person has one disability, they also have another.
- ✓ Ask your customer to repeat the information if you don't understand.
- ✓ Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible.
- ✓ Try to allow enough time to communicate with your customer as they may speak more slowly.
- ✓ Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences. Wait for them to finish.

Some people have problems communicating because of their disability ie. difficulty expressing themselves or understanding written or spoken language or difficulty pronouncing words.

***Types of assistance your customer might use:** Communication board, paper and pen, speech generating device, support person.*

UNIT 4 | PORT COLBORNE'S ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

Service Animals

- ✓ Service animals shall be permitted entry to all municipal facilities and meeting rooms which are open to the public.
- ✓ If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the City shall ensure that other reasonable measures are available to assist the person with obtaining, using and benefiting from the City's goods and services.
- ✓ Staff may request confirmation of a service animal's status.

Support Persons

- ✓ Support Persons shall be permitted entry to all municipal facilities and meeting rooms which are open to the public.

- ✓ Admission fees for support persons, if any, must be posted on the City's website and anywhere else where fees are posted.

Assistive Devices

- ✓ A person with a disability shall be permitted to obtain, use or benefit from goods or services through the use of their own assistive devices.
- ✓ If the person cannot access goods or services using an assistive device, the City shall offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist the person with obtaining, using and benefiting from the City's goods and services.

Temporary Disruption to Services and Facilities

- ✓ The City shall make reasonable efforts 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.
- ✓ Notice of temporary disruptions must be posted in a visible place, on the City's website, or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances as soon as reasonably possible.

Feedback Process

Feedback from a member of the public regarding the accessibility of the City's goods and services may be provided in the manner deemed most convenient by the person providing the feedback including in person, by telephone, in writing, by email or other electronic format.

Feedback may be provided directly to the service provider or:

Carrie McIntosh

Phone: 905-835-2900 ext. 308

Fax: 905-835-2969

Email: carriemcintosh@portcolborne.ca

UNIT 5

WHAT TO DO IF A CUSTOMER WITH A DISABILITY IS HAVING DIFFICULTY ACCESSING GOODS OR SERVICES

If your customer is having difficulty accessing City goods or services ALWAYS work with your customer to find an alternative method of accessing the service.

For more information refer to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act or website at: www. /www.mcass.gov.on.ca

***If you are unsure how to help a customer, your first question should ALWAYS be:
"How can I help you?"***

UNIT 6

EMPLOYEE ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE CHECKLIST

This checklist is to be completed within five working days of receipt and returned to your Supervisor or Chairperson. The completed form must be signed, then copied and returned as per the distribution list at the bottom of this page.

Name: _____

1. I have read the City of Port Colborne's Accessible Customer Service Training Manual.

YES

2. I am aware that the customer service that I provide to people with disabilities must be based on respect, dignity, independence, equal opportunity and integration.

YES

3. I am aware of the City's policy with respect to service animals, support persons, assistive devices, temporary disruptions to services and feedback regarding accessible customer service.

YES

Employee / Volunteer / Committee Member / Council Member Signature	Date
Supervisor / Chairperson Signature	Date

Copies: 1. Accessibility Advisory Committee 2. Supervisor

3. Employee / Volunteer /
Committee Member / Council
Member retains original in booklet

