



Accessible Customer Service



Agenda

- ★ Background

- ★ Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and Ontario Regulation 429/07

- ★ What is good accessible customer service?

- ★ Different Disabilities and best practices

- ★ Assistive Devices



Agenda continued....

★ Service Animals

★ Support Persons

★ Township of North Dundas Accessibility
Customer Service Standard Policy

★ Wrap Up

- Approximately 1.8 million Ontarians have disabilities

- In SDG approximately 9,496 persons with disabilities

North Dundas - 1582

South Dundas -1550

North Stormont -1013

South Stormont -1848

North Glengarry -1595

South Glengarry -1908

- Increasing as the population ages



- Spending power of \$21 to \$25 billion a year in Canada



Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 requires:

- **Development of Annual Accessibility Plans**
- **Consult with people with disabilities**
- **Plans to be available to public**
- **Creation of Accessibility Advisory Committee**



The purpose of this Act is to:

- To achieve a fully accessible Ontario by 2025
- Develop accessibility standards
- Enforce the standards



Regulations under the Act

- ✓ Accessibility Standard for Customer Service – Regulation 429/07 passed and is now law
- ✗ General Requirements
- ✗ Standard 1 - Customer Service
- ✗ Standard 2 - Information and Communications
- ✗ Standard 3 - Employment
- ✗ Standard 4 - Transportation
- ✗ Standard 5 - Design of Public Spaces



Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

REQUIRES:

Establishment of policies, practices and procedures including policies concerning:

- ✓ **Services Animals and Support Person**
- ✓ **Notice of temporary disruptions**
- ✓ **Training**
- ✓ **Feedback**
- ✓ **Availability and Format of Documents**



Training must include:

- Purpose of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- 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 a guide dog or support person




Training continued...

- How to use assistive devices on premises
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing goods or service
- Township of North Dundas Accessibility Customer Service Standard Policy

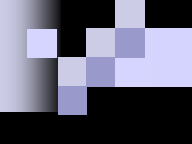


What is good Accessible Customer Service

😊 **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 their 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

☺ Equal Opportunity — service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access your goods or services equal to that given to others.



STAFF SHOULD

- ✓ Ask **“HOW CAN I HELP”**
- ✓ When communicating take into account the person’s disability
- ✓ Offer a variety of methods of communication – written, large print, oral, pictures, etc

- 
- ✓ Understand the nature and scope of the service you offer. The Regulation does not require more services than you presently provide—just flexibility in the manner you provide it
 - ✓ Accept Feedback – it is a great learning tool.



When communicating take into account the person's disability

“I am in a wheelchair and when my girlfriend and I go to a restaurant or I go to buy clothes the sales person always talks to my girlfriend instead of me. My disability is physical, and I understand perfectly.”

Dan Edwards

SDG Accessibility Committee

Township of South Dundas



PHYSICAL DISABILITY

Physical disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body through muscle weakness, tremors and paralysis.

A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to:

- Perform manual tasks such as hold a pen, turning a key or grip a door knob
- Move around independently
- Control the speed or coordination of movements
- Reach, pull or manipulate objects
- Have strength or endurance



BEST PRACTICES - PHYSICAL DISABILITY

- ✓ Speak normally and directly to your customer.
- ✓ People with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things. Ask before you help.
- ✓ Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a persons personal space, don't touch, move or lean on them.
- ✓ Provide your customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevator, etc)

Best Practices – Physical disability continued.....

- ✓ Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter
- ✓ If a counter is too high or wide, step around it to provide service
- ✓ Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line
- ✓ Be Patient. Customers will identify their needs to you.





HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss can cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sound or words.

A person who is deaf, deafened or hard of hearing may be unable to:

- Use a public telephone
- Understand speech in noisy environments
- Pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers



Best Practices - Hearing Loss

- ✓ **Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.**
- ✓ **Always ask how you can help. Don't shout. Speak Clearly.**
- ✓ **Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.**
- ✓ **Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth**

Best Practices – Hearing Loss continued...

