



CORPORATE POLICY MANUAL

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1. Purpose

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service O. Reg. 191/11 requires a Municipality to adopt and maintain policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of its services to persons with disabilities. This policy is prepared in accordance with the Regulation and addresses the following:

- › The Provision of Goods and Services
- › Communication
- › Use of Assistive Devices
- › Use of Service Animals
- › Use of Support Person
- › Notice of Temporary Disruptions
- › Training Requirements
- › Feedback Process
- › Notice of Availability of Documents/Format of Documents

2. Policy Statement

The Corporation of the Town of Midland is committed to providing its goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all people. The policy strives to ensure the following:

a) **Dignity and Independence**

That Town goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

b) **Integration**

That the provision of goods and services are provided in a manner that allows person with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary.

c) **Equal Opportunity**

That the provision of goods and services are provided to persons with disabilities in such a way that they have an opportunity to access our goods and services equal to that given to others.

3. Definitions

Disability

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code:

- a) Any degree of physical disability, 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 impediment, 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;
- b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c) A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d) A mental disorder, or;
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Assistive Devices

Devices used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by this standard. Assistive devices include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, reading machines, visual aids, recording machines, hearing devices and devices for grasping.

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 or a practice.

Guide Dog

A guide dog shall mean a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the applicable regulations.

Service Animal

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

- a) If it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- b) 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

A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

For the purposes of this Policy:

- a) "Clerk" means the Clerk of the Town of Midland
- b) "Council" means the Council of the Town of Midland
- c) "Town" mean the Corporation of the Town of Midland

4. The Provision of Goods and Services

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

- a. The Town's goods and services shall be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- b. The provision of the Town's goods and services to persons with disabilities shall be integrated, unless an alternate measure is necessary, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- c. Persons with disabilities shall be provided with an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the Town's goods and services.

In order to ensure that the Town reaches its goals in the provision of its goods and services the following areas are addressed:

4.1 Communication

When communicating with persons with disabilities, the Town of Midland will do so in a manner that considers the person's current barriers. Staff will be trained on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

The Town is committed to providing fully accessible telephone services to our customers. If conventional telephone service is not suitable to the customer's needs, the Town will offer to communicate with the customer by email and/or TTY Telephone Service.

4.2 Assistive Devices

The Town is committed to serving individuals who require the use of assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. Staff will be familiarized with the various assistive devices that may be used by persons with disabilities.

Exceptions may occur wherein the person with a disability is hindered from using an assistive device or it may be deemed as a health and safety risk to others. In these situations, the Town shall make every effort to accommodate the individual by offering reasonable measures of assistance in obtaining, using or benefiting from our goods and services.

5. Use of Service Animals

Persons with disabilities may enter facilities owned and/or operated by the Town of Midland accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal and may keep the animal with them provided that the facilities are open to the public and that the animal is not otherwise excluded by law. If the use of a service animal is precluded by law from the premises, the Town shall make every effort to accommodate other measures to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services.

If it is not easily identifiable that an animal is a service animal, the municipality can ask the person to provide documentation from a regulated health professional including doctors, nurses, audiologists/speech language pathologists, chiropractors, occupational therapist, optometrists, physiotherapists, psychologists, psychotherapists/registered mental health therapists.

Staff shall be trained to interact appropriately with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

6. Use of Support Person

If an individual is accompanied by a support person, they are both permitted to enter facilities owned and/or operated by the Town of Midland provided that the facilities are open to the public. They shall not be prevented from having access to each other while on the premises.

Where fees for services are required to any Town facility, event, or program and provided that the person with a disability is a paying participant, then fees will not be charged for the support person. Fares must also be waived.

The Town may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on its premises, in consultation with the person with a disability and only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

7. Notice of Temporary Disruption

Temporary disruptions in Town services or facilities may occur due to circumstances that may or may not be within the Town's control or knowledge.

The Town will make every effort to provide customers with notice of planned or unexpected disruptions in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. The notice shall include reasons for the disruption, anticipated duration of disruption and a description of alternative facilities or services if available.

Notices of disruption shall be posted at the following locations:

- › on the Town's website
- › on the Municipal Message Board at the Municipal Office – 575 Dominion Avenue
- › At the public entrances and service counters of the affected premise and service counters of the affected premises

In the event that the disruption is planned and the timing permits, the notice of disruption shall also appear on the Town pages of the Midland Mirror. Sample notices are attached as Appendix A (Scheduled Service Disruption) and B (Unexpected Service Disruption).

8. Training Requirements

The Town will ensure that the following persons receive training in the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities (Customer Service training):

- a) Every person (employee, agent, volunteer or third party) who deals with members of the public on behalf of the Municipality.
- b) Every person who participates in the development of the Township's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public.

The training shall include the following:

- › The purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.
- › How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- › How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or assistance of a support person.
- › How to use equipment or devices available on Town property and provided by the Town that may help with the provision of goods and services to a person with a disability.
- › What to do if a person with disability is having difficulty accessing the Town's goods or services.
- › The Town's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service provided.

Continued Training

New employees, volunteers, third party agents, etc. shall receive training as soon as practical. Employees will also be trained on an ongoing basis if changes are made to the policies, practices and procedures.

Third Party and Contract Agencies

A copy of the Town's Customer Service Policy and related information will be provided to Third Party agencies. They will be required to read and return a form certifying their receipt and understanding of the information. It will be the responsibility of the third party or contract agency to train all their staff based on the information provided by the Town.

Training Records

The Town will ensure that all training records are inputted into the municipal training database including name of employee, date of training and date of completion.

