



## **ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

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## INTENT

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves. All goods and services provided by the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC) shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

## SCOPE

- This policy applies to the provision of goods and services at premises owned and operated by AAC.
- This policy applies to employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of AAC, including when the provision of goods and services occurs off the premises of AAC.

The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs, service animals and service dogs only applies to the provision of goods and services that take place at premises owned and operated by AAC.

- This policy shall also apply to all persons who participate in the development of AAC's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

## DEFINITIONS

**Assistive Device** - is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

**Disability** – the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:

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;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder; or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

**Guide Dog** – is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

**Service Animal** – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

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

**Service Dog** – as reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562* a dog, other than a guide dog for the blind, is a service dog if:

- it is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability;
- or the person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

**Support Person** – as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

In accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, this policy addresses the following:

- A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities
- B. The Use of Assistive Devices
- C. The Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals
- D. The Use of Support Persons
- E. Notice of Service Disruptions
- F. Customer Feedback
- G. Training
- H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents
- I. Communications

### **A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities**

AAC will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality;
- allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace, when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- using alternative methods, when possible, to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place, and in a similar manner;

- taking into account individual needs when providing goods and services; and
- communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

## **B. The Use of Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services provided by AAC.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the customer.

## **C. The Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals**

- A customer with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. “No pet” policies do not apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs.
- A customer with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog or service dog will be allowed access to food service areas that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law.
  - Other types of service animals are not permitted into food service areas due to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*.
- If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law (see applicable laws below) the AAC will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).
  - *Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario*: If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pitbulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal: If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability, AAC may request verification from the customer. Verification may include:

- a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
- a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

Care and Control of the Animal: The customer that is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.

Allergies: If a health and safety concern presents itself (if, for example, in the form of a severe allergy to the animal) the AAC will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

#### **D. The Use of Support Persons**

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the AAC will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person.

- There may be times where seating and availability prevent the customer and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations the AAC make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.
- In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the customer, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.
- If payment is required by a support person for admission to the premises the AAC will ensure that notice is given in advance by posting notice of admission fees for support persons where the AAC fees are posted.

#### **E. Notice of Service Disruptions**

In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customer's with disabilities rely on to access or use AAC's goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable
- reason for the disruption
- anticipated duration
- a description of alternative services or options

When disruptions occur the AAC will provide notice by:

- posting notices at the AAC main entrance
- contacting customers with appointments
- verbally notifying customers when they are making a reservation or appointment
- or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances

#### **F. Customer Feedback**

AAC shall provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to customers with disabilities. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all customers and notice of the process will be made available. Feedback forms along with alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email), will be available upon request. Customers can submit feedback to:

Agricultural Adaptation Council  
381 Elmira Road North, Unit 1  
Guelph, ON N1K 1H3  
519-822-7554  
info@adaptcouncil.org

Customers who wish to provide feedback can complete an onsite customer feedback form or verbally to any AAC employee.

Customers that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

## **G. Training**

Customer service accessibility training will be provided to:

- a) all employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of the AAC; for example: salespersons, drivers, vendors, event operators, call centers and third party marketing agents; and,
- b) those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions: As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.
- A review of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation 191/11*.
- A review of obligations under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it pertains to people with disabilities, and the duties of employees, volunteers, and other persons.
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
  - use assistive devices;
  - require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
  - require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- AAC's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

### Training Schedule:

The AAC will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or act on our behalf.

Revised training will be provided to all in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

Training Records:

The AAC will keep a record of all training activities. The record will document who attended, what was trained, when training took place, and any follow up activities resulting from training. Training records will be maintained and updated when new training takes place.

**H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents**

This policy will be made available through the AAC website for users of AAC services. Where necessary, AAC and a person with a disability may agree on a specific format that takes into account the person's disability.

**I. Communications**

Documents and/or communications with persons with disabilities will take into account the nature of the disabilities. AAC will to the best of their abilities seek to accommodate those with disabilities when communicating with them.

This policy and its related procedures will be reviewed as required in the event of legislative changes.

**Acknowledgement & Agreement**

I, (*Employee Name*), acknowledge that I have read and understand the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy of the Agricultural Adaptation Council. Further, I agree to adhere to this Policy and will ensure that employees working under my direction adhere to these guiding principles. I understand that if I violate this Policy, I may face corrective action, up to and including termination of employment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_