

### What is Accessible Customer Service?

The Township of Centre Wellington is committed to providing customer service to persons with disabilities in the following manner:

- respects their dignity and independence;
- is integrated as fully as practicable into the method of service delivery;
- ensures an opportunity equal to that given to other customers to obtain and use the Township's goods and services, and
- allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way to other customers.

### What Can I do?

**Always start with people first. Ask, how can I help? In any interaction, address the person's service needs rather than focus on the disability. Individuals with disabilities are aware they may need some accommodations and will work with you. Just remember to ask how you can help.**

### What is Considered a disability?

A "Disability" as defined by the AODA includes the following:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or a 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*; (handicap")

### Provincial Legislation

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) was passed by the Ontario Legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province.

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures to provide goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
3. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access the Township's goods and use our services.
4. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of our premises that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by law.
5. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing the Township's goods or services in premises open to the public.
6. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on our behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
7. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how the Township provides goods or services to people with disabilities and how the Township will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaint.
8. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use Township's goods or services are temporarily disrupted.



Centre Wellington

## Accessible Customer Service



**Dignity, Independence,  
Integration and  
Equal opportunity**

**Township of Centre Wellington**

**1 MacDonald Square**

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## General Tips

Here are some general tips that can help make your communication and interactions with or about people with all types of disabilities more successful.

- Use *disability* or *disabled*, not *handicap*
- Never use terms such as *retarded*, *dumb*, *psycho*, *moron* or *crippled*. These words are very demeaning and disrespectful
- Remember to put people first. It is proper to say *person with a disability*, rather than *disabled person*.
- If you don't know someone or if you are not familiar with the disability, it's better to wait until the individual describes his/her situation to you, rather than to make your own assumptions.

### People with disabilities prefer these terms

Person who has .....

Person with a disability

Seniors

- **Do not touch or address the service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.**
- **Speak directly to your customers, not to their companion or attendant.**

### Everyone is Different

**A person who is blind may need to have information read aloud to them; an individual with a learning disability may need to have instructions written down, and someone who uses a wheelchair may need help in finding a route they can use. Accessible customer service is good customer service which is courteous, helpful and prompt.**

**Accessible customer service can mean many things. It is the understanding that each individual may need a slightly different type of accommodation.**

### Physical disabilities:

- 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 person's personal space, don't touch, move or lean on them.
- Provide customer information about accessible features (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.)
- 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.

### Deaf or hard of hearing:

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is 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 re-phrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- Deaf people may use a sign language interpreter direct your attention to the Deaf person
- Any personal (e.g. financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.

### Deaf-blind:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do.
- A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it's an emergency.
- Communication can take some time – be patient.
- Direct your attention to your customer, not the Intervener.

### Vision disabilities:

- Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, location as necessary.
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.
- 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.

### Intellectual or developmental 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 the person is an adult and unless informed otherwise, can make their own decisions.
- 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.

For more details and information on providing service to people with disabilities see the *Accessible Customer Service Guide Book* or *Additional Tips on How to Provide Service to Customers*