

The Corporation of the Township of Severn



Accessible Customer Service Policy Best Practices and Procedures

Accessible Customer Service

Statement

To provide the citizens of the Township of Severn with disabilities with accessible goods and services in a manner consistent with the following principles:

- Independence
- Dignity
- Integration
- Equality of Opportunity

Goods and Service provided to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible and persons with disabilities shall benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner as other customers.

Purpose

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is designed 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, by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Services Standard required municipalities to establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods and services to people with disabilities and must address 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;
- Feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities; and
- Notice of availability and format of documents and meetings.

Application

This policy shall apply to Members of Council, all Township of Severn employees, as well as volunteers, agents, contractors who act on behalf of or represent the Corporation in any manner. This will also apply to members and volunteers of all Township of Severn Committees and Boards including the Severn Township Library Board and its employees and volunteers.

Implementation

The Township of Severn shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- The goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities, and others, will be integrated unless an alternative measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable persons with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of goods and services.
- The Township of Severn employees when communicating with a person with a disability shall do so in a manner that takes into account the persons' disability.

Definitions

Assistive Devices – shall mean an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids, etc.) to access and benefit from the goods and services offered by the Township of Severn.

Barrier – means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of the disability. Barriers may include a physical, architectural, and attitudinal barrier as well as, an information or communication barrier, technological barriers, a policy, procedure, or a practice.

Disability – means any degree of physical disability including, but not limited to diabetes, epilepsy, brain injury, paralysis, amputation, lack of coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device; mental impairment or developmental disability; learning disability or dysfunction in understanding or using symbols or spoken language; mental disorder; or injury for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Guide Dogs or Service Animals – a “guide dog” means a guide dog as defined in section 1 of the Blind Persons’ Rights Act. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal of 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.

Principle of Dignity – policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as customers and clients who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer. They do not treat people with disabilities as an afterthought or force them to accept lesser service, quality, or convenience.

Principle of Independence – in some instances, independence means freedom from control or influence of others – freedom to make your own choices. In other situations, it may mean the freedom to do things your way.

Principle of Integration – integrated services are those that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers.

Principle of Equal Opportunity – equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services, it means that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods or services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.

Support Persons – shall mean any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend to 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.

Exclusions

This policy is excluded during an emergency situation where the health and safety of the person with a disability is in jeopardy.

Consequences of Non-Compliance

The AODA is Provincial legislation and every person who is guilty of an offence under the AODA is liable on conviction:

- To a fine of not more than \$50,000 for each day or part day on which the offence occurs or continues to occur; or
- If the person is a corporation, to a fine of not more than \$100,000 for each day or part day on which the offence occurs or continues to occur.

Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Accessibility Committee. Recommendations will be reviewed by staff and forwarded to Council for implementation.

Best Practices and Procedures

Accessibility Customer Services follows four basic principles:

- Dignity
- Independence
- Integration
- Equal opportunity

What can I do to help people with disabilities access our services?

- Ask how you can help
- Offer a variety of methods of communication
- Understand the nature and scope of the services you offer

Assistive Devices

The following assistive devices are available through the Township of Severn:

1. Accessible Telephone Service

- A person(s) with a vision disability or impairment or a person with a hearing loss will have access to a handset located in the Research Room which has sight and hearing enhancements.

In inquiries for telephone services are received for hearing impaired or vision impaired individuals, please refer them to Bell Canada. Teletype (TTY) is older technology and the municipality will not be purchasing any equipment for this purpose.

The Bell Relay Service operator is available to assist in placing or receiving calls to/from persons who use a TTY/teletypewriter. The operator will also assist in placing VCO (Voice Carry Over) and HCO (Hearing Carry Over) calls. VCO mode allows a person with a hearing disability to speak directly to the other party. HCO mode allows a person with a speech disability to hear the other party. There is no charge for local calls.

Information regarding this service is provided in the local telephone book under "Special Needs."

2. Electronic Door Openers

- Locations:
 - Township of Severn Administration Building, 1024 Hurlwood Lane
 - Coldwater Community Centre
 - Washago Community Centre
 - Lake St. George Community Centre
- The electronic door openers must be turned on at the beginning of the work day when the building is opened and turned off when the buildings are not occupied. The motor in the electronic door opener will continue to run if it is pressed when locked and not turned off.

3. Accessible Parking

- The accessible parking places should be connected or integrated with a barrier-free path of travel, shall be painted blue and marked by an identifying marking consisting of the International Symbol for the disabled. The accessible parking places shall be cleared of snow as soon as practicable.

