



ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

Policy Statement

The Regional Municipality of Halton (hereinafter referred to as Halton Region) is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities.

Background

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) was created with the goal of developing standards that would improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the Province. The AODA allows the Provincial Government to develop specific standards of accessibility and enforce them. The standards are made into regulations pursuant to the AODA.

Ontario Regulation 429/07 - Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into force on January 1, 2008. The customer service regulation is the first standard developed under the AODA. The regulation requires designated public sector organizations, including municipalities, to be in compliance with a number of accessible customer service standards by January 1, 2010.

Objectives

- a) This policy is intended to meet the requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the AODA. It applies to the provision of goods or services to the public, not the goods themselves.
- b) This policy aims to ensure that persons with disabilities are given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from Halton Region's goods or services. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that:
 - Goods or services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
 - The goods or services provided to persons with disabilities are integrated with the provision of goods or services to others unless an alternate measure is necessary to allow a person with a disability to benefit from the goods or services. The alternate measure may be temporary or permanent.
 - Communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes the person's disability into account.
 - People with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access Halton Region's goods or services. If a service animal is excluded by law from a premises, other measures will be made available for the person with a disability to access the goods or services.

Definition(s)

Assistive Device is a technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

Barrier, as defined by the AODA, 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, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.



Disability, as defined by the AODA and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, is:

- 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,
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Service Animal – As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Support Person – As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, a 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.

Guidelines and Procedures

Scope

- a) This policy governs the provision of goods or services by Halton Region to persons with disabilities which includes the provision of goods or services by Halton Region employees and volunteers and by agents and contractors who provide goods or services on behalf of Halton Region.
- b) The part of the policy that deals with the use of service animals and support persons applies only to goods or services provided by Halton Region at premises owned or operated by Halton Region.
- c) This policy may be supplemented by practices and procedures, as required by Ontario Regulation 429/07.

Assistive Devices

- a) Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices as required in accessing goods or services provided by Halton Region unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- b) A list of assistive devices provided by Halton Region will be developed and maintained.



Support Persons

- a) Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their support person in areas/premises that are open to the public, when accessing goods or services provided by Halton Region.
- b) Where admission fees for the support person are applicable, advance notice of the fee will be made available.
- c) Halton Region may deem it necessary to require a support person for a person with a disability in order to protect the health and safety of that person or of others on the premises. This will only occur after consultation with the person with a disability and when it is the only means to allow the person with a disability to access Halton Region's goods or services.

Service Animals

- a) Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal and keep that animal with them in areas that are open to the public, when accessing goods or services provided by Halton Region, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- b) In the event that a service animal is prohibited from the premises, Halton Region will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from Halton Region's goods or services.
- c) Service animals must be supervised by their owners and kept in control when used to access Halton Region's goods or services.

Service Disruptions

- a) In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities and services that are relied upon by people with disabilities to access Halton Region goods or services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance.
- b) Notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities and services that may be available.
- c) Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the provider of goods or services, or posted on the Halton Region's website or by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.
- d) In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

Availability of Documents

- a) As required by Ontario Regulation 429/07, Halton Region will prepare one or more documents, describing the following, and provide them upon request to any person:
 - Halton Region's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities;



- Halton Region's policies, practices and procedures governing the use of service animals and support persons;
 - the steps Halton Region will take in connection with a temporary disruption of facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities;
 - Halton Region's policy on providing training on accessible customer service; and,
 - Halton Region's process for receiving and responding to feedback on the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.
- b) If Halton Region is required by Ontario Regulation 429/07 to provide documents to a person with a disability, the document or the information contained in the document will be provided in a format that takes into account the person's disability.
- c) Halton Region will make reasonable efforts to respond to requests for documents in alternate formats in a timely manner.

Training

- a) As required by Ontario Regulation 429/07, the following individuals will receive training on a number of topics outlined in the regulation:
- staff, volunteers, agents/contractors and any other individuals who interact with the public or other third parties on behalf of Halton Region; and,
 - staff, volunteers, agents/contractors and any other individuals who participate in the development of Halton Region policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or third parties.
- b) The training will include the following topics:
- a review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07;
 - how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
 - how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, service animal or a support person;
 - how to use the equipment or assistive devices available on Halton Region's premises;
 - what action to take if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing goods or services; and,
 - Halton Region's customer service policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.
- c) As required by Ontario Regulation 429/07, Halton Region will keep records of the training provided.



Feedback Process

- a) Halton Region shall create and maintain a feedback process so that members of the public are able to comment on the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.
- b) The feedback process will allow for comments in person, by telephone, in writing or by delivering an electronic text by email, or otherwise.
- c) The feedback process will specify the actions that will be taken by Halton Region, if complaints or suggestions are received.

Exclusion

- a) The Accessible Customer Service Policy shall not apply during any period where an emergency, as defined under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, 1990*, has been declared.

Performance Measurement

- a) The Accessible Customer Service Policy will be reviewed and/or amended when additional accessibility related regulations are enacted by the Government of Ontario, or as required.

Related Documents

- *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*
- *Ontario Regulation 429/07 - Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- Halton Region Accessibility Plan

Approval

Approved by Regional Council on June 3, 2009 through Report No. LPS63-09.

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