

CUSTOMER SERVICE ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS

Effective: June 2009
Reviewed: July 2010
Revised:

AUTHORITY

Ombudsman, Fiona Crean

PURPOSE

To ensure accessible and equitable treatment for all visitors to this office.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS - BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto is required to meet the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) which came into effect on January 1, 2008 and applies to public and private sector organizations that provide goods and services to the public.

The Customer Service Accessibility Standard is the first of five standards to be established under the AODA. Four other accessibility standards are in development: Information and Communication, Built Environment, Employment and Transportation Standards.

The Office of the Ombudsman is committed to making services accessible to all persons with disabilities.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Office of the Ombudsman provides equitable access to services for all individuals and communities in the City of Toronto. It will do so by valuing difference and demonstrating respect; promoting and ensuring full access to service; practicing attitudinal openness; being inclusive; and communicating appropriately and effectively.

DEFINITIONS:

Disability

Disability includes but is not limited to:

- Deaf or hard of hearing
- Blind or visually challenged
- Physical disability
- Developmentally challenged
- Psychiatric survivor/consumer of mental health services
- Learning disabilities
- Some medical conditions including epilepsy, diabetes etc depending on the situation
- Other medical disabilities such as brain injuries, etc.

While human rights legislation exists to protect people with as wide a range of disabilities as possible, from a service standpoint, the focus is to ensure people who might otherwise not gain access are served.

Access

Access is about removing barriers, both physical and attitudinal to service provided by the organization.

Barriers refer to anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including physical architectural, information or communication barriers, as well as attitudinal, technological, policy or practice barriers.

Service equity means being conscious of the person's individual needs and social context, being conscious of one's own impact on individuals and actively working to understand how systems and procedures affect clients.

PROCEDURES

In order to meet the needs of individuals appropriately, the following principles will be respected:

Individualization – meeting the specific circumstances of the person

Partnership – involving the person requiring the service

Inclusion – ensuring that the person is involved in the process

Respect for confidentiality and dignity

Individuals have a responsibility to communicate his/her needs in sufficient detail to enable the Office of the Ombudsman to respond appropriately. The Office of the Ombudsman has a responsibility to ensure alternative approaches are explored, that confidentiality is maintained and the dignity of the individual is upheld at all times.