

Accessible Customer Service Policy

PURPOSE

This policy establishes standards for Customer Service for the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, in accordance with *Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

POLICY STATEMENT

CLOCA 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 of all customers. The provision of services to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible. Persons with disabilities, including those that need use of assistive devices and/or support persons, will be given an opportunity to that given to others, to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services provided by and on behalf of CLOCA

SCOPE

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

DEFINITIONS

Accessible

Customer service is provided in a manner that is capable of being easily understood or appreciated, easy to get at, capable of being reached or entered and obtainable.

Assistive Device

A device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the *Customer Service Standard*.

Barrier

Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.

Disability

- i) Any degree of physical 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 impairment, 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;
- ii) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- iii) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- iv) A mental disorder; or,

- v) 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

A guide dog as defined in Section 1 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act* is a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having qualifications prescribed by the regulations under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*.

Service Animals

As defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* 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.

Support Persons

As defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* 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 communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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

- a. Responsibilities
- b. The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities
- c. Communication with persons with disabilities
- d. Assistive devices and other measures that assist with accessibility
- e. Guide dogs, service animals
- f. Support persons
- g. Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities
- h. Training
- i. Feedback
- j. Notice of availability and format of documents
- k. Exclusions

PROCEDURES

- a. Responsibilities

The Company shall:

- Ensure compliance with the *Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*
- Include accessibility in annual planning processes
- Budget for accessibility requirements
- Support staff attendance at required training
- Notify Director of Corporate Services of additional training requirements
- Communicate, coordinate and/or provide service to a person with a disability regarding the use, or who may use a, service animal, support person or assistive device
- Provide notification of service disruptions and support person admission fees
- Provide all documentation in appropriate formats upon request by a person with a disability

Corporate Services shall:

- Coordinate and provide Accessible Customer Service training in order to comply with *Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*
- Coordinate and maintain training records
- Establish and maintain an ongoing training program to ensure all staff are trained in providing Accessible Customer Service as part of the corporate orientation process
- Communicate to all departments regarding all requirements under the regulation
- Monitor the progress of legislative requirements in order to ensure compliance
- Report to the Ministry of Community and Social Services on compliance requirements
- Attend professional development activities to keep current on regulations and best practices
- Ensure compliance with the *Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*

b. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

CLOCA will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- CLOCA's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- The provision of CLOCA'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 CLOCA's goods or services and,
- Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from CLOCA's goods and services.

c. Communication with Persons with Disabilities

When communicating with a person with a disability, CLOCA will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

d. Assistive Devices and other Measures that Assist with Accessibility

The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from CLOCA's goods or services is recognized unless CLOCA has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

In these situations and others, CLOCA may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist him or her in obtaining, using and benefiting from CLOCA's goods and services where CLOCA has such other measures available.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

e. Guide Dogs, Service Animals

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their guide dog or other service animal and keep that animal with them in areas/premises that are open to the public, when

accessing goods or services provided by CLOCA, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

If the service animal or guide dog is excluded by law, CLOCA will look to other available measures to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from CLOCA's goods and services.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept in control at all times.

f. Support Persons

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their support person in areas/premises that are open to the public, when accessing goods or services provided by CLOCA.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, CLOCA will ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises. If there is confidential information to be disclosed, written consent must be received from the person with the disability.

A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from CLOCA's goods and services, will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee is applicable.

CLOCA may deem it necessary to require a support person for a person with a disability in order to protect the health and safety of that person or others on the premises. This will only occur after consultation with the person with a disability and when it is the only means to allow the person with a disability to access CLOCA's goods and services.

g. Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities, services or systems that are relied upon by persons with disabilities to access CLOCA goods and services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance.

Notice of the disruption will include information about the nature of the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities, services or systems, if any, that may be available.

CLOCA will make reasonable efforts to provide prior notice of planned disruption if possible, recognizing that in some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruption, advance notice will not be possible. In such cases, CLOCA will provide notice as soon as possible.

Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on the premises, or by posting it on CLOCA's website or by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.

h. Training

CLOCA is committed to establishing, implementing and maintaining a program for training on how to provide customer service to people with disabilities. CLOCA 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;
- The requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07);
- Instruction on CLOCA'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 CLOCA'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 CLOCA's premises that may help with the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities

Timeline for Training

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

Records of Training

CLOCA will keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided. Detailed records will be kept for reporting purposes.

i. Feedback

CLOCA will maintain a feedback process to enable members of the public to comment on the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities. Feedback from the public is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback will be received in any form (i.e. in person, by telephone, in writing, fax, on the website, or by email) and all such feedback will be logged for reporting purposes.

All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and will be used to improve customer service. An answer to feedback is not mandatory, however depending on the situation, it may be appropriate to respond to the customer. Should an answer be deemed appropriate and should the customer have chosen to supply his or her contact information, the customer will be provided with a response.

Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public and notice of the process will be posted on CLOCA's website and/or in other appropriate locations.

j. Notice of Availability and Format of Documents

All documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*, including CLOCA's Accessible Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, notice of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)*.

When providing a document to a person with a disability, CLOCA will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes the person's disability into account.

Notice of the availability of all documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* will be posted on the CLOCA website.

k. Exclusions

This Accessible Customer Service Policy shall not apply during any period where a "State of Emergency" has been declared as defined under the Emergency Management Act.