4. Accessible Washrooms

- Locations:
 - Township of Severn Administration Building, 1024 Hurlwood Lane
 - Coldwater Community Centre
 - Washago Community Centre
 - Lake St. George Community Centre

- The washrooms are wheelchair accessible and are fitted with assistance devices to aid in the accommodation of persons with disabilities.

5. Elevator

- Location:
 - Coldwater Community Centre
- An elevator is available for individuals requiring assistance in order to access the second floor.

6. Council Meetings and Committee Meetings held in the Council Chambers

- The Council Chambers is equipped with microphones for each member of Council/Committee and one for questions/delegations from the floor. The microphones shall be turned on for each public meeting.

7. Various assistive devices including but not all inclusive (Administration Office)

- Paper and writing instruments; portable magnifiers; computer terminal at customer service counter with capabilities of enlarged print; certain documents available to the public will be enhanced i.e. large print etc.; lowered counter to accommodate a person who uses a wheelchair or a person with physical disabilities.

Feedback

Feedback from our customers gives the Township of Severn Council opportunities to learn and improve. The Municipality recognizes the right of our customers to make a complaint, compliment or suggestions on ways to improve our services. To assist the Township of Severn 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:

Feedback on Accessibility may be provided by the public by using the following methods:

- Complete and submit the attached Feedback Form
- In writing, by mail or delivered to Accessibility Co-ordinator, Township of Severn, P.O. Box 159, Orillia, Ontario, L3V 6J2
- By fax at 705-325-5818
- By phone at 705-325-2315, Ext. 250
- By email at accessibility@severn.ca

- In person at the Township of Severn Administration Office - 1024 Hurlwood Lane

The feedback should provide alternative suggestions that the Township could provide in order to provide goods and services in an accessible manner, as well as your contact information.

Once the feedback is received:

- All feedback will be directed to the Accessibility Co-ordinator
- Contact information is required
- If revisions to the Accessible Customer Care policies and/or procedures are required as a result of the feedback, the revisions shall be implemented as soon as practical.
- If a revision requires significant financial/capital or physical the matter will be reviewed by the Chief Administrative Officer and if feasible, a plan will be developed to address the revision, subject to Council approval.

Documentation

The Township of Severn shall upon request, give a copy of the policies, practices and procedures required under the Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service to any person.

Service Animals, Support Person(s)

What about service animals and support persons accompanying a person with a disability?

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 service animals are permitted in most public situations.

Support people assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an intervener, sign language interpreter, or as a Personal Support Worker providing physical assistance. A support person may also be a friend or relative that will assist and support the customer.

- Every employee shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and/or services
- Every employee shall 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 persons 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 persons with the disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods or services. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods or services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.
- Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person while accessing goods and/or services.

Admission Fees – Advance Notice

In the event that admission fees are charged, advance notice concerning what admission, if any, would be charged to a support person shall be posted in a conspicuous place.

Service Disruption – Notice

It is possible that from time to time there will be disruptions in service, such as an entrance way that is under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, or technology that is temporarily unavailable. If a disruption in services is planned, and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

People with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transit or arranging a ride. By providing notice, you can save that person an unnecessary trip.

Notice will be provided on the website, over the phone, or in writing.

Unexpected Disruption in Service – Notice

In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, notice may be provided in a variety of ways and will be done as quickly as possible.

In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by service interruption shall be informed of any alternative methods.

Training

- Every person who participates in developing the policy, practices and procedures.
- Every person who deals with the public on behalf of the Township of Severn, including third parties i.e. employees, agents, volunteers, management.

- 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.

The method and amount of training shall be geared to the trainee’s role in terms of accessibility. Training records shall be kept, including the dates when the training is provided, and number of individuals to whom the training was provided.

Types of Disabilities and Best Practices

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. Physical disabilities can be congenital such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendonitis. A physical disability may affect an individual’s ability to:

- Perform manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key or gripping a door knob
- Move around independently
- Control the speed or coordination of movements
- Reach, pull or manipulate objects
- Have strength or endurance

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to your customer. Don’t speak to someone who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things. Ask before you help.
- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person’s personal space, don’t touch, move, or lean on them.
- Provide your customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter.

- If a counter is too high or wide, step around it to provide service.
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.
- Be patient. Customers will identify their needs to you.

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 phone
- Understand speech in noisy environments
- Pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. Remember, customers who are deaf or hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating.

Here are some tips on serving customers who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or by gently waving your hand.
- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout. Speak clearly.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- Deaf people may use a sign language interpreter to communicate – always direct your attention to the deaf person – not the interpreter.
- Any personal (e.g. financial) matters should be discussed in a private room with few competing sounds.
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.
- Don't touch service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

DEAF – BLINDNESS is a combination of hearing and vision loss. The result for a person who is deaf-blind is significant – difficult to access information and performing daily activities. Deaf-blindness interferes with communication, learning, orientation and

mobility. People who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, Braille, telephone devices, communication boards and any combination thereof. Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an intervener who relay information and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.

Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some tips on serving customers who are deaf-blind:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Do not touch or address the service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency.
- Understand that communication can take some time – be patient.
- Direct your attention to your customer, not the intervener.

VISION disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Vision loss can result in:

- Difficulty reading or seeing faces
- Difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar places
- Inability to differentiate colours or distances
- A narrow field of vision
- The need for bright light, or contrast

- Night blindness

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

Vision disabilities can restrict your customers' abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have vision disabilities:

- Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact.
- If the person uses a service animal – do not touch or approach the animal – it is working.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, and location as necessary.
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.
- Never touch your customer without asking permission unless it is an emergency.
- Do not leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Do not walk away without saying good-bye.

INTELLECTUAL disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors such as Downs Syndrome, exposure to environmental toxins, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disorders. A person with an intellectual disorder may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken and written information
- Conceptual information
- Perception of sensory information
- Memory

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use clear, simple language.
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.

- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions.
- Be patient and verify your understanding.
- If you can't understand what is being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant.

SPEECH disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical disabilities include problems with:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- Stuttering or slurring

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

Some people have problems communicating. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Here are some tips on serving customers with speech or language impediments:

- If possible, communicate in a quiet environment.
- Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Ask them to repeat as necessary or write their message.
- If you are able to, ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no."
- Verify your understanding.
- Patience, respect, and willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

LEARNING disabilities include a range of disorders that affect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding and processing. People with a learning

disability have average or above average intelligence but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in:

- Difficulties in reading
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Way finding
- Processing information

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

- Learning disabilities are generally invisible and ability to function varies greatly – respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling in forms and so on with courtesy.
- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.

MENTAL HEALTH disabilities include a range of disorders; however, there are three main types of mental health disability:

- Anxiety
- Mood
- Behavioral

People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; be perceived as pushy or abrupt; be unable to make a decision; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

- Treat each person as an individual. Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations.
- Stay calm and courteous, even if the customer exhibits unusual behaviour, focus on the service they need and how you can help.

SMELL disabilities can involve the inability to sense smells or a hypersensitivity to odors and scents. A person with a small disability may have allergies to certain odors, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.

TOUCH disabilities can affect a person's ability to sense texture, temperature, vibration or pressure. Touch sensations may be reduced or heightened resulting in a hypersensitivity to touch, temperature, or the opposite, numbness and the inability to feel touch sensations.

TASTE disabilities can limit the experience of the four primary taste sensations; sweet, bitter, salty, and sour. A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify spoiled food or noxious substances.

OTHER disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses and diseases including ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement.

Disabilities are not always visible or easy to distinguish.

Forms

1. Notice – Admission Fees
2. Notice – Expected Service Disruption
3. Notice – Unexpected Disruption in Service
4. Feedback Form

Township of Severn Admission Fees

Admission Fees shall be charged to a “Support Person” accompanying persons with disabilities. The cost will be:

Definitions:

“Persons with Disabilities shall mean those individuals that are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Support Persons” shall mean any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, friend to 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.

Township of Severn Service Disruption

There will be a scheduled service disruption at the Township of Severn Municipal Office. The Disruptions will be from:_____ to:_____

These disruptions include (circle one):

- Repairs to Doors
- Repairs to Technology
- Other

On behalf of the Township of Severn, we would like to thank you for your patience in this matter.

Township of Severn Service Disruption Unexpected

There is currently an unexpected service disruption at the Township of Severn Municipal Office. The estimated time of service disruptions will be: _____

These disruptions include (circle one):

- Repairs to Doors
- Repairs to Technology
- Other

On behalf of the Township of Severn, we would like to thank you for your patience in this matter.

Township of Severn Feedback Form

The Township of Severn welcomes your comments, suggestions and feedback regarding accessibility of its programs and services for persons with disabilities. Please complete the following form and send it to the Accessibility Co-ordinator, Township of Ramara. Be sure to provide possible solutions that will assist us in resolving your issue. If you would like to receive a response, please make sure you include the appropriate contact information. We will do our best to follow up in a timely manner.

Subject	
Accessibility Concerns	
Possible Solutions	
First Name	
Last Name	

Would you like a response? If yes, please choose one of the following methods:

Phone Number	
Email Address	
Mailing Address	

Send this form to: Accessibility Co-ordinator
 The Township of Severn
 P.O. Box 159
 Orillia, ON L3V 6J3
 Phone: 705-325-2315