- ✓ **Deaf people use a sign language interpreter—always direct your attention to the deaf person**
- ✓ **Any personal matters (financial) should be discussed in private room**
- ✓ **If the person has a hearing aid, try to speak in a quiet area with few competing sounds**
- ✓ **If necessary—write notes back and forth to share information.**



Vision

Vision disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision or side vision, or a lack of central vision. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.

Vision loss can result in:

- **Difficulty reading or seeing faces**
- **Difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar place**
- **Inability to differentiate colours or distances**
- **A narrow field of vision**
- **The need for bright light, or contrast**
- **Night blindness**



Best Practices – Vision Loss

- ✓ **Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact**
- ✓ **If the person uses a service animal – do not touch or approach the animal – it is working**
- ✓ **Verbally describe the setting, form, location as necessary**
- ✓ **Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.**

Best Practices – Vision Loss continued....

- ✓ **Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it is an emergency**
- ✓ **Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location**
- ✓ **Don't walk away without saying good-bye.**



DEAF-BLINDNESS

Deaf blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss.

- **The result for a person who is deaf-blind is significant difficulty accessing information and performing daily activities.**
- **People who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, braille, telephone devices, communication boards and any combination thereof.**
- **Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an Intervenor who relay information and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides.**

Best Practices - Deaf-Blind

- ✓ **Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.**
- ✓ **A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or note explaining how to communicate with them**
- ✓ **Do not touch or address the service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times**





Best Practices – Deaf-Blind continued...

- ✓ Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency
- ✓ Understand that communication can take some time –be patient
- ✓ Direct your attention to your customer, not the Intervenor



Intellectual Disability

Intellectual disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors such as Down's Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disorders.

A person with an intellectual disorder may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken and written information
- Conceptual information
- Perception of sensory information
- Memory



Best Practices – Intellectual Disability

- ✓ Don't assume what a person can or cannot do
- ✓ Use clear, simple language
- ✓ Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information
- ✓ Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions



Best Practices – Intellectual Disability continued.....

- ✓ Be patient and verify your understanding
- ✓ If you can't understand what is being said, don't pretend, just ask again
- ✓ Provide one piece of information at a time
- ✓ Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant



Speech Disabilities

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical disabilities include problems with:

- **Pronunciation**
- **Pitch and loudness**
- **Hoarseness**
- **Stuttering or slurring**



Best Practices - Speech

- ✓ **If possible communicate in a quiet environment**
- ✓ **Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences**
- ✓ **Ask them to repeat as necessary, or to write their message.**



Best Practices – Speech continued....

- ✓ If you are able, ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no”
- ✓ Verify your understanding
- ✓ Patience, respect and willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.



Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities include a range of disorders that effect

- **verbal and**
- **non-verbal information acquisition,**
- **retention,**
- **understanding and**
- **processing.**

People with a learning disability have average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways.



Learning Disabilities can result in:

- Difficulties in reading
- Problem solving
- Directions
- Processing Information



Best Practices – Learning Disabilities

- ✓ **Learning disabilities are generally invisible and ability to function varies greatly—respond to any requests with verbal information, assist with filling in forms, be courtesy.**
- ✓ **Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.**



Mental Health Disability

Mental health disabilities include a range of disorders however there are three main types of mental health disability:

- **Anxiety**
- **Mood**
- **Behavioral**

People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; be perceived as pushy or abrupt; be unable to make a decision; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.



Best Practices – Mental Disability

- ✓ Treat each person as an individual. Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.**
- ✓ Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations.**
- ✓ Stay calm and courteous, even if the customer exhibits unusual behaviour, focus on the service they need and how you can help.**



Other Disabilities

Other disabilities include:

- **Smell**
- **Touch**
- **Taste**
- **Other disabilities result from accidents, illnesses and diseases such as ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, seizure disorders, heart disease.**



SOME DISABILITIES ARE INVISIBLE

“I have fibromyalgia. Primary fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a form of fibromyalgia where pain occurs in muscles, tendons, and ligaments throughout the body. To look at me you would not know I have a disability but experience extreme pain. I have an accessible parking ticket and sometimes when I park in an accessible parking space I get dirty looks or people say things not realizing I have a disability.

