



OP 03 Accessible Customer Service

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library

Policy Type: Operational
Policy Title: Accessible Customer Service

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1.0 OVERVIEW

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* provides for the establishment of accessibility standards. The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library whole-heartedly supports the spirit of the AODA and this Regulation, which requires the establishment of policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of our goods or services to persons with disabilities. In addition, reasonable efforts will be used to ensure that library policies, procedures and practices meet the needs of people with various kinds of disabilities and that the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity, as defined herein, are respected.

In fulfilling its mission, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access its goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

2.0 POLICY

2.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to provide an overall framework to guide the review and development of other Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library policies, procedures, practices, By-laws and guidelines to comply with the standards developed under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*, the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (ASCS)*, the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11 (IASR)* and future regulations, as amended.

2.2 Definitions

Assistive Devices means an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, hearing aids, oxygen tanks, portable chalk boards and electronic communication devices) to access and benefit from the goods and service offered by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

Barrier means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information

or communications barrier, attitudinal barrier, technological barrier, and a policy or practice that serves as an obstacle.

Disability as set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, 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.

Principles

Dignity - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.

Independence - when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on his/her own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

Integration - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.

Equal opportunity - service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that he/she has an opportunity to access library goods or services equal to that given to others.

Support Persons – 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. A support person may be a paid support worker, a volunteer, a friend or a family member; the support person does not need to have special training or qualifications.

2.3 General Standards under AODA, 2005

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The aim of the 2013-17 Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Accessibility Plan is to outline measures that the Town and the Library will take during 2013 and beyond to identify, remove and prevent barriers to all citizens in accessing Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and Library facilities and services. On behalf of the Library, the Town will report annually on the progress and implementation of the plan and the plan will be updated at least once every five years.

Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library, unless not practical to do so, will use the accessibility criteria when procuring and acquiring goods, facilities, or services.

Self-Service Kiosk

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will use the accessibility criteria when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

Training

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will ensure that all employees receive training on the requirements of the accessibility standards referred to in the regulation and in the Human Rights Code as they pertain to person with disabilities. This training will be developed and implemented by January 1, 2014. Continual training will be provided to employees according to the changes made to this policy or requirements, as soon as practicable. A training record shall be kept, including the dates that training is provided on and the number of individuals who received the training.

2.4 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Accessible Customer Service Policies, Practices, and Procedures

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures, and practices, as amended from time to time, are consistent with the following principles:

- a) The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b) The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- c) Persons with a disability must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use, and benefit from the goods or services.

Assistive Devices

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library permits persons with a disability to use and keep with them their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use, or benefit from the goods or services offered by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

Where Library owned assistive devices are available, appropriate staff will be made aware of and trained in same. Staff will be available to assist with the Library owned assistive device if requested for use by an individual.

Service Animals and Support Persons

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall allow persons with disabilities, who require to be accompanied by a support person, into all library operated public facilities. Both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and the person with a disability will have access to his/her support person

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.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library allows a person with a disability to be accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal onto all Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library operated public facilities and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

If the service animal is excluded by law from the facility, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library's goods and services.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

A Notice of Service Disruption must be provided when there is a temporary disruption of a Library facility or service (planned or unexpected, in whole or in part) that is usually used by people with disabilities to access library goods or services.

The Notice will include the following information:

- a) The reason for the disruption
- b) Anticipated duration
- c) Description of alternate facilities or services, if available
- d) Contact information

The notice will be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises, library web-site and/or other method reasonable in the circumstances.

Feedback

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library provides goods or services to persons with a disability; information about this process is available to the public.

The feedback process, set out in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library Guidelines to the Accessible Customer Service Policy, permits persons to provide feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, and online.

Notice of Availability of and Format of Documents

Notice shall be provided that the Library's policies, practices, and procedures required under *Ontario Regulation 429/07- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* are available upon request:

- **Library policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities** - including a policy on the use of personal assistive devices by people with disabilities to access library goods or services
- **Service animals and support persons** - Policy, practice and procedures with respect to the entry of service animals and support persons to those areas of the premises that are operated by the Library and open to the public
- **Notice of temporary disruptions** - The steps that will be taken in connection with a temporary planned or unexpected disruption to facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access library goods or services.
- **Training** - description of the library policy on providing training on accessible customer service
- **Feedback process** - description of the process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which the Library provides goods or services to people with disabilities

Should the Library be requested to provide a person with a disability any document noted in this section, the Library will give the person the document of the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability. If a person with a disability asks for a document in a different format, staff will discuss what options are available to the individual and then agree upon the format the Library will provide.

Exclusions

This Policy shall not apply during any period where an emergency has been declared by the head of Council

Procedures

Procedures are set out in the companion document, *Guidelines to the Accessible Customer Service Policy*.

2.5 Integrated Accessibility Standards- Ont. Reg.191/11

2.5.1 Information and Communication Standards

Accessible Formats and Communication

Except as otherwise provided, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall make arrangement for accessible formats and communication supports for people with disabilities, upon request. These accessible communication supports and formats shall be provided in a timely manner and shall ensure that the person's accessibility needs are taken into account. This shall be done at a cost no more than the regular costs charged to other persons.

Accessible Website and Web Content

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall make all the internet website and web content conform to the World Wide Web Consortium - *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0*, at Level AA. This shall be done in accordance with the requirements set out in *AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11)*.

Emergency Procedures, Plans and Information

The Library shall provide all existing public emergency procedures, plans and public safety information to the public and meet the requirement of this section of *AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*.

2.5.2 Employment Standards

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

Recruitment

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall post information about the availability of accommodations for applicants with disabilities in its recruitment process. Job applicants who are individually selected for an interview and/or testing shall be notified that accommodations for material to be used in the process are available, upon request. The Library shall consult with any applicant who requests an accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's disability. Successful applicants shall be notified about the Library's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities as part of their offer of employment.

Informing Employee of Supports

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will inform employees of the policies used to support employees with disabilities, including policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability. The Library will provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable after they begin their employment and provide updated information to all employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

Return to Work

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall develop and have in place a documented return to work process for its employees who have been absent from work due to disability and require accommodations related to their disability in order to return to work. The process shall outline the steps taken to facilitate the return to work of employees who were absent due to a disability. Please refer *Policy HR 01 (Return to Work)* for additional information.

Workplace Emergency Response Situation

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will provide information regarding this section to the employees if the employee's disability is such that the workplace emergency response information is necessary. In addition, this information shall be provided to the person providing assistance, with the employee's consent. In the exception where the employee moves to a different location or when the Library reviews its general emergency response situation, this information regarding employee's overall accommodation plan shall undergo review.

Performance Management, Career Development, and Redeployment

When using its performance management process, or when providing career development and/or advancement opportunities, or when redeploying, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans. The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will take the following steps to prevent and remove accessibility barriers identified that pertain to employment.

Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP)

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall have in place a written process for the development of a documented individual accommodation plan for employees with a disability.

Process is to include:

- The employee's participation in the development of the IAP;
- Evaluation on an individual basis and identification of accommodations to be provided. This should specify the duration for the provision of accommodations;
- The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library may request an evaluation by an outside medical or other expert, at the Library's expense, to assist with determining accommodation and how to achieve accommodation;
- Appropriate steps are to be taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information;
- Frequency with which the IAP will be reviewed and updated and the manner in which it will be done;
- A format for providing IAP that takes into account the employee's disability needs;
- If IAP is denied, the reasons for denial are to be provided to the employee;

3.0 References

- Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- Compliance Manual: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- AccessON: www.accesson.ca
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Annual Accessibility Plan, Integrated Accessibility Standards- Ontario Reg 191/11