



Hamilton

## **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 and Accessibility Standards for Customer Service**

Every volunteer, contractor, third party, agent and vendor are required to review the AODA 2005, Customer Service Standard Handbook. Please ensure you read pages 2-43 regarding Customer Service Policies and Procedures, then fill in the [Statement of Acknowledgement](#) (pg. 43 or [click on this link](#)) and submit a signed scanned copy to [Maxine.Carter@hamilton.ca](mailto:Maxine.Carter@hamilton.ca) or in person or via postal mail to the Access and Equity office (address listed on pg. 43)

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# **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the Customer Service Standard Overview**

## **What is the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)?**

AODA Section 1,

Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by,

- (a) Developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, buildings, employment, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025;
- (b) Providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, Provincial Government, industries, various sectors of the economy in the development of the accessibility standards.

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 is the first accessibility standard and became law in Ontario on January 1, 2008. Municipalities were given two years to implement this Standard. The Customer Service Standard states what municipalities, businesses and other organizations in Ontario must do to make the provision of their goods and services more accessible to persons with disabilities. Other proposed standards are Transportation, Employment, Information and Communication and the Built Environment.

The AODA makes Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to create comprehensive accessibility standards for important areas of daily life. Under the Act, businesses and organizations must comply with specific requirements. Every public sector organization including municipalities such as the Municipality of Hamilton and all its affiliated and designated Agencies, Boards and Committees must comply with the regulation requirements of the Customer Service Standard by January 1, 2010.

There are other laws that relate to accessibility that may apply to organizations covered by the Customer Service Standard such as the Ontario Building Code Act, 1992 and the Ontario Human Rights Code. The City of Hamilton also has its very own Barrier-Free Design Guidelines approved by Council in June 2006 that must be used by all Departments involved in the

planning, design or construction of all new and/or renovated City of Hamilton owned, leased or operated facilities, parks, open spaces and infrastructure, including urban design, traffic and roads.

The AODA and the Customer Service Standard do not replace or change what you must do under these and any other laws unless otherwise stated.

### **AODA Compliance and Enforcement**

All sectors must comply with the standards within specified time frames.

- Accessibility reports will be required.
- Inspectors may be appointed to verify compliance.
- Penalties will be enforced for non-compliance.

**\*Source:** Ministry of Community and Social Services

# **City of Hamilton**

## **Customer Service Policies and Procedures**

On December 9, 2009 Council approved the Customer Service Standard Policies. Below are the excerpts of policy statements and procedures that all staff, volunteers, consultants, agents working on behalf of the City and third parties must follow:

### **POLICY STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

The City of Hamilton is committed to ensuring that Council, all levels of corporate management and staff, plan implement and evaluate strategies and opportunities that sustain and maintain the rights of persons with disabilities and their families to barrier-free programs, services and opportunities. In so doing, the City implements the Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 according to the legislation's standards for: Customer Service (already approved); Transportation; Employment; the Built Environment; Information and Communications.

The City of Hamilton is committed to providing customer service to persons with disabilities in a manner that:

- respects their dignity and independence;
- is integrated as fully as practicable into the method of service delivery;
- ensures reasonable efforts are made to provide equitable opportunities to accessing goods and services;
- allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services, programs and opportunities in ways that are based on their own needs and self-determination.

# **Assistive Devices Policy**

## **Policy Statement:**

The City of Hamilton welcomes and provides equitable access to all goods, services, programs and opportunities, to persons with disabilities who use personal assistive devices. They must be permitted to use their personal assistive devices, unless prohibited by law. Persons with disabilities must be made aware of any assistive devices, services and service methods, supplied by the City of Hamilton, that may assist with the provision of goods, services, programs and opportunities. Staff must know how to use the devices and equipment available in their specific areas. Assistive devices must be offered in a manner that respects a person's dignity and independence.

## **Definitions:**

A Personal Assistive Device is any technical aid, communication device or medical aid that is designed, made, adapted or customized to assist a person with a disability, to increase, maintain, or perform a particular task. Assistive devices include but are not limited to, canes, crutches, walkers, wheel chairs, white canes, identity canes, oxygen tanks, hearing aids, word boards, electronic communication devices, augmentative and alternative devices, Bell Relay and telephone amplifiers.

## **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton, will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

## **Procedures:**

1. Persons with disabilities have the right to use their own assistive devices at all times, to obtain, use or benefit from the City of Hamilton's goods and services. It is the responsibility of persons with disabilities to ensure that their assistive devices are operated in a safe and controlled manner.

2. Staff may, respectfully, ask persons with disabilities about their preferred method of communication or how the staff member can best provide the required good or service and make every attempt to communicate, using the client's preferred method.
3. If the request is for a format that is not usually made available, such as a document to be provided in Braille, then reasonable advance notice is required by the City of Hamilton, in most cases 3 - 5 working days. However, requests for larger and more complex documents could take up to 10 or more working days. This is to be discussed with the person with a disability who made the request.
4. If there is a regular fee that applies to providing the document requested to the public, the City of Hamilton will charge the same fee for the alternative format. No additional charges will be passed on to the person with the disability, for making the document available in an alternative format.
5. Wheelchairs, Bell Relay System, large print, pen and paper are available within the City of Hamilton and text to talk devices and FM systems are available in limited locations, such as Customer Service Counter locations like City Hall, Museums, Tourism sites and some Ontario Works locations.
  - 5.1 In certain locations, staff will have to post signage to also inform the public of the requirement to book a request for specific assistive devices in advance, when not available on site. This information will also be made available to the public on the City's web site and at customer serving locations.
6. All management, staff, Council and volunteers of the City, will be trained and made aware of the various assistive devices that may be used by persons with disabilities, while accessing our goods, programs and services.
7. In order to use and/or benefit from the services, programs and opportunities, staff may offer City-owned assistive devices, to persons with disabilities.
8. In the exceptional circumstance, where a person with a disability should want to use a city-provided wheelchair or walker, due to malfunctioning of a person's wheelchair, walker or scooter, the City of Hamilton staff may, in consultation with the person with a disability, offer the use of a city-provided wheelchair or walker. Staff will provide

