



# **Guidelines to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy Board Approved: September 3, 2009**

## **Introduction**

These guidelines outline best practices and procedures in support of the Library's Accessibility Standards for Customer Service policy.

Through the establishment of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service policy and supporting procedures and practices that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is reflecting its commitment to the strategic priority of service excellence.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access library goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers. To ensure support for and compliance with the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and relevant regulations, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will make reasonable efforts to ensure that it provides accessible customer service to people with various kinds of disabilities and respects the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity, as defined herein.

## **Procedures**

### **Accessible Customer Service**

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will make reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices as amended from time to time are consistent with the following principles:

- a) The goods or services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b) The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- c) Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

### **Communication**

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library employees, when communicating with a person with a disability, shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability

Should the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library be requested to provide a person with a disability a public document or information, the Library will take into consideration the

communication needs of the person with a disability and endeavour to provide the information to the person with a disability in a format that is agreed upon.

In-house printing and publications produced on behalf of the Library, where possible, should adhere to the CNIB's Clear Print Standards. If one form or method of communication cannot be used by a person with a disability, he/she may be able to use another form or method, or a combination.

The tables below provide some communication tips to help provide service to customers, taking into account various disability categories:

### **Vision Disabilities:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vision disability reduces a person's ability to see clearly.</li> <li>• It may restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards.</li> <li>• Most individuals who are legally blind have some remaining vision – very few are totally blind.</li> <li>• May use a guide dog or white cane.</li> <li>• May need to view written documents in large print, or with help of a magnifier.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't assume your customer can't see you.</li> <li>• Speak normally and directly to customer.</li> <li>• Offer your elbow to guide.</li> <li>• If they accept, walk slowly, wait for permission.</li> <li>• Identify landmarks.</li> <li>• Be precise and descriptive with information.</li> <li>• Don't walk away without saying goodbye</li> <li>• Be patient, interactions may take longer.</li> </ul>

### **Hearing Disabilities:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person with a hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing.</li> <li>• Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees.</li> <li>• A person with a hearing impairment may require assistive device when communicating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract the customer's attention before speaking – gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.</li> <li>• Look at and speak directly to the person.</li> <li>• May have to use pen and paper to communicate.</li> <li>• Speak clearly; keep hands away from your face.</li> <li>• Reduce background noise.</li> </ul>

### **Physical Disabilities or Disabilities Affecting Mobility:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May restrict a person in the following ways:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Control or speed of movements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak directly to the person.</li> <li>• Ask before you help.</li> <li>• Don't touch assistive devices, including</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coordination and balance</li> <li>○ Ability to grasp some objects</li> <li>○ Ability to walk long distances</li> <li>○ Ability to sit or stand for prolonged periods</li> <li>● Can be present at birth, result from disease, injury or be temporary.</li> </ul>	<p>wheelchairs unnecessarily unless it is an emergency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Don't leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position.</li> </ul>
---	--

**Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intellectual development and capacity that is below average.</li> <li>● Can mildly or profoundly limit ability to learn, communicate, do everyday activities and live independently.</li> <li>● May be an invisible disability.</li> <li>● They may understand you more than you know.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.</li> <li>● Use plain language.</li> <li>● Take your time, be patient</li> <li>● Ask: "Do you understand this?"</li> <li>● Provide one piece of information at a time.</li> <li>● If you can't understand what is being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.</li> </ul>

**Learning Disabilities:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May affect how a person receives, expresses or processes information.</li> <li>● In many cases individual has average or above average intelligence.</li> <li>● May affect language based learning, mathematics, and/or writing, fine motor skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take your time, be patient it may take a little more time for the person to understand and respond.</li> <li>● Provide information in a way that works for your customer (i.e. pen and paper)</li> <li>● Speak normally, clearly and directly to your customer.</li> <li>● Be prepared to explain the information you provide.</li> </ul>

**Mental Health Disabilities:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mental health disabilities include a range of disorders however there are three main types of mental health disabilities – anxiety, mood, behavioural.</li> <li>● A person with a mental health disability can look like anyone else; you may not know that a person has a mental health disability unless you are informed of it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treat the customer with the same level of respect and consideration.</li> <li>● Be confident and reassuring.</li> <li>● If the customer is in crisis, ask how best to help.</li> <li>● Take the customer seriously.</li> <li>● Don't take things personally.</li> </ul>

**Speech or Language Disabilities:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have problems communicating.</li> <li>• May be difficult to pronounce words, slurring or stuttering.</li> <li>• May use communication boards or other assistive devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't make assumptions.</li> <li>• Give whatever time they need to get their point across.</li> <li>• Ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no', if possible.</li> <li>• Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences.</li> <li>• Say: "I don't understand, can you please repeat that?"</li> </ul>

### **Hearing/Vision Disability:**

Definition:	Tips For Serving Customers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot see or hear to some extent, this results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities.</li> <li>• Many will be accompanied by an Intervenor, a professional who helps with communicating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak directly to your customer, not to the intervenor.</li> <li>• Identify yourself to the intervenor.</li> <li>• A customer who is deafblind may have a card or note explaining how to communicate with them.</li> </ul>

### **Assistive Devices**

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library permits persons with disabilities to use and keep with them their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services offered by the Library.

