



**ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE
POLICY**

January 1, 2010

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1. Purpose and Application

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is Provincial Legislation 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 on or before January 1, 2025.

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 or other third parties.

This policy is 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 Feed back regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- Notice of availability and Format of documents and meetings.

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the City of Barrie, whether the person is an employee of The Corporation of the City of Barrie, a member of Council, an agent, a volunteer, a student on placement or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing the City of Barrie's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

2. Policy Statement

The City of Barrie is committed to providing exceptional and accessible service for its customers. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that is based upon the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity to all of its customers. The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible. Persons with disabilities will benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

3. Definitions

Accessible shall mean capable of being entered or reached, approachable; easy to get at; capable of being influenced, obtainable; easy to understand or appreciate.

Assistive Device shall mean a device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the customer Service Standard.

Disability: Shall mean,

- 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;

Dignity shall mean respecting and treating every person including persons with a disability as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer.

Independence shall mean freedom from control or influence of others, freedom to make your own choices.

Integration of services shall mean the integration of services that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same service, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers. All policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities.

Equal Opportunity shall mean having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. People with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods or services as others.

Guide Dog shall mean a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations.

Goods and Services shall mean goods and services provided by the Corporation of the City of Barrie.

Nurse shall mean a Registered Nurse or Registered Practical Nurse who is a registered member in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

Physician shall mean a physician who is a registered member, in good standing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

Procedure shall mean the steps that staff are expected to take to comply with the Customer Service Policy.

Practises shall mean how staff will offer or deliver services.

Readily Apparent shall mean an animal which is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or by what it is doing, ie. wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign identifying the animal as a service animal.

Service Animals are animals that are used as a service animal for a person with a disability. To be considered a service animal under the standard, it must either be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a disability must be prepared to show a letter from a doctor or nurse confirming that it is required for reasons relating to his or her disability.

Support Person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

4. General Principles

4.1 Providing Goods and Service to People with Disabilities

The City of Barrie is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

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

4.2 Communication

- a) The City will communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that will take into account their disability;
- b) City staff will be trained to on how to interact and communicate with customers with various types of disabilities;
- c) Customers with disabilities will be offered alternative communication formats that will meet the needs of the customer and
- d) Documents will be provided to customers in an alternative format that will meet the needs of the customer in a timely fashion and in accordance with the Corporate Communications Policy Manual.

4.3 Use of Service Animals, Support Persons and Assistive Devices

a) Service Animal

The Corporation of the City of Barrie is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal that is not in contravention of any law (ie. the Municipal Code By-law) on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties and owned and operated by the City of Barrie. If a service animal is excluded by law, the City of Barrie will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the City's goods and Services.

The City of Barrie will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public on behalf of the Corporation of the City of Barrie are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

b) Support Person

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter The Corporation of the City of Barrie's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on the City of Barrie premises.

The Corporation of the City of Barrie may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when receiving goods or service or participating in a program offered by the City in situations where it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises (please see Service Animals, Support Persons and Assistive devices procedure).

Fees will not be charged for one support person when a customer is accessing services where an admission fee is applicable and require a support service. Customers will be informed of this notice that will be posted within the Corporation of the City of Barrie's premises and provided in alternate formats such as the City of Barrie webpage, appropriate City of Barrie publications, ie., Recreation Guide, City Page in the newspaper.

c) Assistive Devices

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the City's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the City has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises. In these situations, the City may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist him or her in obtaining, using and benefiting from the City's goods and services, where the City has such other measures available.

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

The Corporation of the City of Barrie will also ensure that staff are trained to use the following assistive devices for customers with disabilities: wheelchair, TTY, electronic communication devices, interpretive devices, internet.

4.4 Notice of Temporary Disruptions

The Corporation of the City is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to the public. However, temporary disruptions in the City's services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the City's Control.

The Corporation of the City of Barrie will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. In the event of an unplanned disruption of its facilities and services, the City will make a reasonable effort to provide notice as soon as possible. In both cases, this notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Records will be maintained containing dates of when Temporary Disruption Notices are posted.

When temporary disruptions occur to the City's Services or facilities, the City will provide notice by posting the information in visible places and on the City's web-site (www.city.barrie.ca) or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

4.5 Staff Training on Customer Service

The Corporation of the City of Barrie will provide customer service training in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07 which includes all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of the Corporation, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Positions that require training and the applicable level of training can be located within the Procedures and Practices section of this policy.

The training will be provided as soon as practicable upon an individual being assigned the applicable duties.

Training will include the following:

- i) Understanding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standards.
- ii) How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- iii) How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- iv) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Corporation of the City of Barrie's goods and services.

Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to people with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Records of training will be maintained containing name of staff person trained, date of training and level of training. Levels of training are defined within the procedures and practices section.

4.6 Accessibility of Meetings

The Corporation of the City of Barrie will ensure that meetings held by the Corporation will be accessible.

The Corporation of the City of Barrie will take into consideration and provide alternate forms of communicating with persons with disabilities in attendance at meetings in alternative formats taking into account their disability.

The Corporation of the City of Barrie will provide meeting space that is an accessible physical environment and access to the meeting contents and proceedings.

4.7 Feedback Process

In accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07, The Corporation of the City of Barrie is committed to providing its customers and their expectations with a feedback process to generate customer suggestions and complaints. This policy is a mechanism for customers to provide their suggestions, comments and complaints.

Feedback regarding the way the Corporation of the City of Barrie provides goods and services to its customers and to people with disabilities can be made via:

- i) the City's web-site www.city.barrie.ca.
- ii) completion of feedback form submitted to the attention of the Communications and Intergovernmental Affairs Department.
- iii) in person.

4.8 Format of City Documents

The Corporation of the City of Barrie is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of its customers. The City will provide any document produced by the City in an alternative format upon request, unless it is not technically feasible to do so and subject to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Requests for information in an alternative format are to be provided to the customer in a reasonable amount of time.

Alternative formats will include availability on the City's web-site, large print versions of the document, a text only electronic file which can then be read by a computer or arrangements made for print in Braille.

4.9 Notice of the Availability of Documents

The Corporation of the City of Barrie will provide notice that this policy is available for public viewing.

Questions regarding the policy or if the purpose of a policy is not understood an explanation should be referred to, Cheryl Dillon, Accessibility Coordinator, (705) 739-4220, ext. 5237 or Cheryl.Dillon@barrie.ca