instructions for use of city-provided wheelchairs and walkers that are loaned out to residents in these circumstances.

9. In such circumstances, the department management or designates will fill out an incident report and send a copy to the Access & Equity Office by internal mail.
  - 9.1 Each department must develop a process for recording, tracking and monitoring of these requests.
10. Each department must provide a list of assistive devices available to persons with disabilities and post this in a visible location on the premises.
11. City of Hamilton departments must provide and have available, specific guidelines to persons with disabilities, regarding how to use the assistive devices.
12. In exceptional circumstance, where the person who has a disability must be separated from their assistive device, City of Hamilton staff must, in consultation with the person who has a disability, arrange for alternate support to ensure timely and quality provision of the goods, services program and opportunities being sought. If such a situation can be foreseen, consult with the person with a disability, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. These arrangements must be made and communicated, in advance, to staff and any other person who may be involved.

# Communication Policy

## **Policy Statement:**

The City of Hamilton's Mayor, Councillors and staff will communicate with persons who have disabilities, in ways that are respectful and take into account the person's disability.

## **Definitions:**

Communication is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information.

Communication must take place in a manner that takes into account the individual's disability. This means that you must consider how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications.

## **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton, will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

## **Procedures:**

1. The City of Hamilton staff departments will ensure that inclusive methods of communications will be made available to persons who have disabilities and ensure that they are adapted, where possible, to take into account a person's disability.
2. Department staff will notify the public, regarding the different kinds of inclusive communication methods available to them, when using and/or accessing goods, services and programs and staff will provide the procedures to the public on how to use these methods.

3. Department staff will be knowledgeable about the variety of communication methods available and must know how to provide them in various ways or know who in the organization has the skill to perform certain functions, or know where to access such services.
4. Finding a suitable communication method may require staff to explore options, depending upon the situation or circumstances. For example, someone who is unable to speak or has difficulty speaking, may use gestures, pen and paper or typing back and forth, when the information being exchanged is simple or straightforward. Other people, with speech disabilities, may use electronic communication systems and, though it might be difficult to understand the synthetic voice, taking the time to listen carefully or to observe a visual display of the information, will often allow effective communication.
5. Staff that provides goods, services, programs and opportunities to the public, will be trained on how to communicate with persons with different kinds or types of disabilities. (See [Training Policy](#), pg. 22).
6. Whenever possible, staff will plan ahead, when providing goods, services, programs and opportunities, to ensure that technical devices, which assist communication, are fully operational and appropriate for the needs of the individuals or group with disabilities.
7. When unavoidable, staff will direct persons with disabilities to alternate locations, where it is convenient to the person requiring service, so that they have access to appropriate communication methods, or arrange a time when a communication device or assistance can be made available.

### **Guidelines for Public Meetings and Open Houses:**

1. Consideration will be given to the [Accessible Meeting Checklist](#) (see pg. 38), when scheduling, organizing and setting up public meetings, information centres and open houses.
2. Where possible, in accordance with the procedures, accessibility supports such as Real Time Captioners, American Sign Language Interpreters, Interveners, etc., will be made available, on request. Note that these services will have to be scheduled or booked at least 5 working days or more, in advance.

3. Staff departments must ensure that certain assistive devices are provided at scheduled public meetings, information centres and open houses. Other types of assistive devices may be available, on request, with advance notice.
4. These assistive devices may include but are not limited to: infrared hearing systems, FM systems, infrared amplification devices, pen and paper, electronic copies of presentations, text to talk versions of reports or materials, large print documents (where practicable) and magnification devices.
5. Documents will be made available, on request, in Braille, large print ([Clear, Accessible and Large Print Guidelines](#), pg. 32) and in electronic format. These requests could take from 24 hours to 10 or more working days to provide materials. Staff will advise the individual of the approximate length of time before their request is filled. Where possible, a limited number of large print copies will be made available.
6. Advertisements and notices of public meetings, information centres, open houses, including the provision of programs or services, will indicate the level of accessibility of the venue and/or where the accessible locations are and any accessibility supports being provided.

Staff will also provide a contact name and telephone number, for persons with disabilities or their designate to call, to make arrangements for accessibility support, in advance of the public meetings, information centre or open houses ([Accessibility Clause for Advertisements](#), pg. 42).

**Billing:**

Where reasonably possible, the City of Hamilton will inquire whether billing information, tax bills, invoices, etc., are required in an alternate format, for persons receiving goods and services. This enquiry can be done in a variety of ways such as inserts in tax bills and correspondence or on the City of Hamilton's website. Examples of alternate formats include but not limited to, hard copies, large print, e-mails, Braille, CD and audio format.

