

CORPORATE PROCEDURE

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Accessible Customer Service

Section: Administration

Sub-Section: Administration -
General

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References and Related Documents:

Ontario Regulation 429/07

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

The Corporation of the Town of Whitby shall promote accessibility through the development of policy, procedures and practices and by ensuring consideration is given to persons with disabilities. To do this, we must ensure policies, procedures and practices address ***dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.***

Scope

This procedure applies to all elected officials, employees, contractors, consultants, temporary and other workers, committees of council and volunteers of the Town (referred to in the Accessible Customer Service Policy, as affected parties)

Procedure

The Corporation of the Town of Whitby shall use reasonable efforts to ensure its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the following:

1. Goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
2. The provision of goods and services to a person with a disability must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to ensure a person with a disability is able to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
3. Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to others to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
4. When communicating with a person with a disability, a provider shall do so in a manner that takes into consideration the person's disability.
5. Persons with disabilities that are accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, as defined in this policy, shall be permitted in areas of the premises owned and operated by the Town of Whitby that are open to the public. An animal is considered 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.

6. Persons with disabilities, accompanied by a support person, shall be permitted to be accompanied by that support person in premises open to the public.
7. Notices shall be provided when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access Town of Whitby services are temporarily disrupted.
8. The Town of Whitby shall provide a feedback process to allow people with disabilities the opportunity to provide feedback on the goods and services provided by the Town of Whitby.
9. The Town of Whitby shall allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the Town of Whitby.

Responsibilities

Training for Staff:

1. The Corporation of the Town of Whitby shall ensure that all affected parties receive training on policies, procedures and practices of the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities.
2. Further, comprehensive training shall be provided to:
 - a. Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Town of Whitby, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer, contracted service staff (contractor) and elected officials or otherwise.
 - b. Every person who participates in developing the Town of Whitby's policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.
 - c. Such positions as identified by each Director in consultation with Human Resources.
3. The training will include a review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of this policy and instructions about the following matters:
 - a. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.
 - b. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.
 - c. How to use equipment or devices available on the Town of Whitby's premises or otherwise provided by the Town of Whitby that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
 - d. How to assist a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the Town of Whitby's goods or services.
4. Any new employee shall have the applicable training for the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service as part of their orientation package.
5. Training will be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to the policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.
6. The Human Resources Department shall log and retain records which shall record the details of the training provided, as well as the names of persons, location and date the training was completed.

Service Animals:

1. For the purpose of this policy, a 'service animal' is defined as either:
 - a. A 'guide dog' as defined in section 1 of the Blind Persons Rights' Act
 - b. A 'service animal' for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability, if:
 - i. it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
 - ii. the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.
2. If a person with a disability is accompanied by a service animal, the Town of Whitby shall ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law; for example, areas that are not open to the public including areas where food is prepared, in the pools or where it endangers the health and safety of others.
3. If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the Town of Whitby shall ensure other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Town of Whitby's goods or services.
4. Care and control of all service animals is the sole responsibility of the owner at all times while, accessing and receiving Town services. If a service animal becomes a nuisance or cannot be controlled by the owner then staff shall have the right to have the person remove the service animal from any Town of Whitby owned or leased building.
5. Staff shall not touch, handle, speak or feed any guide dogs or service animals.
6. If a person with a service animal requests special accommodation staff shall within reason provide the service as requested. If accommodations cannot be made available staff shall discuss with the person other reasonable methods to provide alternate service for that person.
7. In a situation where a conflict develops in regards to a service animal, staff's best judgment shall be used to resolve the situation, in the best interest of the health and safety of the parties involved.

Support Persons:

1. 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.
2. If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the Town of Whitby shall ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises.
3. The Town of Whitby reserves the right to request a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.
4. The Town of Whitby may waive admission fees for support persons who accompany a person with a disability into facilities where admission fees apply. Notice of admission fees shall be provided in advance of participation in a registered program, if applicable.
 - a. Member of public should notify a staff member of the presence of a support person.
 - b. Admission fees may be waived for the support person.
 - c. If there is confidential information to be disclosed, consent must be received from the person with the disability.

5. Staff shall direct all communication to the person directly and not towards the support person unless directed to do so by the person with the disability. Staff shall confirm with the person to receive approval prior to releasing confidential information when the support person is present.
6. Support persons are in facilities to provide assistance with communication, personal care, mobility or medical needs of the program participant; they are not to be active participants of the program and they are not to leave the participant while in their program. Support persons may need to register with the facility prior to the beginning of the registered program.

