



“May I Help You?”

Understanding Accessible Customer Service



Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province.

The AODA allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

One of the specific standards that has been developed, and made law, is the Accessible Customer Service Standard. This standard details specific requirements for all service providers.

The Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge Policy Statement

It is the policy of The Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge that citizens with disabilities achieve accessibility to the provision of goods and services by the Municipality to this community, consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity as set out in the regulations of *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

What is Accessible Customer Service?

Accessible customer service can mean many things. Mostly, it is the understanding that each individual may need a slightly different type of accommodation.

For example, a person who is visually impaired may need to have information read aloud to them; an individual with a learning disability may need to have instructions written down; and someone who uses a wheelchair may need help in finding a route they can use. Accessible customer service is **good** customer service -- courteous, helpful and prompt.

Implementation of the Municipal Policy

Guide Dogs, Service Animals

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the Municipality 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 Municipality will look to other available measures to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Municipality's goods and services.

“Service Animal” is:

- An animal which is specially trained to assist an individual with disabilities.
- An animal is a “Service Animal” if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability, for example a guide dog wearing a harness.
- If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a Service Animal, then a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability is required.

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 Municipality 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.

“**Support Person**” means:

- In relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.
- May be a paid professional, a volunteer, a family member or a friend

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

Operational Procedures of the Municipal Policy

Feedback Mechanism

The public can provide feedback on the accessibility of the provision of goods and services by the Municipality:

- a) by mail addressed to: Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge, Box 10, 4569 Oliver Road, Murillo ON P0T 2G0
- b) by phone at: (807) 935-2613
- c) in person at: Municipal Office, 4569 Oliver Road, Murillo
- d) or by email at: jamie.cressman@oliverpaipoonge.on.ca

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

Assistive Devices

If a person with a disability requires assistive devices to access goods or services of the Municipality, they are allowed to use such devices.

Assistive devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes used by people who are blind or who have low vision, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping and TTY machines.

Disruption of Services

People with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access services. By providing notice, you can save that person an unnecessary trip. Notice can be provided on the Municipality’s website, by telephone, or in writing. In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, provide notice in a variety of ways and as quickly as possible

If there is a temporary disruption in a particular facility or service used to allow a person with a disability to access goods or services, the Municipality will give notice of the disruption to the public by posting the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration of the disruption, and alternative facilities or services that may be available. This posting will be in a conspicuous place on the premises of the Municipality, or by other reasonable methods in the circumstances. If the disruption is anticipated, the Municipality will provide a reasonable amount of advance notice of the disruption. If the disruption is unexpected, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

What Else Can I Do?

Always start with people first. In language, that means saying “person with a disability”, rather than “a disabled person”. In any interaction, it means addressing the person’s access and accommodation needs, rather than focusing on the disability.

Let’s take some time to understand the definition of different disabilities and some tips to assist you in providing accessible customer service.

Each table below defines a specific category of disability and outlines some tips to help you provide service to your customers. First and foremost, get to know your customer because many disabilities are invisible. By focussing on your customer, you will better understand their needs. Also, don’t assume what the customer can or can’t do.

Hearing Loss:

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf - severe to profound hearing loss • Hard of Hearing - a person who uses their residual hearing and speech to communicate • Deafened – caused to hear poorly or not at all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract customer’s attention before speaking - gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand • Look directly at the person • May have to use pen and paper • Speak clearly, keep your hands away from your face • Reduce background noise • Ensure appropriate lighting

Culturally Deaf:

Definition	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deaf community is a healthy sociological community of Deaf people who have been Deaf since birth. They are cultural linguistic minority whose prime language is American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes quebecoise (LSQ). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written English is a 2nd language and in complex situations an ASL Interpreter provides the best quality access for communications. Please see page 6 to book an interpreter.

Deafblind:

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot see or hear to some degree • Many will be accompanied by a support person (A professional who helps with communication by using Sign language that involves touching the hands of the client) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak directly to your customer, not the support person • Identify yourself to the support person • Some may wish to take your hand and finger spell and have you respond in the same way

Intellectual or Developmental:

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectual development and capability that is below average • Can mildly or profoundly limit ability to learn, communicate, do everyday activities and live independently • May be an invisible disability • They may understand you more than you know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t assume what customer can or cannot do • Use plain language • Take your time, be patient • Ask: “Do you understand this?” • Provide one piece of information at a time – step-by-step instruction • Offer information in simpler concepts

Learning:

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affects how person acquires, interprets, retains or takes in information• In many cases individual has average or above-average intelligence• May affect:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Language based learning○ Mathematics○ Writing, fine motor skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take some time, be patient• Demonstrate a willingness to assist• Speak normally, clearly and directly to your customer• Provide information in a way that works for your customer (i.e. pen and paper)• Be prepared to explain any materials you provide

Mental Health:

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defined as the absence of psychological well-being and satisfactory adjustment to society• Some common features of mental health disabilities are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Phobias, Panic Attacks○ Hallucinations○ Mood swings○ Bipolar Disorders (depression & manic phases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat customer with the same level of respect and consideration• Be confident and reassuring• Do not be confrontational• If the customer is in crisis, ask how best to help• Take customer seriously• Don't take things personally

Speech or Language:

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May have problems communicating• May be difficult to pronounce words, slurring or stuttering• May use communication boards or other assistive devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't make assumptions• Give whatever time they need to get their point across• Ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no', if possible• Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences• May have to use pen and paper• Say: "I don't understand, can you repeat that?"