**Record Keeping:**

Where reasonably possible, the City of Hamilton staff, with the written consent of the person with a disability who may be a regular participant or service user, will indicate and record their specific communication needs, for future reference, if deemed necessary and appropriate.

# Disruption Notice Policy

## **Policy Statement:**

The City of Hamilton will, in advance, where possible and in a timely manner, provide notice when services are temporarily disrupted, particularly those services used by or relied upon by persons who have disabilities.

## **Definitions:**

Disruption of service may include closure of a service or program, whether temporary or permanent and any disruption in service that would normally be considered unanticipated or unexpected. You must provide a notification of disruption of service for any location, that a person with a disability must use, in order for goods, services and programs to be accessible to them.

Examples of disruption of service can be due to one or more of the following:

- Inaccessibility to entrances
- Lack of safety when accessing an entrance
- Automatic door openers not working
- Elevating devices not working
- Lack of technical aids routinely provided by the City
- Insufficient lighting for persons with low vision
- Building maintenance
- Lack of availability of Interpreters

## **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton, will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

## **Procedures:**

1. Where there is any temporary disruption in services, in whole or in part, disruption notices will be posted in a timely manner, as soon as City of Hamilton staff has confirmed the disruption in service.
  - 1.1 In the event of planned service disruptions, an advance notice shall be provided and posted in conspicuous locations.

- 1.2 In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice shall be provided, as soon as possible and posted in conspicuous locations, for example, on or near the site of disruption, other obvious locations and on the City of Hamilton's web site.
2. Written notices will be posted visibly in all public areas, by using inclusive communication modes.
3. Notices of disruption will be provided through phone, e-mail or advance mail to persons with disabilities, who may be involved in community committees or working on projects and initiatives with staff, such as focus groups, consultations and advisory committees. Efforts will be made by staff to provide alternative opportunities for persons with disabilities, whose participation is negatively impacted by the disruption.
4. Notices will be posted in locations, including (but not limited to):
  - 4.1 Notices posted on the City of Hamilton website
  - 4.2 Notices can be provided in recorded telephone messages
  - 4.3 Notices, where applicable, will be provided to:
    - Information desks
    - Reception staff or front counter staff
    - Other relevant points of public contact
    - Local and regional media, where applicable
5. The notice will include:
  - 5.1 Information about the reason for the disruption in the service or program;
  - 5.2 The anticipated duration of the disruption;
  - 5.3 A description of any available alternate services. In certain circumstances consent must be received from the person with disabilities, regarding the use of alternate services and locations.
6. The City of Hamilton staff may undertake other measures to communicate and respond to disruptions in service which are in line with the spirit of the policy.

# Service Animals Policy

## **Policy Statement:**

The City of Hamilton welcomes and provides equitable access for persons with disabilities accompanied by a guide dog or service animal to all facilities. The person will be permitted to enter the facility with the service animal and will be permitted to keep the animal with her/him unless the animal is excluded by law from the premise.

## **Definitions:**

Service animals are animals that are individually trained to carry out tasks for persons with disabilities. Service animals are generally dogs, but may include other types of animals such as, but not limited to cats, rabbits or reptiles. Such service animals may be used to assist a person who is blind, has a vision impairment or low vision; a person who is deaf, deafened or hard of hearing; a person who has a mobility disability or difficulties with strength or dexterity; a person who has autism or a developmental disability; a person who has a mental health disability and many other reasons.

## **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton, will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

## **Procedures:**

1. Animals that function as service animals for persons with disabilities are permitted in all premises that are open to the public, unless prohibited by another law such as the **Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001** [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_050031\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_050031_e.htm) and the **Health Protection and Promotion Act** [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_900562\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900562_e.htm)

which allow service dogs to go to places where food is normally served, sold or offered for sale. Other types of service animals are not included in this exception. In these cases, City of Hamilton staff must determine and carry out an alternative way to provide the same level and quality of goods, services, programs and opportunities, in collaboration with the individual. This will be done in a timely manner.

2. City of Hamilton staff will ensure that clear signage, regarding any specific rules for out-of-bounds or prohibited areas that exclude service animals, is posted in conspicuous locations.
3. Persons with disabilities who use service animals cannot be:
  - 3.1 asked to remove their service animal from the premises;
  - 3.2 isolated from others;
  - 3.3 charged extra fees for the use of the animal;
4. In exceptional circumstances where the service animal may be prohibited by law, [The Dog Owners' Liability Act 2005](https://www.elaws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90d16_e.htm) ([https://www.elaws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90d16\\_e.htm](https://www.elaws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90d16_e.htm)) prohibits individuals from owning, breeding, selling, importing, abandoning or training pit bulls, including Staffordshire Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier or American Pit Bull Terrier) staff may respectfully ask if an animal is a service animal and will not ask the nature of the person's disability or purpose of the animal. Staff will explain, in a respectful manner, that the service animal must be removed from the public area due to the Municipal Bylaw and make alternate arrangements or provide the service outside the public area. In such cases, staff is required to determine the specific secure areas where service animals are permitted to stay, with respect to the law.
5. A person with a disability, who uses service animals, cannot be denied access or refused service because others have allergies or express a fear of the service animal. All efforts must be made to respectfully accommodate both individuals.
6. Due diligence needs to be paid, to address Health and Safety requirements. For example, if a person's health and safety could be seriously impacted by the presence of a service animal on the premises open to the public, management must fully analyze all options for safely allowing the service animal. Options could include creating a distance between the two individuals, eliminating in-person contact; changing the time the two receive service or using air

purifiers and any other measures that would allow the person to use their service animal on the premises.