Notice of Service Disruptions:

1. If in order to obtain, use or benefit from a Town of Whitby's goods or services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services of the Town of Whitby (for example, elevators) and if there is a regular or temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, the Town of Whitby shall give notice of the disruption to the public.
2. Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.
3. Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on the premises owned or operated by the Town of Whitby of goods and services, by posting it on the Town of Whitby's website or by such methods as is reasonable under the circumstances.

Feedback Process:

1. The Town of Whitby shall establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which it provides goods and services to persons with disabilities and shall make information about the process readily available to the public.
2. The feedback process must permit persons to provide their feedback in person, by telephone, in writing or by delivering an electronic text by email or via the website.
 - a. To submit a complaint:**
 - i. The member of the public with the complaint should be thanked for their feedback.
 - ii. The member of the public should have a discussion with the staff person at the Town of Whitby who is involved in the situation.
 - iii. Should the discussion not resolve the complaint or the member of the public is uncomfortable discussing the issue with the staff person, the member of the public should fill out a complaint form available in hard copy, via the website, by phone or by email. A staff person can assist the member of the public with the complaint form in a manner that takes into consideration their disability.
 - iv. The information to be provided by the member of the public should include their personal contact information, the date, and a description of the complaint. This information should be documented on the complaint form.
 - v. The complaint should be forwarded to the appropriate Supervisor or Manager, who shall attempt to resolve the complaint in a timely manner.
 - vi. The member of the public shall be contacted once a resolution has been reached.
 - b. To submit a suggestion:**
 - i. The member of the public, who wishes to provide the Town of Whitby with a suggestion on how to improve our service, shall inform a staff member of their suggestion.
 - ii. The staff member shall thank the member of the public for their suggestion.

- iii. The staff member shall assist the member of the public in filling out the suggestion form, should they require assistance.
- iv. The member of the public shall be notified in a timely manner of how the Town of Whitby shall proceed with their suggestion. Staff response should include: an explanation of how we shall implement the suggestion, a response indicating further investigation or an explanation why we are unable to implement the suggestion.

Format of Documents:

1. Should the Town of Whitby be required to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, the Town of Whitby shall give the person the document, or the information contained in the document in a format that takes into account the person's disability.
2. Material printed in-house and publications produced on behalf of the Corporation of the Town of Whitby should contain a note indicating, "alternate formats are available upon request" and include relevant contact information.
3. The Town of Whitby and the person with a disability shall try to agree upon the format to be used for the document or information, subject to feasibility requirements of this policy.
4. Alternate formats that should be considered by the Town of Whitby and the person with a disability shall include but are not limited to:
 - Print requests: Requests for alternate formats should be honoured in the most practical manner depending on the media chosen, size and complexity of the document, the quality and source of the documents, the feasibility of the request (including cost) and the number of documents to be converted. It should be noted that when a request for one of these formats is received and deemed feasible, staff should make every attempt to respond to the request in the most practical manner and to the satisfaction of the requestor. If it is determined that the format requested is not feasible, then other alternative methods of providing the information should be explored that shall still meet the needs of the requestor (e.g. Audio CD or explaining the information verbally, etc.)
 - i. Staff member receives request from member of the public for alternative format.
 - ii. Employee fills out alternative request form.
 - iii. Forwards request to the responsible manager.
 - iv. The responsible manager and the Accessibility Coordinator shall determine the feasibility.
 - v. The responsible manager proceeds with alternative format request, if feasible;
 - vi. If not feasible; the responsible manager shall contact the individual with a feasible solution.
5. Feasibility shall be determined based upon cost in relation to size of document and time associated with processing document requests. The timeframe attached to the conversion process varies depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents and number of documents to be converted. Documents shall be returned in a timely manner depending on factors previously noted.
6. Conversion shall be processed in-house wherever possible. When a member of the public requests a piece of Town documentation in a multiple format, the department of origin shall be responsible for the cost of the conversion, materials and distribution, not the public requestor.

Assistive Devices:

1. The Town of Whitby shall allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the Town of Whitby.
2. Should a person with a disability be unable to access the Town's services through the use of their own personal assistive device, the Town of Whitby shall ensure the following measures:
 - a. Determine if service is inaccessible, based upon individual requirements.
 - b. Assess service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual.
 - c. Notify the person with disability of alternative service and how they can access the service temporarily or on a permanent basis.

June 17/09
Date


Robert Petrie
Chief Administrative Officer