Physical or Disabilities Affecting Mobility:

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May restrict a person in the following ways:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Control or speed of movements○ Coordination and balance○ Ability to grasp same objects○ Ability to walk long distances○ Ability to sit or stand for prolonged periods• Can be present at birth, result from disease, injury or temporarily	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak directly to the customer• Ask before you help• Respect personal space• Don't move any items they may have• Describe what you are going to do beforehand• Don't leave your customer in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position

Vision Loss:

Definition	Tips For Providing Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most individual who are legally blind have some remaining vision• Low or no vision can restrict ability to read signs, locate landmarks, or see hazards• May use guide dog or white cane• May need to view written documents in large print, or with help of magnifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak directly to customer• Offer your elbow to guide• If they accept, walk at an appropriate pace for the environment• Identify landmarks• Be precise and descriptive with information• Don't leave the customer without letting them know• If you are wearing a name tag, let the person know your name• Don't touch or talk to a guide dog (remember it is working)

Most importantly, recognize your nervousness and relax! People with disabilities are generally aware they may need some accommodations and will work with you. Just remember to ask how you can help.

It is important to recognize that there are available internal & external resources for you to use to assist you in delivering service to persons with disabilities:

- Speak to your Supervisor and/or Manager
- Review the Government of Ontario Website: <http://www.accesson.ca>
- Review the Oliver Paipoonge Website: www.oliverpaipoonge.on.ca
- The Bell Relay Service Operator is available to assist in placing or receiving calls to/from persons who use a TTY. There is no charge for local calls. To place a call through the BCRS (Bell Canada Relay Service), call: 1-800-855-0511. The Bell Relay Operator will ask if you have used this service in the past. If you have not, they will provide you with simple instructions on how to use the service.
- Book a Sign Language Interpreter* through the Ontario Interpreting Services at the Canadian Hearing Society at: 623-1646

*The Municipality is responsible for providing Sign Language Interpretation to provide information that is accessible to the public. Our written materials, forms and communications are in English and this is generally the second language for persons who are Culturally Deaf in Thunder Bay. Prior to scheduling a meeting with a person who is Culturally Deaf, it is advisable to book the Interpreter first since their schedules can be very busy. If you have any written materials that will be used at the meeting, send them to both the Interpreter and the person who is Culturally Deaf prior to the meeting. This will give them time to review the materials and ensure accurate Interpretation. Remember, at the meeting, you will be speaking to your customer, not the Interpreter.

**Ontario Regulation 429/07
Training Compliance Form**

(Staff and Volunteers of the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge)

To ensure that the Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge meets its obligations under *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, Ontario Regulation 429/07, once you have read this handbook, you will complete all areas of this form, and give it to your supervisor who will send it to the Chief Administrative Officer.

QUIZ (please circle correct answer)

- 1) *The Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act* (AODA) was passed in what year.
 - a) 2000
 - b) 2003
 - c) 2005

- 2) When you are dealing with a person with a disability and are unsure if they need help, you should:
 - a) Go ahead and help them – if they don't like it, they'll say so.
 - b) Ignore them until you have time for them.
 - c) Always serve customers with disabilities away from other customers.
 - d) Ask "May I help you?"

- 3) Which of the following statements is always true:
 - a) Older people are all hard of hearing.
 - b) Avoid touching a service animal without permission.
 - c) Support people are paid employees of persons with disabilities.
 - d) People who are blind cannot see anything.

- 3) Which statement about persons with disabilities is true:
 - a) Their disability might affect how they interact with you and it might not.
 - b) They all use assistive devices like a wheelchair or a hearing aid.
 - c) Their disability affects them with the same severity at all times.
 - d) All people with the same disability are affected in the same way.

- 5) If you need to communicate by telephone with a person who is Deaf, orally deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing, you can use the Relay service. Their phone # is:
 - a) 911
 - b) 411
 - c) 1-800-855-0511
 - d) none of the above

NAME _____ DEPARTMENT _____

SIGNATURE _____ SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE _____

DATE OF TRAINING _____ TIME OF TRAINING _____





ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005

**ONTARIO REGULATION 429/07
(Accessibility Standards For Customer Services Section 6, Training)**

COMPLIANCE FORM FOR CONTRACTORS

Contracting Party: _____

Address: _____

Location of work being provided to the Municipality: _____

Work being performed for the Municipality: _____

Anticipated duration of the contract or services being provided: _____

I have the authority to bind the contracting party and I verify that our company meets the requirements of the Accessibility For Customer Service Regulation 429/07, Section 6; Training For Staff and will continue to meet these requirements for the duration of the contract or services being provided to the Municipality.

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Please submit to the Municipality prior to beginning of any contract work for the Municipality.