7. In very exceptional circumstances that the animal becomes out of control, causing a clear disruption or a threat to the health and safety of others and the animals' behaviour is not corrected by the owner, a person with a disability can be asked to remove their service animal from the premises. The regular processes for such occurrences will be followed.
  - 7.1 Once everyone's safety is assured, City of Hamilton staff must, in a timely manner, determine and carry out, an alternative way to provide the same caliber of service(s), in consultation with the person who has a disability.
  - 7.2 An incident report will be filled out (a copy to be sent to the Access and Equity Office and one kept on file, in the department).
8. As a courtesy, particularly if the person and service animal have been in attendance on the premises for a long time, staff may inquire whether the animal requires water, may designate an area in which the service animal can relieve itself and/or inquire whether the staff can be of assistance, pertaining to the service animal.

# **Support Persons for Persons with Disabilities Policy**

## **Policy Statement:**

The City of Hamilton welcomes and is committed to ensuring equitable access to all goods, services, programs and opportunities for persons with disabilities, who are accompanied by support persons. There may be a need to require a person with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with disability or the health and safety of others on the premise.

## **Definitions:**

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 with access to goods, services, programs and opportunities.

## **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants, to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

## **Procedures:**

1. Both the person with a disability and their support person will be provided with access to all public areas, in a respectful manner.
2. There will be no fees charged for support persons for any City of Hamilton services, programs and opportunities, while supporting a person with a disability.
  - 2.1 In all circumstances, where admission or entry fees are charged, the fees for entry of the support person will be waived.

This policy regarding waived fees for support persons must be documented and communicated to all staff who routinely collect and/or supervise the collection of such fees from the public.

2.2 Persons with disabilities will be informed of the waived fee, in accessible formats, including but not limited to the website, large print, Braille, information desks and, where applicable, posted on entrance doors.

2.3 HSR currently administers a program to assess and prepare identification cards, for persons with disabilities, who use support persons. These cards are currently being used on all HSR buses.

3. The person with a disability may choose not to introduce the support person.
4. Where confidentiality is important, because of the sensitivity of information discussed, staff may, in appropriate circumstances, require the support person to sign a confidentiality agreement.
5. Once the staff member has determined the individual to whom they are providing the service (which individual is the person with a disability), the staff member must address the person with the disability directly, rather than the support person, unless directed otherwise by the person with the disability.
6. Staff will be trained to understand respectful ways to interact with a person with a disability, who is accompanied by a support person. It would be disrespectful to ask for written confirmation stating that the individual is a support person or to ask for an explanation about the type of support being provided.

# **Resident and Visitor Feedback and Complaints Policy**

## **Policy Statement:**

The City of Hamilton will establish an accessible two-way feedback/ complaints process for receiving and responding to about the manner in which goods, services, programs and opportunities are provided to persons who have disabilities. The process will be made known to the public including what happens to complaints or feedback when they are received.

## **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

## **Procedures:**

1. Communication notices, about the City of Hamilton's options for receiving and responding to feedback and complaints, will clearly set out various means by which persons with disabilities can provide feedback, compliments and/or complaints regarding access to and the quality of the City of Hamilton services, programs and opportunities provided.
2. Information about the process will be readily available to the public.
3. The feedback and complaints will be collected and recorded on the Accessibility Feedback and Complaints Form that can be found on the City's website and will be in supply at all service counters throughout the City of Hamilton. Feedback, compliments and complaints can be submitted to City staff by any other method chosen by the resident.
4. Staff will provide feedback and complaint forms at the point of service or delivery of programs.

5. Staff will make available to persons with disabilities a variety of methods for providing feedback, compliments and complaints.
6. The feedback and complaints processes must be developed in inclusive modes, catering for the needs of persons with disabilities.
7. Persons with disabilities can provide feedback and complaints using the City of Hamilton's Accessibility Feedback and Complaints Form, they can call the Customer Contact Centre and speak with a representative; they can speak to any member of staff, use e-mail, provide their feedback in writing, on a CD or any other method that meets their needs.
8. While receiving the feedback or complaint, staff must explain to the individual how the feedback or complaint will be processed (who reads it, when a response will be provided, if requested, timeframe for resolution or action and follow-up).
9. Department management will ensure that all feedback and complaints are investigated and specific action(s) identified and resolved. **In other words, departments continue to respond to and resolve complaints in a timely manner.**
10. When complaints are received they will follow the usual path of being responded to by the department responsible, as quickly as possible and resolved by the appropriate department(s)/division(s). Complaints will also be recorded on the Accessibility Feedback and Complaints Form or on an existing electronic complaint system such as Amanda, Trapeze or Hansen.
11. All staff will have access to feedback and complaint forms that they will use to record complaints and feedback on behalf of the individual, unless the individual wishes to record and make their own feedback or complaint in a manner that is suitable to them.
12. Management will ensure that information is clearly posted on their premises regarding the process for making complaints or providing feedback including what happens once complaints and feedback is received.
13. All feedback and complaint forms, once completed, unless entered electronically will be sent to the "Attention: Supervisor of Customer

Contact Centre" for recording in the electronic tracking system (Hansen).

