



County of Haliburton

Policies and Procedures Manual

Accessible Customer Service

Recommended by: Joint Accessibility Committee **March 18, 2009**
Approved by: County Council **March 25, 2009**
Resolution Number: R-65/2009

PURPOSE

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is a Provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

With a compliance date of January 1, 2010, the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into force on January 1, 2008 establishing accessibility standards specific to customer service for public sector organizations and other persons or organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County of Haliburton, whether the person does so as an employee, member of Council, agent, volunteer, student on placement, or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing the County's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

DEFINITIONS

“Accessibility Coordinator” shall mean the person appointed by Council as Accessibility Coordinator for the County of Haliburton or the County Clerk.

“Assistive devices” shall mean an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).

“Disabilities” shall mean the same as definition of disability found in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Employees” shall mean every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County of Haliburton, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

“Persons with Disabilities” shall mean those individuals that are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Service Animals” shall mean any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

“Support persons” shall mean any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

POLICY STATEMENT

The County of Haliburton is committed to providing exceptional and accessible service for its customers. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence to all customers. The provision of services to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible. Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others, to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services provided by and/or on behalf of the County of Haliburton.

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Communication with Persons with Disabilities

When communicating with a person with a disability, any representative of the County of Haliburton will do so in a manner that takes into account the person’s disability.

Use of Assistive Devices

The County of Haliburton is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. The County of Haliburton will ensure that staff are trained and familiar with various common assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing County of Haliburton goods and services.

If it is determined that the use of an assistive device poses a risk to the health and safety of the person with the disability or to others on the premises, the County will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the County’s goods and services.

The County of Haliburton will ensure that staff are trained on the use of assistive devices available on our premises for customers including the lift, ramp, automatic doors, door bells and any other equipment that may be acquired for use on the premises.

Use of Service Animals

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the County of Haliburton will ensure that the person will be permitted to enter County facilities that are normally open to the public with the animal as long as they remain within the care and control of the person with a disability and unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.

The County of Haliburton reserves the right to request verification from a doctor or nurse of the authenticity of the service animal and access to the premises may be denied to the service animal if documentation cannot be provided upon request. Alternate arrangements may be made to access County of Haliburton goods and services if documentation cannot be provided to support the legitimacy of the service animal.

Use of Support Persons

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the County of Haliburton will ensure that both parties will be permitted to enter the facility and participate in public events or individual meetings at the discretion or choice of the person with the disability. If there are costs associated with admission to an event that are applicable to the support person, this information will be provided through public notice in advance.

Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The notice will include information about any potential changes to goods or services or infrastructure that may be provided by the County of Haliburton that could have an impact on persons with disabilities.

Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.

Notice of planned temporary service disruptions will be posted in a conspicuous place at the physical location of the service disruption, on the County of Haliburton website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca, will be provided to the local radio stations in the form of a public service announcement and will be printed in the local news media.

In the event of an unplanned temporary service disruption, the County of Haliburton will provide notice as soon as possible and in the event of a public emergency, the County of Haliburton Public Inquiry System (accessible from the County website) will be activated in accordance with the provisions of the County of Haliburton Emergency Plan.

Training

The County of Haliburton will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies receive training as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The amount and format of training given will be tailored to suit each person's interactions with the public and his or her involvement in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services.

The content of the training will include:

- ✓ a review of the purposes of the AODA
- ✓ a review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)
- ✓ Instruction on the County of Haliburton's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.
- ✓ How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- ✓ What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the County of Haliburton's goods and services.
- ✓ How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal; and
- ✓ Information about the equipment or devices available on the County of Haliburton's premises that may help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Training will be provided as soon as practical upon an individual being assigned the applicable duties as well as on an ongoing basis as changes occur to the County's policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

The County of Haliburton will keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided. The names of individuals trained will be recorded for training administration purposes, subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

Feedback Process

The County of Haliburton is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all members of the public it serves. Feedback from the public is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of goods and services to persons with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other methods of submission.

Feedback is directed to the County Clerk to be logged, investigated and reported through an annual reporting process. Staff within the Clerk's Department will respond immediately to all queries relating to accessibility concerns.

As the Accessibility Coordinator, the County Clerk will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of feedback and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints.

Notice of Availability and Format of Documents

The County of Haliburton is committed to providing public notice regarding availability of documentation to persons with disabilities as required by the Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, including the County's Accessible Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request subject to MFIPPA.

When providing a document to a person with a disability, the County of Haliburton will provide the document or the information contained within the document in a format that is useable by the person with a disability recognizing that the preparation of an alternate format may result in time delays in providing the requested information.

Notice of availability of documents will be provided on the County of Haliburton website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca and posted at the County of Haliburton Administration Offices as required.