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## **ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

### **Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities**

#### **Our Commitment**

Township of Southgate strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of all people. Southgate Township is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

#### **Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities**

Township of Southgate will provide goods and services to people with disabilities, with particular consideration to the following areas:

##### **Communication**

Township of Southgate will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. Staff who communicate with customers will be trained how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

Township of Southgate is committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. Staff will be trained to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language, to speak clearly and slowly and to tailor their responses as much as possible in support of the individual.

Township of Southgate will offer to communicate with customers by other means, if telephone communication is not suitable to the communication needs of the person with a disability or is not available.

##### **Assistive Devices**

Township of Southgate is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. Staff will be trained and become familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

Township of Southgate will also ensure that staff knows how to use the assistive devices which are available on our premises.

## **Correspondence, invoices and other documentation**

Township of Southgate is committed to providing accessible information to all of our customers.

For this reason, correspondence, invoices and other documentation will be provided in large print or by e-mail, **upon request**.

Township of Southgate may provide a document, or information contained in a document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability. Township of Southgate and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

Any questions customers may have about the content of a document will be answered in person, by telephone or e-mail.

## **Use of Service Animals and Support Persons**

### **Service Animals**

Township of Southgate is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal, in the areas of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. All staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public will be properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability:

- i) If it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- ii) 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 Person**

Township of Southgate is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Township of Southgate facilities and buildings with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person, be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on Township premises.

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 or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

No admission will be charged to the support person for admission to Township of Southgate recreation facilities.

## **Notice of Disruption in Service**

Township of Southgate will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.

This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by Township of Southgate, by posting it on the Southgate Township's website or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

## **Training**

Township of Southgate will provide training to:

- Every person who participates in developing the policy, practices and procedures under Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Every person who deals with the public on behalf of the Township of Southgate, including 3rd parties, i.e. employees, agents and volunteers
- Current employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf will receive training by January 1, 2010
- All those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures will receive training by January 1, 2010
- Members of Township of Southgate Council will receive this training by January 1, 2010
- New employees, volunteers, management, etc. shall receive training as soon as "practicable", after commencing duties.
- Agents working on various projects for the municipality and who have been approved by successful tender shall be responsible for providing their own training to meet the requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07

## **Training will include the following:**

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Township of Southgate goods and services
- Township of Southgate policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.

Staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to people with disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

## **Training Records**

Training records shall be kept, including the dates when the training is provided, number of individuals to whom the training was provided and the signature of all those individuals trained on a particular date.

## **Feedback Process**

The ultimate goal of the Township of Southgate is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving all people, including those with disabilities. Comments regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way the Township of Southgate provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by using a feedback form, by mail, e-mail, or verbally. All feedback should be directed to the Township of Southgate Accessibility Coordinator. Customers can expect a response within thirty (30) days.

## **Modifications to This or Other Policies**

Township of Southgate is committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities.

Any policy of the Township of Southgate that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

## **Questions about this Policy**

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities.

If anyone has a question about this policy, or if the purpose of this policy is not understood, inquiries should be referred to the Township of Southgate Accessibility Coordinator.

### ***Exclusion***

This Accessibility Customer Service Policy shall not apply during any period where the Mayor, or the Mayor's designate has declared a "State of Emergency" as defined under the **Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act**.

**TOWNSHIP OF SOUTHGATE**  
**ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**  
**FEEDBACK FORM**

**Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities**

Thank you for visiting the Township of Southgate. We value all of our customers and strive to meet everyone's needs.

Please tell us the date and time of your visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Member, Department or Service Location You visited: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Did we respond to your customer service needs today? (Please circle)

**YES**

**NO**

Was our customer service provided to you in an accessible manner?

**YES**

**SOMEWHAT**

**NO** (please explain below)

Did you have any problems accessing our goods and services?

**YES** (please explain below)   **SOMEWHAT** (please explain below)   **NO**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please add any other comments you may have:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact information (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

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