14. Complaints and feedback will be tracked and monitored by Access & Equity staff in Corporate Services. Access and Equity staff will run regular reports to be provided to the General Managers and to the Province, if requested.
15. The person providing the feedback or making a complaint will be apprised of the outcomes by staff should they request a follow up. (If the complaint or feedback is anonymous then follow up may not be possible).
16. Follow up will be within 10 working days, unless there are circumstances that prevent such response time. If a response is delayed, the person providing the feedback or making a complaint must be apprised of the delay.

# Training Policy

## **Policy Statement:**

The City of Hamilton will ensure that the Mayor and Councilors, all staff, individuals who develop policies and procedures, volunteers and third parties acting on behalf of the City, are appropriately trained, knowledgeable and skilled in providing goods, service, programs and opportunities, to persons with disabilities. Training will be provided in an ongoing manner as long as there are changes to policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.

## **Responsibility:**

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants who work on behalf of the City of Hamilton will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

## **Procedures:**

1. The City of Hamilton will provide Customer Service Standard (CSS) accessibility training to the Mayor, Councillors, all employees, volunteers and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of policies, practices and procedures.
2. General Managers will ensure that all their staff receives the required training, as soon as practicable. Each department must develop their own training schedule to achieve this end.
3. General Managers will ensure that employees are being trained on an ongoing basis or made aware, when changes are made to the Customer Service Standard (CSS) policies, practices and procedures and receive updated training, every 5 years thereafter.

4. General Managers will keep records of all staff trained and can request reports from the Access and Equity Office. The training records will be tracked using the PeopleSoft system.
5. The staff will be provided training that is relevant to their duties, responsibilities and interaction with the public.
6. New managers will be trained on the CSS policies, practices and procedures within one month of being hired or as soon as practicable thereafter.
7. New staff and volunteers will be trained on the CSS policies, practices and procedures at the time of orientation or within a reasonable period of time but no later than three months of starting with the City of Hamilton.
8. New staff and volunteers will be provided with a copy of the CSS policies and procedures awareness handbook.
9. All agents, third parties, contractors and consultants working for the City of Hamilton must, before commencing work on a contract, provide a Statement of Acknowledgment, and when requested, proof of accessibility training, including proof that accessibility training has been given to their employees, agents, volunteers and any subcontractors. Training must be in accordance with the training requirements of the Customer Service Standard. (See training outline #11).
10. The training curriculum will be reviewed regularly, by the Access and Equity Office, to ensure that it remains up-to-date with current legislation, practices and upcoming Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, 2005 standards.
11. Training will include:
  - 11.1 The purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.
  - 11.2 How best to interact and communicate with people who have a wide range of disabilities.

- 11.3 How to interact respectfully, with people with disabilities, who use assistive devices, or are accompanied by a service animal or a support person.
  - 11.4 How to assist persons who have disabilities to access services, programs and opportunities of the City of Hamilton.
  - 11.5 How to use equipment or assistive devices, e.g. Bell Relay System, wheelchairs and lifts made available on City of Hamilton premises; or, how to access internal staff that will assist them to do so.
  - 11.6 What to do if a person with a disability appears to be having difficulty accessing the City of Hamilton's goods and services. This will include asking the person whether they need assistance.
  - 11.7 The City of Hamilton's policies, practices and procedures relating to the Customer Service Standard.
12. Training and awareness, regarding the Customer Service Standard will be provided to the following groups:
    - 12.1 Advisory Committees & Volunteers
    - 12.2 All Staff, Mayor and Council
    - 12.3 All new Employees
    - 12.4 All new Managers
  13. Training will take the form of:
    - 13.1 AODA, 2005 Customer Service Standard Handbook; and
    - 13.2 Either
      - E-learning or other electronic learning programs; or
      - In-class training for management, front line employees, Councillors and staff who develop and review policies, procedures and by-laws, as well as employees providing goods, services, program and opportunities to persons with disabilities, including but not limited to, information clerks, front desk or

reception staff, volunteers, transportation staff and security personnel.

# Key Definitions

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities, 2005 defines a disability as:

- 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 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,
- 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, or
- 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; (“handicap”)

**In addition, the AODA defines a barrier as:** 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; (“obstacle”).

Making an organization accessible requires you to have regard for visible and invisible barriers to participation. **Some of these barriers include:**

**Architectural or structural** barriers may result from the design of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout.

**Information and communications** barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that is not clear or plain can all cause difficulty.

**Technology**, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers.

**Systemic** barriers can occur through policies and procedures. These are any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities – for example, denying access to a person with a service animal.

**Attitude** is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or non-visible disabilities or they simply discriminate against them because of stereotypes and myths and misconceptions that perpetuate. Some people may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering help or they ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether.

# **Useful AODA and Customer Service Standard Links**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_05a11\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm)

Customer Service Standard

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_070429\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_070429_e.htm)

# Accessible Customer Service Principles

**'Accessible Customer Service'** implies policies, processes and practices that are based on equity, dignity, respect and independence and governs interactions between the person with a disability and a provider of goods or services, that ensures the same levels and quality of service are in place as for persons without disabilities. Essentially, the means to accessing goods, services and opportunities for persons with disabilities may be provided differently.