9. Feedback Process

Feedback from our customers provides the Town with an opportunity to learn and improve. The Municipality is committed to excellent customer service and feedback from the public is encouraged to identify areas that may require change and service improvement.

To assist the Town of Midland in ensuring that provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities is done so in an effective and timely manner, the customer is invited to provide their feedback as follows:

- a) By mail or in person at: Town of Midland
575 Dominion Avenue
Midland, Ontario L4R 1R2
Attention: K. Desroches, Municipal Clerk
- b) By Telephone at: 705-526-4275 Extension 2208
- c) By TTY Telephone: 705-526-4275 Extension 2824
- d) By email at: kdesroches@midland.ca
- e) By Feedback Form at: www.midland.ca

In order to assist in a proper response, customers will be asked to provide their name, address, telephone number and any other contact information necessary.

Information regarding the feedback process will be posted on the Town's website at www.midland.ca. The Town will strive to provide responses to feedback within five (5) business days from its receipt.

The Customer Service Feedback Form is attached as Appendix C.

10. Notice of Available of Documents/Format of Documents

This policy and related information pertaining to the delivery of goods and services will be made available, upon request, in a format that takes into account the individual's disability. The Town and the individual may agree upon the format to be used.

This policy and related information will be made available on the Town's website.

Appendix 'A'



The Corporation of the Town of Midland

Notice of Scheduled Service Disruption

There will be a scheduled service disruption at the Town of Midland Municipal offices. The disruption will be from _____ and _____.

This disruption includes:

Alternative (if applicable):

On behalf of the Town of Midland we would like to thank you for your patience in this matter.

Karen Desroches
Municipal Clerk
Accessibility Coordinator
Town of Midland

Appendix B



The Corporation of the Town of Midland

Notice of Unexpected Service Disruption

There is currently an unexpected service disruption at (insert location) _____
_____.

The estimated time of the service disruption will be from _____
until _____.

This disruption includes:

Alternative (if applicable):

On behalf of the Town of Midland we would like to thank you for your patience in this matter.

Karen Desroches
Municipal Clerk
Accessibility Coordinator
Town of Midland

Appendix C



The Corporation of The Town of Midland

Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form

The Corporation of the Town of Midland is committed to providing its goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all people. In order to ensure that we are meeting your needs, please complete the information below.

Did we respond effectively to your customer service needs?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Were your accessibility needs accommodated in the delivery of our customer service?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form – cont'd

Did you have any problems accessing our goods and services?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Additional Comments:

Contact Information (Optional):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____

Email: _____

Understanding the Needs of People with Disabilities and How to Interact Appropriately

Types of Disabilities:

Vision

Vision disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Impaired vision can restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

- › Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to them.
- › Speak normally and clearly.
- › Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it's an emergency.
- › If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- › Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- › Do not touch or address service animals.
- › Do not leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair or guide them to a comfortable location.
- › Do not walk away without saying good-bye.
- › Be patient.

Hearing

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. People who are hearing impaired may require assistive devices when communicating. Some people may use sign language, notes or hearing aids when communicating. They may also use email, pagers, or TTY telephone service.

- › Always ask how you can help. Do not shout.
- › Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- › Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where your customer can see your face.
- › Look at and speak directly to your customer. Address your customer, not the interpreter.
- › If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, i.e. a pen and paper.
- › Do not put your hands in front of your face when speaking.

- › Do not touch or address service animals.
- › Any personal matters (i.e. financial) should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- › Be patient.

Deaf-Blind

A person who is deaf-blind cannot see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener.

Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

- › Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others neither.
- › 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 explaining how to communicate with them.
- › Speak directly to your customer as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- › Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach your customer who is deaf-blind.
- › Do not touch or address service animals.
- › Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission, unless it's an emergency.
- › Be patient.

Physical

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. For example, people who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

- › Speak normally and directly to your customer. Don't speak to someone who is with them.
- › People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- › Do not touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, unnecessarily unless it's an emergency.
- › Provide your customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment (i.e. automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- › Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to ensure clear passages.
- › Be patient.

Intellectual or Developmental

People with intellectual or development disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way a person acts, asks questions or uses body languages.

- › Do not assume a person can or cannot do something.
- › Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- › Make sure your customer understands what you have said.
- › If you cannot understand what it being said, do not pretend. Just ask again.
- › Provide one piece of information at a time.
- › Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant.
- › Be patient and supportive.

Learning

Learning disabilities can result in a host of different communication difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced but they can interfere with a person's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has a learning disability unless you are told, or you notice the way a person acts, ask questions or uses body language.

- › When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- › Speak normally, clearly, and directly to your customer.
- › Take some time – people with certain learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- › Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- › If you are dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- › Be courteous and patient and your customer will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.
- › Patience and willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Mental Health

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You will not know that a person has a mental health disability unless you have been told.

- › Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- › Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with your customer to meet their needs.
- › If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- › Be patient.

Speech or Language Impairments

Some people have problems communicating. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe disabilities may use communicator boards or other assistive devices.

- › Just because a person has one disability does not mean they have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking, do not assume that they have an intellectual or development disability as well.
- › If you do not understand, ask your customer to repeat the information.
- › If you are able, ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no.”
- › Be patient and polite and give your customer whatever time he/she needs to get his/her point across.
- › Do not interrupt or finish your customer’s sentences. Wait for them to finish.
- › Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

This information was obtained from the website of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services – Accessibility Standards.



Accessible Customer Service Policy

Validation of Understanding

This shall validate that I have read and understood the Accessible Customer Service Policy for the Town of Midland.

Print Name

Signature

Company Name

Position

Date