



Accessible Customer Service Policy

Policy Number:	HR-AC-002
Section:	Human Resources
Sub-Section:	Accessibility
Subject:	Accessible Customer Service Policy
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POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Barrie is committed to providing exceptional and accessible service for its customers. This policy focuses on those elements of the *IASR* that impact the City when providing goods, services and facilities to their customers or service users (e.g., customer service standards). Goods and services will be provided in a manner that is based upon the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity to all of its customers. The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible. Persons with disabilities will benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers. All City policies, procedures, bylaws, standards, and guidelines must comply with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA)*, and provide for dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for people with disabilities.

SCOPE

1. This policy applies to all City employees. Any individual or group responsible for the decision on behalf of the City must support compliance with the AODA.
2. Any individual or third-party organization that provides goods, services, and facilities on behalf of the city is also required to demonstrate compliance with the AODA.

DEFINITIONS

Assistive Device – Is a technical aid, communication device or medical aid that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities, in seeing, hearing, speaking, mobility, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, working, or self-care.

Disability – For the purposes of this policy, "disability" is defined according to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005* as:

- a. Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or



physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

- b. A condition of mental impediment or a development disability,
- c. A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. A mental disorder or
- e. An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; ("handicap")

IASR – Integrated Accessibility Standards

Service Animal – An animal is a service animal for 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. O. Reg. 429/07, s. 4 (9).
- c. Service animals include but are not limited to "guide dogs": a guide dog as defined in section 1 of the Blind Persons' Rights Act; ("chien-guide") means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations under the Blind Persons' Rights Act. ("chien d'aveugle") R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7, s. 1 (1).

Support Person – Means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. ("Personne de soutien") O. Reg. 429/07, s. 4 (8).

PURPOSE

This policy is in accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Ontario Regulation 429/07 and addresses the following:

- The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.
- Communication with persons with disabilities
- The use of service animals, support persons and assistive devices by persons with disabilities;
- Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities.
- Staff training on customer service.
- Accessibility of meetings.
- Customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities; and
- Format of City documents and notice of their availability.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The City of Barrie is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities. City policies, practices and procedures will be consistent with the following principles:

Providing Goods and Service to People with Disabilities



- a. The City's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b. The provision of the City's goods and services to persons with disabilities are integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the City's goods or services.
- c. Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain use or benefit from the City's goods and services.
- d. The City will communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that will take into account their disability.
- e. City Staff will be trained on accessible customer service and how to interact and communicate with customers with various types of disabilities.
- f. Customer with disabilities will be offered alternative communication formats that will meet the needs of the customer.
- g. Documents will be provided to customers in an alternative format that will meet the needs of the customer in a timely fashion.

Communication

- a. The City will communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that will take into account their disability.
- b. City staff will be trained on accessible customer service and how to interact and communicate with customers with various types of disabilities.
- c. Customers with disabilities will be offered alternative communication formats that will meet the needs of the customer.
- d. Documents will be provided to customers in an alternative format that will meet the needs of the customer in a timely fashion.

Use of service animals, support person and assistive devices

1. Service Animals

- a. The City of Barrie is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal that is not in contravention of any law (the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, or the Municipal Code By-law for example) on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties and owned and operated by the City of Barrie. If a service animal is excluded by law, the City of Barrie will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the City's goods and Services.
- b. If a service animal cannot be easily identified as a service animal, City of Barrie staff may ask the individual requiring assistance to provide documentation from a regulated health professional, indicating that they require the assistance of a service animal. The documentation must confirm that the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.
- c. Individuals requiring the assistance of a service animal are responsible for the behavior and cleanliness of their service animal at all times. In the event that a service animal becomes disruptive, aggressive or displays unwanted behavior, the City has the right to request that the individual removes their service animal from City property.
- d. The City of Barrie will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public on behalf of the City are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

2. Support Person (s)

- a. We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter City of Barrie's premises with their support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is



accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on the City of Barrie premises.

- b. The City of Barrie may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when receiving goods or service or participating in a program offered by the City in situations where it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises. Before determining that a person with a disability must be accompanied by a support person when receiving goods or services or participating in a program offered by the City, staff will consult with the person with the disability or the individual's legal guardian to understand their support needs.
- c. Fees will be charged for one support person when a customer is accessing services where an admission fee is applicable and require a support service. Customers will be informed of this through the City of Barrie website, and appropriate City of Barrie publications, such as the City's Recreation Guide.

3. Assistive Devices

- a. A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the City's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the City has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or others on the premises. In these situations, the City may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measure to assist them in obtaining, using and benefiting from the City's goods and services, where the City has such other measures available.
- b. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that their assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.
- c. The City of Barrie will also ensure that staff are trained to use the following assistive devices for customers with disabilities: wheelchair, Bell Relay System, hearing assist devices/electronic communication devices, interpretive devices, and cloud-based interpreting services (if applicable).

Notice of Temporary disruptions

- a. The City of Barrie is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to the public. However, temporary disruptions in the City's services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the City's Control.
- b. The City of Barrie will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned disruption. In the event of an unplanned disruption of its facilities and services, the City will make a reasonable effort to provide notice as soon as possible. In both cases, this notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.
- c. Records will be maintained containing dates of when Temporary Disruption Notices are posted.
- d. When temporary disruptions occur to the City's Services or facilities, the City will provide notice by posting the information in visible places and on the City's website (www.city.barrie.ca) or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

Staff training on customer service



- a. The City of Barrie will provide customer service training in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07, including Ontario Regulation 191/11: the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation and all updates to the legislation.
- b. Training will be provided as required and to all new employees through new employee orientation training. Staff will be advised of policy updates or legislative changes through internal communication notification and through the City's internal website.
- c. Training will include the following:
 - i. Understanding the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, including Accessible Customer Service Standards.
 - ii. How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
 - iii. How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person; and
 - iv. What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the City's services.
 - v. Records of training will be maintained by the Human Resources Department containing the name of the staff person trained, date of training and level of training.

Accessibility of meetings

The City of Barrie will ensure that public meetings held by the Corporation will be held in a meeting space that is physically accessible and will provide alternate formats to meeting content upon request.

Feedback process

- a. The City of Barrie is committed to providing its customers with a feedback process to generate customer suggestions and complaints. This policy is a mechanism for customers to provide their suggestions, comments and complaints.
- b. Feedback regarding the way the City of Barrie provides goods and services to its customers and to people with disabilities can be made via:
 - i. The City's website www.barrie.ca
 - ii. By Service Barrie through email at ServiceBarrie@barrie.ca, by calling Service Barrie at 705-726-4242 or by writing: City of Barrie, P.O. Box 400, 70 Collier Street, Barrie, Ontario, L4M 4T5; or
 - iii. In person at the Service Barrie Counter on the 1st floor of City Hall, located at 70 Collier Street, Barrie, Ontario.

Format of city documents and notice of Availability.

- a. The City will provide any document produced by the City in an alternative format upon request, unless it is not technically feasible to do so and subject to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- b. Request for information in an alternative format are to be provided to the customer in a reasonable amount of time.
- c. City staff will consult with individuals requesting alternate formats in order that alternate formats meet the needs of the individual whenever practicable.
- d. The City of City of Barrie will provide this policy, available to the public, on the City of Barrie website at www.barrie.ca and in writing upon request. This policy will be made available in an alternate accessible format or with communication support, upon request.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

1. *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*
2. *Ontario Human Rights Code*



3. *City of Barrie Accessible Customer Service Policy*
4. *Blind Persons Rights Act, 1990*
5. *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
6. *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)*