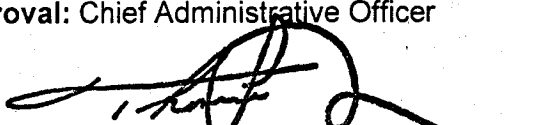




Policy Title: ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE		Policy Number: ADM 090
Reference: <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005</i> Council Resolution 22/09	Date Originated: December 2008	Date Revised:
Approval: Chief Administrative Officer 	Point of Contact: Manager, Customer & Administrative Services	

Policy Objective This outlines the corporate policy with respect to the establishment of accessibility standards for customer service in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07 created under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

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01 Definitions:

01.01 Accessibility Standard - Ontario Regulation 429/07 created under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) which provides for standards to enhance the accessibility of an organization ("the standard").

01.02 Assistive Device - Any device that is designed and/or adapted to assist a person to perform a particular task (For example, canes, crutches, walkers, wheel chairs, personal sound amplification devices, ventilators etc.)

01.03 Disability -

- 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 coordination, 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
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*

01.04 Customers –

- a) all staff
- b) Mayor and members of Council
- c) other political representatives
- d) citizens and visitors to the City of Pickering

- e) businesses
- f) volunteers and agents recognized by the City
- g) all community stakeholders

02 General:

02.01 The AODA was enacted in 2005 in order to facilitate the development of specific standards with respect to improving accessibility across the province. Ontario's first accessibility standard, the customer service standard, came into force on January 1, 2008. The standard outlines what organizations must do in order to ensure that customer service is accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. All public sector organizations with more than twenty employees must comply with the standard by January 1, 2010.

03 Scope and Responsibilities:

03.01 City staff are to be trained on how to provide customer service to people with disabilities in accordance with the core principles of the accessibility standard. Training must be delivered to any employee, volunteer, and/or agent as well as any other individual who might reasonably be expected to interact with the public on behalf of the City or influence the development of policies, practices and procedures. The level of training and awareness will be determined by the Manager, Customer & Administrative Services in consultation with departments and Human Resources.

04 Customer Service Policies, Practices and Procedures:

04.01 The City of Pickering will make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of the standard:

- dignity
- independence
- integration, except when alternate measures are necessary to meet the needs of people with disabilities
- equal opportunity.

By considering these principles when developing policies, practices, and procedures, accessibility planning becomes

entrenched within the decision making process and satisfies the spirit with which the *AODA, 2005* was enacted.

04.02 Dignity and Independence - Customer service will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. People with disabilities should not be forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience as a result of their disability.

Service delivery must consider how people with disabilities can effectively access and use the services provided. Awareness and respect of any individual is paramount when providing customer service.

04.03 Integrated Services – that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar manner as other customers. Service provision and associated procedures will be inclusive of all customers and clients. There are occasions when customer service must be provided using alternative measures which are not integrated. Alternative measures will only be employed when they cannot be integrated and are the only means of providing customer service to a person with a disability.

04.04 Equal Opportunity - People with disabilities will be given an equal opportunity to use and benefit from services provided by the City. People with disabilities should not be required to put forward a greater effort in order to access, use and/or benefit from a service. As a result, additional services may be extended to people with disabilities in order to ensure they do not need to put forward a greater effort.

05 Communication:

05.01 Communication will be provided in a manner that takes into account an individual's disability. Consideration is given to the way in which individuals express, receive and process information without making assumptions about a particular disability. Individuals with the same disability may process information in different ways. The City will continue to review the nature, manner and methods with which it communicates to people with disabilities in an attempt to improve the accessibility of information and services.

05.02 Website – The Marketing & Business Development section is responsible for the overall look of the City's internet sites. The City of Pickering will provide its internet sites in a format that is accessible to persons with disabilities unless it is not technically

feasible to do so. The City's website uses a preset font type and size for optimal layout, but in all cases the font and size is determined by users to meet their specific needs. Information is readily available in HTML format with Adobe PDF as the standard for documents, forms and reports. The City is committed to use of World Wide Web Consortium (W3c.org) best practice technologies when they are available and appropriate for a task and use of the latest versions when supported. These strategies include:

- use of navigation mechanisms in a consistent manner
- essential components of the page work without a mouse
- providing information about the general layout of a site (eg. a site map or table of contents)
- good colour contrast between foreground & background
- easily readable text. Text size can be adjusted by the user using browser controls
- providing a text equivalent for no-text elements (e.g. via "alt or "alternate" text tags). This includes: images, graphical representations of text (including symbols, image map regions, animations, applets and programmatic objects, audio files, audio tracks of video
- use of full text pages
- use of style sheets to control layout and presentation

05.03

Print Material – The City's Communications Standard Operating Procedure provides for documentation standards related to print material (date and time standards, numeric standards, font sizes, spelling conventions, correspondence and report templates). The need for accessible fonts in printed materials must be balanced with the need for a strong corporate identity and consistency in documentation. Consideration must also be given to the fact that there is no "one size fits all" solution to fonts in printed information.