Cheryl Irven,

S.D. G. Accessibility Committee

Township of North Stormont

Assistive Devices

Assistive Devices include:

- Wheelchairs, scooters, canes, walkers, braces, computer software programs,

Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, do not touch, move or lean on them.

Service Animals



- **Service animals means any animal that is of service to a person with a disability**
- **Service animals offer independence and security to many people with various disabilities**
- **If it is questionable whether an animal is a service animal, a person may be asked to provide a letter from a physician stating the animal is required for reasons related to a disability**

Do not touch or address the service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

Support Persons

- **Support Persons assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an Intervenor, sign language interpreter, or as a Personal Support Worker.**
- **A support person may be a friend or a relative**

Speak directly to your customer. Don't speak past your customer – to the support person.



Township of North Dundas Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy

- Passed by Council June 9th, 2009**
- Adopts basic principles of accessible customer service:**
 - Dignity**
 - Independence**
 - Integration**
 - Equal Opportunity**
- Existing policies, practices and procedures**
 - Reviewed and revised on ongoing basis as gaps in policies are identified that impact the ability to provide goods and services to persons with disabilities.**



Township of North Dundas Accessibility Customer Service Standard Policy....

- Assistive devices – reasonable efforts will be made to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices
- Service animals – persons with disabilities will be allowed to be accompanied by their guide dog. If animal is excluded by law, the reason will be explained and other reasonable arrangements will be made to accommodate the person with the disability.
- Service animals will be under the care and control of the person with the disability



Township of North Dundas Accessibility Customer Service Standard Policy....

- Support persons – if a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, they will be allowed to enter the premises together and the person with the disability will not be prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises.**
- In the event that admission fees are charged, there will be no charge for the support person.**
- A person with a disability may be required to have a support person, if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.**

Service Disruption – Notice

- Notice of disruptions will include the reason for the disruption, anticipated duration and description of alternative facilities.
- Notice will be provided on website, signs posted, and if suitable advertised in local newspaper or radio a week in advance.



Unexpected Disruption in Service – Notice

- Notice will be given as quickly as possible in an appropriate manner**
- Notice will be provided on the website, signs posted, and if suitable advertised on the local radio station**
- Alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by the service interruption shall be informed of alternative methods.**



*Township of North Dundas Accessibility Customer Service Standard
Policy....*

Format of Documents


- If requested for a copy of a document in a different format than available to accommodate a person with a disability – every attempt to will be made to provide the information requested in a format that is useful to the individual.**

Documentation

- Notice that copies of this Policy will be available upon request will be posted in a conspicuous place and posted on the Township website**

Training

- Training will be given to every person who participates in developing policy, practices, etc.
- Training will be given to every person who deals with the public on behalf of the Township of North Dundas including 3rd parties, employees, agents, volunteers, management, etc.
- Current employees, agents, volunteers, etc will received training by January 1, 2010.

- 
- New employees, agents, volunteers, etc will receive training as soon as practicable after being assigned.
 - Ongoing training on changes to policies will be provided.
 - Amount of training will be geared to trainee's role in terms of accessibility.
 - Training records shall be kept, including dates, names of individuals to whom received the training.

Feedback

- Feedback will be encouraged**
- Feedback will be received in writing, in person, email, telephone, on disk addressed to the Clerk**
- The Clerk will respond in writing, in person, email, telephone on disk, acknowledging feedback**
- Feedback will be used to assist with the revisions of policies and procedures to provide accessible customer service.**



WRAP UP


Regulation 429/07 Accessible Standards for Customer Service does not require municipalities to provide **MORE SERVICE** than they are presently delivering.....

It does require **FLEXIBILITY** in the manner in which the service is delivered.



REMEMBER.....

- Be courteous
- Be patient
- Be flexible



“Treat every customer as if they sign your
paycheck.....because they do.

QUESTIONS??