

**Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library
Board Approved: September 3, 2009**

1.0 Overview

Customer Service Excellence is a strategic priority of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library. By establishing accessible customer service policies, procedures and practices as required under provincial legislation, the Library's commitment to service excellence is reinforced. By implementing the procedures and practices set out in this policy, accessibility to the library's goods and services for persons with disabilities is increased and the commitment to service excellence is strengthened.

In fulfilling its mission, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access its goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* provides for the establishment of accessibility standards. Accordingly, Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessible Standards for Customer Service, was enacted. The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library whole-heartedly supports the spirit of the AODA and this Regulation, which requires the establishment of policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of our goods or services to persons with disabilities. In addition, reasonable efforts will be used to ensure that library policies, procedures and practices provide accessible customer services to people with various kinds of disabilities and that the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equal opportunity, as defined herein, are respected.

2.0 Policy

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the Library's accessible customer service policies in support of and in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07. Corresponding guidelines have also been developed by the Library to provide further direction relating to accessible customer services.

2.2 Definitions

Assistive Devices means an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, white canes, hearing aides, oxygen tanks, portable chalk boards and electronic communication

devices) to access and benefit from the goods and service offered by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

Barrier means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his/her disability, including a physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, attitudinal barrier, technological barrier, and a policy or practice that serves as an obstacle.

Disability as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, means any degree of physical disability including, but not limited to, diabetes, epilepsy, brain injury, paralysis, amputation, lack of coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device; mental impairment or developmental disability; learning disability or dysfunction in understanding or using symbols or spoken language; mental disorder; or injury for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Guide Dogs or Service Animals - a "guide dog" means a guide dog as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal of a person with a disability:

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

Principles

Dignity - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.

Independence - when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on his/her own without unnecessary help or interference from others.

Integration - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.

Equal opportunity - service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access the library's goods or services equal to that given to others.

Support Persons – means in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him/her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid support worker, a volunteer, a friend or a family member; the support person does not need to have special training or qualifications.

2.3 Policy Provisions

Accessible Customer Service Policies, Practices and Procedures

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall use 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 must 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 a disability 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 and considers his/her communication needs.

Assistive Devices

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

Where library owned assistive devices are available, appropriate staff will be made aware of and trained in same. Staff will be available to assist with the library owned assistive device if requested for use by an individual.

Service Animals and Support Persons

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library shall allow persons with disabilities who require 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

In the event that admission fees are charged, the support person will admitted to the event at no charge.

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

If the service animal is excluded by law from the Library, staff 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.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

A Notice of Service Disruption must be provided when there is a temporary disruption of a library service (planned or unexpected, in whole or in part) that is usually used by people with disabilities to access library goods or services.

The Notice will include the following information:

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

The notice will be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises, library web-site and/or other method reasonable in the circumstances.

Training

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library will ensure that the following people will or have received training regarding the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities:

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

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

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disability
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, or require the assistance of a service animal or support person
- How to use the equipment or assistive devices available at library premises that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing library goods or services
- Library customer service policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities

Training must be provided to each person as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties. Training content may vary depending on the nature of the work and services in which the person is involved. A training record shall be kept, including the dates that training is provided and the number of individuals who received the training.

Notice of Availability of and Format of Documents

Notice shall be provided that the library's policies, practices and procedures required under Ontario Regulation 429/07- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service are available upon request:

- **Library policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities** - including a policy on the use of personal assistive devices by people with disabilities to access library goods or services
- **Service animals and support persons** - Policy, practice and procedures with respect to the entry of service animals and support persons to the Library
- **Notice of temporary disruptions** - The steps that will be taken in connection with a temporary planned or unexpected disruption to facilities or services that people 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 Library be requested to provide a person with a disability any document noted in this section, the Library will give the person 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.

Exclusions

This Policy shall not apply during any period when an emergency has been declared by the Library Board or the Municipality.

3.0 Procedures

Procedures are set out in the companion document, *Guidelines to the Accessible Customer Service Policy*.

4.0 References

- 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
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Guidelines to the Accessible Customer Service Policy
- Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Annual Accessibility Plan