



## THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF UXBRIDGE

### **Accessible Customer Service Policy: Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities**

#### **1. Purpose / Background Information**

The *Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* is a provincial statute that allows the government to develop and enforce specific standards for accessibility. The standards are intended to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to customer service, transportation, the built environment, information / communication and employment.

The Customer Service Standard is the first standard developed under the AODA through Ontario Regulation 429/07, which came into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The Regulation establishes accessibility standards for the provision of goods and services to members of the public or other third parties. For public sector organizations, compliance with this Regulation must be complete by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

This document outlines the policy of the Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge with respect to the establishment of accessibility standards for customer service in accordance with the Ontario Regulation 429/07 and addresses the following:

- The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
- 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;
- Customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- Training for all persons as required by the standard; and,
- Notice of the availability and format of documents.

## **2. Application**

This policy shall apply to every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

This policy applies to all services offered at facilities owned, leased or operated by the Township, as well as public events hosted by the Township, regardless of where the event takes place. This policy also applies to all external groups and agencies that use facilities owned leased or operated by the Township to hold a public event.

Every licence or contract issued for municipal projects, services, programs or products must include a clause regarding third party compliance with the Accessible Customer Service Policy. Consultation with Township Legal Services is required in order to ensure that standardized wording is used in all applicable municipal documents.

## **3. Mission Statement**

*The Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons that it serves.*

## **4. Definitions**

### Assistive Device

A device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)

### Disability

The Township recognizes the definition of 'disability' as given in the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005:

- 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 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*.

Nurse

A Registered Nurse, Registered Practical Nurse or Nurse Practitioner who is a registered member in good standing with the College of Nurses in Ontario.

Physician

A physician who is a registered member in good standing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

Service Animal

Any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability where it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their disability; or where the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that they require the animal for reasons relating to their disability; or a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school. Service animals may include a variety of animals used to assist with sight or hearing, to detect seizures or to provide any other form of assistance necessary to a person with a disability.

Support Person

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

Township

The Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge.

**5. Customer Service Policies**

**a. Providing Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities**

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

- the Township's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- the provision of the Township's goods and services to persons with disabilities is 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 Township's goods and services and;

- persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from the Township's goods and services.

**b. Communication with Persons with Disabilities**

All municipal communications will be written in a manner so that the intended audience understands the message clearly. This will be done using the principle of "plain language", which is defined as language that avoids obscurity, inflated vocabulary and convoluted sentence structure.

When communicating with a person with a disability, the Township will do so in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

The Township will train all persons who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with people with various disabilities.

Should a customer with a disability require an alternative form of communication, such as a document printed in Braille or the need for the services of a sign language interpreter, the Township will make every possible effort to accommodate those needs. In order to accommodate certain requests and services, the customer with a disability will be required to provide advance notice to the Township.

The cost of any additional communication services will be covered by the Township.

**c. Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities**

The Township will make reasonable effort to provide notice of a 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 Township will make reasonable effort to provide prior notice of planned disruption whenever possible, recognizing that in some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruption, advance notice will not be possible. In such cases, the Township will provide notice as soon as practicable.

The notice will be placed at all public entrances, service counters and any other relevant, visible locations at the premises, on the Township website and by any other method that is reasonable and applicable under the circumstances. In the event of a planned disruption of a service that may affect persons with a disability, notice of that disruption providing the date will be available, in advance, at the site as well as on the Township website, on the Township Page published weekly in a local newspaper, where time allows, or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances as soon as practicable.

**d. Assistive Devices**

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the Township's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the Township has determined 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 Township may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist him or her in obtaining, using and benefiting from the Township's goods and services where the Township has such other methods 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.

**e. Service Animals**

The Township is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on those parts of Township premises that are open to the public and other third parties provided the animal is not otherwise excluded by law. If a service animal is excluded by law, the Township will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Township's goods and services. We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the Township may ask the person with the disability for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability. The Township may also, or instead, ask for a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school. If proper documentation is not produced, the person with the disability may be asked to remove the animal from the premises.

It is the responsibility of the person with the disability to ensure that their service animal is kept in control at all times. This will include controlling the behavior of the animal (e.g. barking or growling), cleaning up after the animal (e.g. defecation) and being responsible for any damage the animal may cause to Township property.

**f. Support Persons**

The Township is 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 Township's premises with their support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on Township premises.

The Township may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on Township premises in situations where it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with the disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

In certain situations, the Township, at its discretion, may require a support person to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to an exchange of information with the person with a disability.

A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Township's goods or services, may be charged for admission to any facility owned and operated by the Township. Customers shall be informed regularly of this by a notice that will be posted in the Township's premises and on the Township Website as well as on the Township Page published weekly in a local newspaper.

#### **g. Customer Feedback**

The ultimate goal of the Township is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on Township services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated as they may identify areas that require change and encourage service improvements.

Feedback regarding the way the Township provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by completion of a Township-generated form available at all Township sites available to the public and on the Township website. Completed forms may be forwarded by regular mail, e-mail or delivered directly to any Township site that is open and available to the public. All feedback will be directed to the Office of the Municipal Clerk. Customers can expect a response within ten (10) business days.

Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public, and notice of the process will be posted on the Township's website and/or in other relevant locations.

#### **h. Training**

The Township shall provide training to all employees, volunteers and any others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures. Individuals in the following positions will be trained: Members of Council and its Committees, members of the senior management team, front-counter and all support staff working at the municipal offices, all other staff including the Works Department, Arena, Parks, Animal Control, Library and Uxpool staff and all members of the Township Fire Department. The amount and format of the training will be tailored to suit each person's level of interaction with the public and their involvement in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services.

Training will include the following:

- The purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the customer service standard (Ontario Regulation 427/07)
- Instruction on the Township's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the Township's goods or services
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use any devices or equipment available on the Township's premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.

#### Timeline for training

The Township will keep records of the training, including the date on which training for all persons described in Section 2 of this policy that are involved with the Township at the time this policy is approved by Council, training will be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009. In all other instances, training will be provided as soon as practicable upon an individual being assigned the applicable duties, as well as on an ongoing basis as changes occur to the Township' policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.

#### Records of training

The Township will keep records of training, including the date on which training is provided, the number of individuals to whom it is provided and the nature of the training that is provided. The names of the individuals trained will be recorded for municipal administrative purposes and all personal information collected will be managed in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

## **6. Availability of Documents**

All documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07)*, including the Township's Accessible Customer Service policies and procedures, notices of temporary disruptions, training records and written feedback processes will be available upon request, subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Where a person with a disability requests a document in an alternate format, the Township will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in the format that is requested and that takes the disability into account.

Notice of the availability of all documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* will be posted on the Township's website and made available through the Office of the Municipal Clerk.

## **7. Modifications to this Policy**

The Township is committed to developing a customer service policy that respects and promotes the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities. All amendments or modifications to this policy must be approved by Council.

## **8. Questions about this policy**

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation will be provided by the Office of the Municipal Clerk of the Corporation of the Township of Uxbridge.

***ADOPTED BY COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF UXBRIDGE ON SEPTEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2009, BY-LAW NUMBER 2009-124***