



Customer Service Policies, Practices and Procedures

Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

Introduction

The *Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) became law in 2005. The Act develops mandatory accessibility standards that will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. All businesses in Ontario, with at least one employee, must comply with the Customer Service Standard by January 1, 2012.

1. Our mission

The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the “College”) protects the interest of the public by regulating the practice of Social Workers and Social Service Workers and promoting excellence in practice.

2. Our commitment

In fulfilling its mission, the College strives to provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of all people including people with disabilities. The College is committed to giving all people equal access to services and the benefits of those services.

3. Providing services to people with disabilities

The College is committed to excellence in serving all its members and members of the public including people with disabilities. The College carries out its functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

3.1 Communication

The College communicates with people with disabilities in a courteous manner taking into account their disability and any accommodating measures that may be required.

3.2 Telephone services

The College is committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our members as well as members of the public. The College offers to communicate with customers in alternate formats if telephone

communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available. (e.g. Bell relay services, email etc).

3.3 Assistive devices

The College is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our services. The following assistive devices are available for customers:

- Automatic door operators at both the street entrance and the lower level entrance of the building
- A ramp at the street entrance
- Wheelchair accessible elevators
- Elevators with visual indicators for up and down as well as floor numbers
- Wheelchair accessible washrooms
- Wheelchair accessible office premises
- Microphone system in Council Chambers.

4. Use of service animals and support persons

The College welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal and other third parties. The College ensures that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

The College welcomes people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person can enter the College 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 College premises. Support persons, may on occasion be required to sign confidentiality agreements depending on the specific circumstances.

5. Notice of temporary disruption

The College will provide notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration,

and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be placed outside the entrance to the College office. In addition, a notice will be posted on the College's website.

6. Training for staff

The College will provide training to all employees, volunteers and independent contractors ("service providers") who provide services to the public or other third parties, on behalf of the College.

This training will be provided as soon as possible after an employee or service provider begins his or her duties with the College. All staff and service providers will be required to confirm that they have been trained on the College's accessibility policies, practices and procedures. New employees will undertake training as part of their orientation as soon as practicable, unless they have previously undertaken equivalent training and are able to provide proof that they have completed this training. Staff and service providers will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Training will include the following:

- The purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the College's goods and services.
- The College's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
- The equipment or devices available on the College's premises that may help serve persons with disabilities.

Council members and non-Council Committee members will also receive online training regarding the College's accessibility policies, practices and procedures.

7. Feedback process

The College's ultimate goal is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving members, or members of the public with disabilities. Comments on the College's services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding how well the College provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be communicated to the College via the College website by accessing "*Evaluation of Services for People With Disabilities*" or by contacting Pat Lieberman, Manager of Council & Employee Relations, in person, by email at accessibility@ocswssw.org or by telephone at 1 877 828 9380 x 207. Where possible, complaints will be addressed immediately. However, some complaints may require more time to address and may require further review to determine the most appropriate course of action. The College will review all complaints and will provide a written response to a complaint within a reasonable period of time from the receipt of the complaint.

8. Alternate Formats

Upon request, the College will provide information in alternate formats (i.e. other ways of publishing information beyond traditional printing). Examples of alternate format include but are not limited to: hard copy, large print, Braille, audio, electronic text, captioning, descriptive video service and sign language interpreters.

The College will consider specific format requests when sourcing alternate format materials. Please be aware not all documents will be readily available in every format. In addition, some text items do not lend themselves to certain alternative formats. If applicable, alternatives will be discussed with the individual requesting an alternate format. Please note that the College does not edit/convert alternate formats or e-texts.

9. Practices/Procedures

9.1 Assistive Devices

Service provider should ensure people have unencumbered access to the assistive devices they bring with them.

Service Providers will not operate or otherwise interfere with a person's personal assistive device unless invited to do so by the person or his/her support person. As an example, do not move a wheelchair or cane without permission.

Customers should be informed of the availability of assistive devices, such as a telephone with hearing amplification, a lifting device or courtesy seating. Notification is best done through international symbols, posting plain-language signs with large, clear lettering, or by telling customers about them. Assistive devices provided on the premises should be in good repair and kept on a regular maintenance schedule.

The College will ensure there is always someone on duty familiar with the operation of the device(s).

9.2 Service Animals

When it is not apparent that the animal is a service animal, a person with a disability may be asked to provide proof. Proof may be a letter from a doctor or nurse.

Service Providers are never to pet or distract a service animal. These actions may distract the animal's focus away from its owner and the owner's commands and cause a problem.

If there is a dispute over a service animal such as an allergic reaction by another Service Provider or customer, managers are responsible to find a solution that is acceptable to all parties. The best solution will be one that respects each individual's right to a safe, secure and accessible work environment.

Service Providers should be able to provide water or direct the owner of a service animal to an outdoor area where the animal can relieve itself.

9.3 Support Persons

Subsection 4(5) of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Services states that "the provider of goods or services may require a person with a disability to be

accompanied by a support person when on the 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.” In these rare instances, the Manager of Council and Employee Relations must decide whether a support person is required. If no support person is available, the manager or designate must determine whether there is an acceptable alternative. One alternative may be to assign a member of the Service Provider team to accompany the person with a disability. Another option may be to reschedule services when appropriate arrangements can be made.

Exercise of this authority must be based on clear evidence of a hazard to the person with the disability or others, if unaccompanied.

A support person is not to pay an admission or other fee when a support person is necessary under subsection 4(5).

10. Modifications to this or other policies

The College is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote 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.

11. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. Any questions should be referred to Pat Lieberman, Manager Council and Employee Relations at 416 972 9882 x 207 or email plieberman@ocswssw.org