## **Accessible Customer Service entails the following principles:**

- Treating all customers with **dignity** and **respect**.
- **Flexible service** that meets the needs of an individual customer.
- Putting the **person first**.
- Asking **'How may I help you?'**
- Understanding that some methods of service **may not work for all** people.
- Allowing for **comments and suggestions** on how to improve accessible customer service.
- Providing as much notice as possible if there is a **disruption** in service.

## **Core Principles**

- Dignity
- Integration
- Independence
- Equity of opportunity

# **General Guidelines for Providing Services to People with Disabilities**

- Never turn a resident/visitor away without delivering services to them. Always try to find an alternative way to provide service.
- If you don't know the answer to a question or don't have appropriate assistive devices, ask your manager or call the Access & Equity office.
- Treat persons with disabilities with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Patience, optimism and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Smile, relax and keep in mind that people with disabilities are just people.
- Don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities a person has.
- Some disabilities are not visible. Take the time to get to know the needs of the person with disabilities.
- Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- If you're not sure what to do, ask "May I help you?"
- If you can't understand what someone is saying, just politely ask again.
- Ask before you offer to help — don't just jump in. People with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- Find a good way to communicate. A good start is to listen carefully.

- Look at the person with the disability, but don't stare. Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their interpreter or someone who is with them.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- Don't touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Ask permission before touching a wheelchair or a piece of equipment.
- Know your department's emergency procedures for persons with disabilities.

# Clear, Accessible and Large Print Guidelines

All City of Hamilton management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents, contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, are required to produce e-mails and printed documents or the information contained in the document, in accessible formats, for persons with disabilities, taking into account the person's disability.

It is important to note, that, providing documents in multiple, accessible formats, are a requirement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005, Integrated Accessibility Standards, Customer Service Standard and the City's Customer Service Accessibility Policies.

In consultation with the CNIB, the City of Hamilton's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) and the ACPD Customer Service Sub-Committee, the following Clear, Accessible and Large print guidelines have been recommended and approved for use, by the Mayor, Council and all staff.

Below are the recommended and approved guidelines for the City of Hamilton.

## Large Print Guidelines

### What Is Considered To Be Large Print?

Documents are considered to be large print if the font size ranges from 16-48 point text or higher. The scale varies according to the visual disabilities of individuals.

- City of Hamilton Guidelines for Large Print is: Arial 18 or Verdana 18.
- All City of Hamilton documents and publications shall be produced in large print, upon request, from members of the public.

## Clear Print Guidelines

### What Is Considered To Be Clear Print?

Documents are considered to be clear print when they are clearly designed, easy to read and formatted in an accessible manner.

- City of Hamilton Guideline for Clear Print Guideline is:
  - **For e-mail** – Arial 14 or Verdana 12
  - **For agendas, minutes and printed publications** – Arial 12 or Verdana 12

## Exceptions to Clear Print Guidelines

- If departments produce documents that do not meet the clear, accessible and large print guidelines, due to design and formatting restrictions, provisions must be made to reproduce the document, in an alternate format, which meets the proposed guidelines, to suit the needs of the person with the disability, upon request.
- Publications produced in a lower font(e.g. Waste Calendar & Recreation Guide) than the Clear Print Guidelines must also be available, on request, in both Clear Print (12 font) and Large Print (18 font) formats.

## Design and Formatting Guidelines

The accessibility, usability, legibility, ease of reading and comprehension of a document largely depends on its design and formatting. Documents should be designed and formatted in a manner that is clear, easy to read and understandable.

### I. Font

Font legibility is essential especially for persons with visual disabilities.

#### Font Style

##### Do's

- Use clear font (e.g. Arial, Verdana) with easily recognizable characters for documents, printed publications, minutes and agendas.
- Font style should be less ornate (e.g. *French Script, Vivaldi, Mistral*).
- Font style should be consistent throughout the document, wherever possible.

##### Don'ts

- Do not use decorative style fonts (e.g. **Forte, Bernard MT Condensed, Old English Text**).
- Do not use stylized fonts (e.g. *brush script, Vladimir Script, chiller*).
- Do not use italics and upper case letters throughout documents.
- DO NOT CAPITALIZE ALL WORDS OR PHRASES throughout documents.

#### Font Heaviness

- Use fonts with medium heaviness (e.g. Arial).
- Characters should be distinct, not too thick (e.g. **Bauhaus 93, Broadway**) or too thin (e.g. *Bradley Hand ITC, Vivaldi*).

- Do not use light type with thin strokes (e.g. *Vladimir script, pristina*).

## **II. Type Colour**

Type colour refers to the text colour

- Use black type on white background or white print on dark background.
- Restrict coloured text to titles, headings or highlighted material.

## **III. Contrast**

It is essential to create documents with high contrast between text colour and background, especially for persons using screen readers or suffering from dyslexia. Achieving a suitable colour palette that will work for everyone is difficult, so the following guidelines should serve as a benchmark to achieve at least 70% contrast.

### **Tips for Achieving High Colour Contrast**

- Use high contrast colours for text and background. For example, black and white or dark blue text on a white background or white text on a black or dark blue background.
- Emphasize the lightness of light colours and darkness of dark colours, when used next to each other, to enhance contrast.
- Do not use colours which are similar in lightness or darkness next to each other. For example, light green and light red may not be easy to distinguish, for some people with low vision.
- Do not use similar colours together. For example, red, orange and green together will be a little difficult to distinguish.
- Do not use achromatic colours (black, white, grey) against colours of similar lightness or darkness. For example, dark grey against black.
- Do not use text on an image or patterned background as letters and shapes will be harder to identify.

