

Accessible Customer Service Policy

Intent

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and applies to the provision of services (and/or goods) to the public or other third parties, not to the services (and/or goods) themselves.

All services (and/or goods) provided by ACCES Employment shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. As an organization which shares many of the AODA principles of dignity, independence, and equal opportunity to access services, ACCES Employment is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

Scope

- a) This policy applies to the provision of services (and/or goods) at all premises operated by ACCES Employment.
- b) This policy applies to employees, volunteers, and third party contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of ACCES Employment, including when the provision of services (and/or goods) occurs off the premises of ACCES Employment such as in: outreach activities and the delivery of services at community events, job fairs, conferences etc.
- c) The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs, service animals and service dogs only applies to the provision of services (and/or goods) that take place at premises and/or sites operated ACCES Employment.
- d) This policy shall also apply to all persons who participate in the development of the ACCES Employment's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of services (and/or goods) to members of the public or third parties.

General Principles

In accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07, this policy addresses the following:

- A. The Provision of Services (and/or Goods) to Persons with Disabilities;
- B. The Use of Assistive Devices
- C. The Use of Service Animals (including Guide Dogs and Service Dogs)
- D. The Use of Support Persons
- E. Notice of Service Disruptions

- F. Customer Feedback
- G. Training
- H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

A. **The Provision of Services (and/or Goods) to Persons with Disabilities**

ACCES Employment will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality;
- allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing services (and/or goods) as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- using alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- taking into account individual needs when providing services (and/or goods); and
- communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

B. **Assistive Devices**

Customer's own assistive device(s):

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing services (and/or goods) provided by ACCES Employment.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures when possible will be used to ensure the access of goods and services.

Assistive devices provided by ACCES Employment:

Assistive devices provided by ACCES Employment are available on a first come, first serve basis and upon request, to assist customers in accessing our services (and/or goods).

C. **Service Animals**

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by a service animal will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. "No pet" policies do not apply to service animals.

Food Service Areas / Kitchens Exclusion Guidelines:

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by a service dog will be allowed access to food service areas and/or kitchens that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. Service animals, other than service dogs are not allowed in food service areas and/or kitchens.

If a service animal is excluded by law, ACCES Employment will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access services (and/or goods), when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

Recognizing a Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability, ACCES Employment may request verification from the customer.

Verification may include:

- a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- 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.

Care and Control of the Animal:

The customer that is accompanied by a service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.

Allergies:

If a health and safety concern presents itself for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, ACCES Employment will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

D. Support Persons

If a customer with a disability is accompanied by a support person, ACCES Employment will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person.

There may be times where seating and availability prevent the customer and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations ACCES Employment will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the customer, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.

Admission Fees:

If payment is required by a support person for admission to a special event at the premises, ACCES Employment will ensure that notice is given in advance by posting notice of admission fees for support persons in advertisement of the event.

E. Notice of Disruptions in Service

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of ACCES Employment. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customer's with disabilities rely on to access or use ACCES Employment's services (and/or goods), reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notification will Include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- services (and/or goods) that are disrupted or unavailable
- reason for the disruption
- anticipated duration
- a description of alternative services or options where possible

Notification Options:

When disruptions occur ACCES Employment will provide notice by:

- posting notices in conspicuous places where possible including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption
- posting notices on the ACCES Employment website;
- contacting customers with appointments when possible;
- verbally notifying customers when they are making an appointment
- by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

F. Feedback Process

ACCES Employment shall provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to customers with disabilities.

Customers who wish to provide feedback on the way ACCES Employment provides services (and/or goods) to people with disabilities can do so in any of the following ways:

- Feedback forms are available in the Resource Information Centres and Receptions Desks at each of our five locations.
- A link to an on-line feedback form is available on the ACCES Employment website: www.accesemployment.ca
- Feedback can also be provided in person to the customer's primary contact at ACCES Employment, the site or program manager or to the person with whom they are interacting.
- Alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email) are available upon request.

All feedback and/or complaints will be directed to the appropriate department and management personnel for review.

Complaints will be addressed according to our organization's regular complaint resolution process as detailed in the ACCES External Complaint Policy.

Customers that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

G. Training

Training will be provided to:

- a) all employees, volunteers, and third party contractors who deal with the public on behalf of ACCES Employment.
- b) those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions:

As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- A review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a service animal; or
 - require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- ACCES Employment's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

Training Schedule:

ACCES Employment will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will also be provided to new employees, volunteers, and third party contractors who deal with the public on our behalf. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

Record of Training:

ACCES Employment will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

Availability and Format of Documents

Documents related to the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service may be made available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on the premises operated by ACCES Employment, as well as on the agency's website and/or any other reasonable method.

Posting and Availability of Policy

This policy is posted on the ACCES Employment website, under the URL: www.accesemployment.ca. A hard copy is available for review by the public at each of our Resource Information Centres.

This policy and documentation of procedures are also available for employee review on our agency Intranet, SharePoint and is also found in the Employee HR Policy manual.

Policy Modifications

This policy and its related procedures will be reviewed as required in the event of legislative changes.

Any policy of ACCES Employment that does not respect and promote dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.