Where library-owned assistive devices are available, library staff will be knowledgeable of the presence and trained in the use of the assistive devices. Staff will be available to assist with the library owned assistive devices if requested for use by an individual.

A person with a disability may use an assistive device such as, but not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes used by people who are blind or who have low vision, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping.

When interacting with a person with a disability who may use one or more assistive device:

- Ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the device and to use the device to access goods or services.
- Ensure that persons with disabilities are aware of assistive devices available in the Library.
- Offer an assistive device in a manner that respects the person's dignity and independence.
- Do not lean or reach over an assistive device.
- Remove potential barriers to the use of assistive devices where possible.

### **Support Persons**

The Library will allow a person with a disability who requires to be accompanied by a support person into the Library. Both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and the person with a disability will have access to his/her support person.

Staff will direct all communication to the person directly and not to the support person, unless instructed to do so.

Any confidential information that is discussed in the presence of a support person will be identified as such prior to the information being released and the person with the disability will determine if the information can be released in the presence of the support person.

In some instances where confidentiality is important because of the nature of the information being discussed, the support person may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

The Library may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when accessing goods and services, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises. Persons with a disability are free to accept a reasonable risk of injury to them just as others do.

A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the library's goods and/or services, will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee is applicable.

### **Service Animals**

The Library allows a person with a disability to be accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal within the Library and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

For the purpose of these Guidelines, a service animal for a person with a disability is deemed same if:

- a) it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- b) the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

If the service animal is excluded by law, the Library will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the library's goods and services.

Where a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the person with a disability.

Library staff may request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming the person who requires the assistance of a service animal or guide dog to validate that the animal is as defined above by producing a certificate.

The guide dog or service animal must be in the care and control of the person with a disability while accessing goods and services at the Library.

Staff must not touch, handle, feed or speak to the guide dog or service animal.

If the Library is providing ongoing services to a person with a service animal or in other special circumstances, the Library may request to maintain a copy of the letter. A copy of the letter should only be kept when necessary and only for as long as necessary. Collection of this information must adhere to all privacy and protection acts.

### **Notice of Service Disruptions**

Notice of Service Disruptions shall be provided when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access library goods or services are temporarily unavailable or if the goods or service are expected in the near future to be temporarily unavailable, in whole or in part.

The Notice must include the following information:

- a) The reason for and information about the disruption
- b) Anticipated duration
- c) Description of alternative facilities or services, if available
- d) Contact information

When a disruption is known in advance or planned, a Notice of Disruption of Service will be posted two weeks prior to a service disruption whenever possible. Unexpected disruptions in service shall be posted as soon as possible.

Notices may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on the premises, on the library's website or any other such method as is reasonable in the circumstances, Notices and signage will take into consideration the Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines from the CNIB available at:

<http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/accessibilities/resources/clearprint/Default.aspx>

### **Training**

The Library will ensure that the following persons will or have received training regarding the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities.

- 1) Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer, or otherwise.
- 2) Every person who participates in developing the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library's policies, practices, and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

The training will include but is not limited to the following:

- 1) Review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Ontario Regulation 429/07;
- 2) Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;

- 3) Instruction on how to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or support person;
- 4) Instruction on how to use equipment or devices available at the Library that may help people with disabilities access library services;
- 5) Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing library services.

New employees will be trained on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service as indicated in the AODA as part of their orientation package.

Training must be provided as soon as practicable to affected individuals if the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library's policies, procedures or practices change in connection with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.

### **Notice of Availability of and Format of Documents**

The Library shall provide notice that upon request it will provide a copy of the following policies, procedures and practices as required to any person under Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Ontario Regulation 429/07.

- Library policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities – including a policy on the use of personal assistive devices by persons with disabilities to access library goods or services.
- Service animals and support persons – Policy, practices, and procedures with respect to the entry of service animals and support persons to the Library.
- Notice of temporary disruption – the steps that will be taken in connection with a temporary planned or unexpected disruption to facilities or services that persons with disabilities usually use to access library goods or services.
- Training – description of the library policy on providing training on accessible customer service.

Should the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library be requested to provide a person with a disability any document noted in this section, the Library will give the person the information contained in the document in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

If a person with a disability asks for a document in a different format, staff will discuss what options are available to the individual and then agree upon the format the Library will provide.

The timeframe attached to the conversion process varies depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity and quantity of documents to be converted. Documents shall be returned in a timely manner depending on the factors previously noted. The conversion will be processed in-house whenever possible. When a member of the public requests a piece of library documentation in an alternate format, the Library shall be responsible for the cost of the conversion, materials and distribution, not the public requestor.

## **References**

- Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy, Administrative Procedure Number \_\_\_\_
- Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- Compliance Manual: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- AccessOn: [www.accesson.ca](http://www.accesson.ca)
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Accessibility Plan