### **Good Colour Combinations to Help Achieve 70% Colour Contrast**

- Light colours against black background.
- Dark colours against white background.
- Light or pale colours against very dark colours background. For example, light pink or yellow against dark blue.
- Black text on a solid background.

### **Poor Colour Combinations**

- Pairing red and green together because it is difficult to distinguish the two.
- Using dark colours against black background.
- Pairing pastel colours together or against grey or white.

- Pairing light or pale colours together.
- Using jarring complimentary colours like orange and blue together.

#### **IV. Letter Spacing**

This refers to the spacing between letters

- Make sure the space between letters is wide enough, so the letters and words are easily recognizable.

#### **V. Margins**

- Make margins wide enough with sufficient space for binding, hole-punching etc.
- A line of text should be no wider than 6" to 6.5" across an 8.5" size page.

#### **VI. Leading**

This refers to the space between lines of text

- It is recommended to use the "**format**" and "**paragraph**" functions to set the "**before**" and "**after line spacing**" at "**auto**", and set the "**line spacing**" at single or 1.5 point size.

#### **VII. Text Alignment**

Left alignment is recommended for all paragraph text because the start of each sentence is consistent, which makes it easier to read.

- Left align all paragraph text.
- Do not centre text as it can be difficult to find the start of the sentence using magnification devices.
- Do not align text to the right because it makes it difficult to find the start of the sentence.
- Do not justify text because it produces gaps between words on a line, posing a challenge for persons using magnification devices.

#### **VIII. Paragraph and Document Headings**

Headings allow readers to easily navigate a document by directing readers to the content or paragraph it references.

- Headings should be clear and distinct.
- Place headings in close proximity to the paragraph it references, so they remain associated.
- Keep headings with corresponding paragraphs left aligned.

#### **IX. Columns**

Columns can create challenges for persons with visual disabilities, especially those using screen readers and other scanning technologies. If it is necessary to use columns in a document, ensure the following guidelines are maintained.

- To make columns, use the column function to create standard column width and spacing.
- Keep corresponding sentences and paragraphs together within columns, wherever possible.

#### **X. Paper Finish & Watermarks**

- Use a matte or non-glossy finish to cut down on glare.
- Avoid watermarks or complicated background designs.

#### **XI. Clear Design and Simplicity**

The key to clear design is simplicity. Essentially, less is more. Too much colour, shapes and design is distracting, especially for persons with visual disabilities.

- Use distinctive colour, sizes and shapes on the cover page of flyers, brochures, presentation documents and reports to make them easier to tell apart from the rest of the document.

#### **XII. Images**

Images can be used in a document to convey meaning, ideas or add a creative touch for sighted people. Images can also facilitate the ease of comprehension, for people suffering from dyslexia or visual learners. When using images, be mindful of the following guidelines.

- Use images only if it conveys a meaning or adds relevance to the document.
- Always include text describing the image (preferable next to the image or below the image) for persons using screen readers.
- Do not overlay text on images, wherever possible.

#### **XIII. Promotional Material**

Promotional material should be designed in a size that ensures easy readability. The following outlines the **minimum acceptable sizes** for promotional materials, but staff should make an effort to use the largest size whenever possible.

1. The minimum size for the City of Hamilton logo (measured from the height of the symbol):
  - a) Pens/key chains: 9.5 mm
  - b) Any other City of Hamilton promotional material: 15mm
2. The minimum font size for City of Hamilton promotional material such as pens/key chains is Arial 8.
3. The minimum font size for any other printed publications is Arial 12 or Verdana 12.

## **Summary TIPS for Producing Clear, Accessible and Large Print Documents**

- Use clear font (e.g. Arial, Verdana), instead of stylized fonts (e.g. *Monotype Corsiva, Mistral*) for minutes, agendas, documents, printed publication, except, where it is absolutely necessary to accommodate design and formatting purposes.
- Do not use *italics*, because it is difficult to read, for persons with various types of disabilities.
- Use **bold** text to a minimum, only to highlight a few words, if necessary (e.g. headings, title etc.).
- Keep text layout simple and consistent.
- Do not use CAPITALIZED text throughout sentences.
- Do not underline words or phrases throughout documents as it could impact the clarity of documents.
- Left align all body text and paragraphs because it is easy to read with visual disabilities.
- Do not use centered and justified text alignment because is difficult to read for persons with visual disabilities.
- Maintain at least 70% contrast between text and background.
- Be consistent with text and font styles, to make the document accessible, for persons with disabilities.
- Maintain distinct spacing between texts.
- Use descriptive text for images to convey meaning.
- Create all Microsoft Word and PDF documents, using the guidelines for creating accessible documents.

### **Creating Accessible Business Cards**

Business Cards must be accessible and available in multiple formats including electronic and Braille. Standard font size for an accessible business is Arial or Verdana 14.

