



ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE (OPS) ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

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OPS diversity

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OPS ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

Introduction

The Government of Ontario supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005. It is the goal of the Ontario government to make Ontario barrier-free by 2025. As we move closer to that date, it is expected that government goods, services and facilities will become progressively more accessible and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (also referred to as the accessible customer service regulation or the "customer service standard"), came into force on January 1, 2008. It is the first accessibility standard created under the authority of the AODA and is a significant step toward the overarching goal of a barrier-free Ontario. The government of Ontario is required to be compliant with the regulation by January 1, 2010.

Accessibility standards will set requirements in a number of other key areas and will be reviewed at least every five years. New requirements may be added over time. Whenever new or revised standards are developed under the AODA, this policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure consistency. Updated information about the AODA and accessibility standards is available at: <http://www.accesson.ca/> or by calling the AODA Contact Centre at 1-866-515-2025 (TTY 416-325-3408) or 1-800-268-7095 (toll-free).

This policy has been prepared to outline what the government must do to comply with the regulation and what our customers may expect from us. This policy also supports the service vision, principles and mandatory requirements of the OPS Service Directive, which is intended to guide ministries in their efforts to meet or exceed customer needs and expectations.

The policy is intended to benefit the full range of persons with disabilities, as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Whether a person's disability is

apparent or not, everyone should be treated with courtesy, made to feel welcome, and have their need for accommodation respected whenever they interact with a government service.

This policy is available in alternate formats upon request.

1. Our mission

The OPS is a professional service organization committed to providing high-quality, cost-effective services that keep pace with rising public expectations.

The OPS strives at all times to provide goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Ministries are also committed to ensuring that customers with disabilities receive accessible goods and services with the same quality and timeliness as others do.

2. Training for staff

The OPS will provide training on customer service to all employees who provide government services, and who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures. New staff and staff who commence new duties that involve interaction with the public or other third parties will undertake training as part of their orientation, if they haven't already done so.

Each ministry will provide staff with training that includes:

- A review of the purposes 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 persons with various types of disabilities;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person;
- How to use the equipment or devices available on the provider's premises, or otherwise, that may assist with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities;

- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing OPS goods and services; and
- OPS policies, practices and procedures relating to the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Staff will be trained, as appropriate, on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to persons with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Ministries will ensure that organizations providing services on behalf of government undertake training in accessible customer service, as outlined above.

3. Assistive devices

Ministries are committed to serving persons with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services.

Ministries will ensure that staff know how to use assistive devices available in their various locations for customers, and inform customers of the assistive devices that are available

4. Use of service animals and support persons

Persons with disabilities may bring their service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public or other third parties. Ministries will ensure that all staff, volunteers and third parties dealing with the public are trained in how to interact with persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

On rare occasions, a manager may determine that a support person is required, or that a service animal cannot enter an area of the premises consistent with other laws. In these instances, managers will suggest appropriate alternatives and provide assistance.

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter government premises open to the public or other third parties with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises.

Consistent with recent decisions such as the “one person one fare” case, government attractions will not charge an admission fee for support persons. This policy will be posted (1) on the ministry’s website; (2) included in information where admission fees are published; and (3) at entrances and/or location(s) where fees are collected.

When support persons are required (e.g., sign language interpreters, real-time captioners, attendants) for ministry sponsored meetings, consultations or events, ministries will arrange to pay support persons directly for their time and reasonable travel expenses upon request, in accordance with government travel and hospitality guidelines.

5. Communication

Ministries will communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. This means staff will communicate in a means that enables persons with disabilities to communicate effectively for purposes of using, receiving and requesting OPS goods, services and facilities.

Ministries will train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.

6. Feedback process

The ultimate goal of this policy is to meet service delivery expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Ministries will let customers know what methods are available for giving feedback. If a method is not suitable, customers may request another method. Privacy will be respected and all feedback will be reviewed for possible action that can be taken to improve ministry services. Feedback

received by ServiceOntario will be redirected to a designated contact person at the appropriate ministry.

Where possible, complaints will be addressed immediately. However, some complaints may require more effort to address, and must be reviewed for action, possibly at a higher level. In accordance with the OPS Common Service Standards, customers can expect acknowledgement of verbal/telephone feedback, or feedback left on a comment card, within two business days, and within fifteen business days of the receipt of a mailed/e-mailed complaint. If a mailed/e-mailed complaint cannot be responded to within fifteen business days an interim acknowledgement must be sent to the customer. The acknowledgement must indicate when the matter will be addressed and when the customer will be notified, and ministries will follow up with any required action within the timeframe noted in the acknowledgement. Feedback/response will endeavour to be in a format that is accessible to the complainant.

7. Notice of temporary disruptions

Ministries will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services used by persons with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, how long the disruption is expected to last, and a description of any alternative facilities or services available (if any).

The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises. Depending on the nature of the disruption, notice will also be provided on outgoing telephone and TTY messages and on ministry websites.

This notice will be provided in accessible formats.

8. Modifications to this or other policies

Ministries are committed to ensuring that their customer service policies, practices and procedures respect and promote the dignity and independence of all persons with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on persons with disabilities.

Any OPS or ministry operational policy affecting customer service that does not respect and promote the dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity of persons with disabilities will be modified or revoked.

9. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, if the purpose of this policy is not understood, or to receive a copy of this policy, please contact:

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