The City will provide any document produced by the City in an alternate format upon request, unless it is not technically feasible to do so and subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information of Privacy Act*. Alternate formats can include, but are not limited to web access, large print versions of the document or a text only electronic file which can then be read by a computer or printed in Braille. Requests for information in alternate format will be sent to the Customer Care Centre and forwarded to the department most responsible for the document. Staff will consult with the requestor to determine the most appropriate format, and will make every effort to provide the information in the preferred format as soon as possible.

05.04 Assistive Listening Devices – Are available to the public for use at public meetings. This device can only be used in the Council Chambers. The availability of Assistive Listening Devices is also included as a resource on our Accessible Pickering website page, along with our promotional material. Assistive Listening Devices are provided with portable or temporary sound systems when a participant in the function has requested that a device be made available, and it is technically feasible to provide the device within a reasonable cost. Any expenses incurred to meet the request will be the responsibility of the department or division organizing the function. Three days notice to the Clerks Division is required.

05.05 TTY – Alternative service channel for the hearing impaired. TTY lines are available at the Customer Care Centre, Councillors' Office, Pickering Recreation Complex and Pickering Central Library. TTY lines are promoted on print material and on the City website. Instructions on its use are located with the TTY, in the City Directory and on the intranet.

06 Notice of Temporary Disruptions:

06.01 People with disabilities may rely on certain systems or amenities to access a City facility or utilize a service. Disruptions to these can provide complications for people with disabilities as they may have to book accessible transit or make alternate arrangements. As a result, public notice will be provided when facilities, amenities or services are temporarily unavailable or when they are expected to be temporarily unavailable. Such public notice might relate to facility renovations and repairs including maintenance of escalators, accessible pool lifts and/or washrooms. Notice will be provided for anything that may reasonably prohibit or limit the use of a service or facility by a person with a disability. The Notice will be conspicuously displayed at the premises with which the disruption has occurred. If feasible, it will be posted on the City's website under the Accessible Pickering section and communicated by various other means as deemed necessary (i.e., media release, Accessible Pickering dedicated telephone line etc). The content of the notice will include the reason for the disruption, the expected duration and, if any, alternative options provided. A procedure and template is available for staff to ensure consistent messaging (refer to Service Disruption SOP).

07 Service Animals:

07.01 Service animals are used by people with various kinds of disabilities including those who are blind, deaf, hard of hearing or those who

may need to be alerted of an oncoming seizure. People requiring service animals are permitted to be accompanied by the animal when in areas open to the public or third parties. This requirement does not apply where an animal is excluded by law from being on the premises or if the presence of the service animal adversely affects the health and/or safety of other users (For example, regulations under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990* and the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001* prohibit animals from entering into areas where food is prepared, stored or sold). Where a service animal is excluded by law, the City will make reasonable efforts to ensure goods and services can still be provided by alternative means (refer to Support Persons SOP).

08 Support Persons:

08.01 A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or to assist with accessing services. People with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by a support person in any area that is open to the public if that support person is essential to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others in the premises. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that people with disabilities are not prevented from having access to their support person while on the premises. In some cases, it may be necessary for the support person to provide consent to regulations specific to the service provided or, if necessary, agree to a confidentiality clause (refer to Support Persons SOP).

09 Assistive Devices:

09.01 Assistive devices include specialized aids and devices that enable people with disabilities to carry out their everyday activities. These include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, hearing aids, adaptive computer technologies, ventilators, walkers, crutches and personal sound amplification devices. The City will make reasonable efforts to ensure that assistive devices can be used to access services.

10 Training:

10.01 Accessible customer service training/awareness is provided to every employee or agent who interacts with the public on behalf of the City as well as those who participate in developing policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of customer service. A form of ongoing training will be provided to individuals and/or groups as soon as practicable after that individual or group is

assigned the applicable duties. Any substantive amendment to a policy, practice and procedure with respect to the provision of accessible customer service may also necessitate further training.

11 Feedback:

11.01 Through the City's Customer Feedback process, any individual will have the opportunity to submit feedback regarding the provision of accessible customer service. The process articulated in the Customer Service Feedback Procedure provides details concerning the feedback methods, review process as well as what actions will be undertaken when feedback is received. A specific point of contact with respect to feedback relating to accessibility issues will be communicated to service users through various channels. Individuals may provide feedback in person (orally), by telephone, in writing, or electronically by diskette or email.

12 Emergency Preparedness:

12.01 The Operations & Emergency Services Department is responsible for Emergency Preparedness ensuring our community emergency planning and response activities incorporate emergency management practices that have the greatest impact on to the needs of people with disabilities. This includes but is not limited to:

- notification
- evacuation
- emergency transportation
- sheltering
- access to medications, refrigeration, and back-up power
- access to their mobility devices or service animals while in transit or at shelters
- access to information.

Refer to the Community Emergency Preparedness Plan.