# Accessible Meeting Checklist

## Planning a Meeting

- Plan ahead of time to ensure accessibility needs are met
- Assign responsibility for accessibility planning
- Location has visual fire alarms
- Invitation and promotional materials in alternate formats
- Event website is accessible
- 'Event Accessibility Accommodation' form** completed
- 'Accessibility Accommodation Request' form** attached with invitation
- Assistive Devices** requested
- 'Contracted Services Booking' form / 'ASL Interpreter Booking' form** completed
- Location serviced by accessible or parallel transit services
- Recent renovations or current construction impacting accessibility
- TTY / Bell Relay service
- Staff trained in disability awareness
- Water bowl and relieving area for service dogs
- Adequate logistics for support persons and service animals

## Invitations and promotional materials

- Invitations and promotional materials identified with the International Symbol of Accessibility and other accessibility symbols
- Invitations in alternate formats (Braille, on audiotape, via e-mail, in large print, on computer disk)
- Conference website available for people who use screen readers
- Signs specific to the event are created in clear / large print

## Signage

- Signs for the street address or building name visible from the street
- Signs are well lit during evening events

## External Environment

- Clearly marked signs written in large print & illuminated if necessary
- Sufficient accessible parking spaces
- Designated parking spots are firm, slip-resistant & close to entrance
- Curb cuts and/or level access to enter building
- Adequate snow removal

- Path of travel from parking lot to building barrier free, non-slip, few or no stairs, even level
- Wide ramps with gradual slope and handrails
- Sidewalks separate from roadway
- Location serviced by accessible/public transit
- Drop off area at the front of building

### **Entrances & Lobbies**

- Wide doorways to accommodate mobility devices/guide dogs
- Lightweight doors with large handles or automatic door openers
- Entrances do not lead to blocked doors with buzzers or bells that must be pushed to permit access
- Entrance well lit and centrally located
- Telephone low enough for person with wheelchair/scooter
- Counter service area for person with wheelchair/scooter
- Large and clear signage indicating meeting room within the building
- Signs mounted at a comfortable height for people with wheelchairs
- Staff / volunteers available at doorways to give directions or assist

### **Elevators**

- Elevators large enough to accommodate mobility devices/guide dogs
- Elevators close to meeting facility
- Control panel at appropriate height
- Braille buttons, raised numerals
- Auditory signal, sound and/or light signals
- Additional signage clearly marked and at suitable height
- Visual cue system to alert people who are deaf or hard of hearing

### **Washrooms**

- Close proximity to meeting
- Doors equipped with automatic or push button door opener
- Doors have raised (tactile) male or female sign or Braille lettering
- At least one accessible unisex washroom on the same floor as event
- Large enough to accommodate equipment
- At least one stall large enough to accommodate equipment
- Stalls have grab bars and raised toilet seats
- Signs clearly marked

- At least one accessible sink; easy to operate handles, accessible height
- Reachable faucets

### **Hallways & Corridors**

- Wide enough to accommodate passage of equipment/guide dogs
- Interior doors easy to open
- Smooth, non-slip floors
- Adequate lighting
- Stairs have handrails on both sides
- Visual fire alarms

### **Meeting Rooms**

- Meeting room located on the building entry floor
- Large enough for circulation, accommodate seating & mobilization of all individuals and their equipment
- Easy to navigate to – ideally on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor
- Refreshments and meals provided in an accessible location
- Refreshments service in lightweight & easy to use containers or dishes
- Speaking areas (podiums, stages) accessible to presenter and audience
- Check for noise levels, ventilation systems
- Accessibility related to window coverings, taped down cables & wires
- Equipment positioned in the least restrictive spot
- No visual distractions
- Well lit space and seating for sign language interpreter/captionist
- Appropriate drapery to provide reduction of light/glare from windows
- At least one telephone that can be used for person who is seated

### **Meeting Contents and Materials**

- Promotional materials have appropriate international symbol(s) of accessibility printed in obvious location
- Materials available in formats that are required based on the needs of your audience (i.e. Braille, large print, electronic)
- Materials easy to read with:
  - Colour contrast (i.e. black on white)
  - Minimum of 14 point size
  - Simple font choice (i.e. Arial)
  - Non-glossy paper

## **Refreshments & Dietary Arrangements**

- Bendable straws, lightweight cups within easy reach for individuals using wheelchairs or scooters
- Sugar-free drinks and desserts for those with dietary concerns
- Assign someone to assist with food and drink
- Suitable and/or adjustable table heights

## **Accessibility Clause for Advertisements, Public Information Centres and Public Meetings**

If you have any accessibility needs in order to participate in this program or event, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ (*staff name & phone contact info.*), by \_\_\_\_\_ (date should be at least one week prior to the event wherever possible). Advance requests are highly encouraged to enable us to meet your needs adequately.



Hamilton

**Statement of Acknowledgement O.Reg.  
429/07 Customer Service Standard Pursuant  
to the AODA, 2005**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print name; first and last  
name),

\_\_\_\_\_ (name of BIA)

(organization name): [ ], BIA, Management Board; [ ], BIA Coordinating  
Committee

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby acknowledge that I  
have received and read the City of Hamilton’s **Customer Service Standard  
(Reg. 429/07) Handbook pursuant to the AODA, 2005.**

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of City Staff/  
**Coordinator/Manager working with at the City)**

I understand that if I have any questions about any of the information  
provided to me, I may contact my Program Coordinator or Manager at the  
City of Hamilton or the Manager Access & Equity, **905 546-2424, Ext.  
6419.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**If mailing, please return this signed form (this page only) to:**

**ATTN:** Manager, Access and Equity

Access & Equity Office

71 Main Street West,

Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

905-546-2424 Ext. 6419; **Maxine.Carter@hamilton.ca**