



Section - ADMINISTRATION

SUBJECT: ACCESSIBILITY - CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE

The County of Lanark is committed to providing service in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allow them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

2.0 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) Ontario is working to make the province fully accessible to people with disabilities by 2025. Under the act, the province is developing five accessibility standards that organizations will be required to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into force on January 1, 2008. Lanark County, as a designated Public Service organization, is required to be in compliance with the standard by January 1, 2010. The standard sets requirements in a number of key areas and will be reviewed provincially at least every five years.

3.0 SCOPE

The County of Lanark is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

This policy applies to all County employees, including full-time, part-time, and temporary employees, summer students and co-op placements and persons acting on behalf of the County (e.g. consultants, contractors)

4.0 DEFINITIONS

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“Alternative Service” means a service generally intended to be temporary that approaches the desired result until such time as the barrier is removed or an equivalent service is put in place;

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

“Contractor” means a company or person with a formal or informal contract to do a specific job on behalf of Lanark County;

“Customer” means any person who receives or seeks to receive goods or services from a person or organization in the private, public and non-governmental sector. Customer includes persons who involuntarily receive goods or services imposed by an external authority;

“Disability” means the same as the definition of disability found in the Ontario Human Rights Code;

“Equivalent” means having similar effects or identical effects;

“Service Animal” means any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability as defined in Ontario Regulation 429/07;

“Support Person” means 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.

5.0 ESTABLISHMENT OF POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

- 5.1 The County of Lanark shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:
 - 5.1.1 Goods or services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
 - 5.1.2 Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services;
 - 5.1.3 The County will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability including accessible notifications and respond to questions;
 - 5.1.4 That the County of Lanark employees will be trained to communicate, provide appropriate assistance and services in a manner that takes into account the person's disability;
 - 5.1.5 Where fees for goods and services are advertised or promoted by the County, it will provide advance notice of the amount payable, if any, in respect of the support person.
- 5.2 Notice of Temporary Disruptions
 - 5.2.1 Lanark County 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.
- 5.3 Use of Assistive Devices, Support Persons and Service Animals
 - 5.3.1 The County of Lanark will provide customers assistance in the use of assistive devices;
 - 5.3.2 Support persons and/or support animals may accompany a person with disabilities in the access of goods and services.

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5.4 Documentation

5.4.1 When required by Regulation any documentation requested by a person with a disability, shall given in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

5.5 Training

5.5.1 The County will provide training to all employees and volunteers or other third parties who deal with the public on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approval of policies, practices and procedures;

5.5.2 The County will ensure that contractors, agents and other third parties who deal with the public on their behalf have been trained and are aware of the County's policies, practices and procedures;

5.5.3 Applicable 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;

5.5.4 County 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 provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- How to interact and communicate with persons in a manner that takes into account their disabilities;
- The process for people to provide feedback to the County about its provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, and how the County responds to the feedback and takes action on any complaint;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog, service animal or a support person to access goods and services;

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- Information on other county policies, practices and procedures dealing with the AODA;
- How to use equipment or devices available on County premises or provided by the County that may help with the provision of goods and services;
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the County's goods and services.

5.6 Feedback Process:

- 5.6.1 Feedback from our customers gives the County of Lanark staff and Council opportunities to learn and improve;
- 5.6.2 The County shall establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which it provides goods and services to persons with disabilities and shall make information about the process readily available to the public.

6.0 AMENDMENTS TO THIS OR OTHER POLICIES

- 6.1 We are 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;
- 6.2 Any Lanark County policy that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.