

POLICY STATEMENT

The County of Elgin 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 on behalf of the County of Elgin.

PURPOSE

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (the "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.

Under the AODA, Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled "Accessibility Standards for Customer Service" came into force on January 1, 2008. That Regulation establishes 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.

This policy is drafted in accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) and addresses the following:

- (a) The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- (b) The use of support persons by persons with disabilities;
- (c) Customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- (d) Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
- (e) The use of service animals by persons with disabilities;
- (f) Notice of availability and format of documents;
- (g) Training; and
- (h) The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities.

County of Elgin

Section: **2**

Human Resources Policy Manual

Subject: **Accessibility Standards
For Customer Service**

Code – **A**

Policy Number: **2.130**

Date Approved: **April 28, 2009**

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Date Last Revision:

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County of Elgin, 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.

IMPLEMENTATION

Support Persons

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.

The County of Elgin will allow people with disabilities the opportunity to be accompanied by a support person in all County owned and operated public facilities. The County reserves the right to request the person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises.

The County of Elgin will waive admission fees for support persons who accompany a person with a disability, into facilities where admission is charged.

- (a) Member of public should notify a staff member the presence of the support person.
- (b) Admission fees will be waived for the support person.
- (c) If there is confidential information to be disclosed, consent must be received from the person with the disability.

Feedback Process

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

The County accepts feedback from the public through the following methods:

- (a) County of Elgin Website
- (b) In Person
- (c) Telephone
- (b) Written complaints/ suggestions

To submit a complaint:

Should a member of the public wish to make a complaint regarding the service they have received:

- (a) The member of the public with the complaint or concern should have a discussion with the staff person at the County of Elgin who is involved in the situation.
- (b) Should the discussion not resolve the complaint or the member of the public is uncomfortable discussing the issue with the staff person, the member of the public should fill out a complaint form. A staff person can assist the member of the public with the *complaint form* in a manner that takes into consideration their disability.
- (c) The information to be provided by the member of the public should include their personal contact information, the date, a description of the complaint, and what the member of the public requests to resolve the complaint. This information should be documented on the complaint form.
- (d) The complaint should be forwarded to the Accessibility Coordinator, the manager responsible for the department and the department head.
- (e) The department head will attempt to resolve the complaint in a timely manner, with the assistance of the Accessibility Coordinator.

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- (f) The member of the public will be contacted once a resolution has been reached.

To submit a suggestion:

Should a member of the public wish to provide the County of Elgin with a suggestion on how to improve our service:

- (a) Member of the public will inform staff member of suggestion.
- (b) Staff member will assist member of the public in filling out the complaint form, should they require assistance.
- (c) The suggestion should be forwarded to the Accessibility Coordinator, the manager responsible for the department and the department head.
- (d) Member of the public will be notified in a timely manner of how the County of Elgin will proceed with their suggestion.
- (e) Staff response should include: an explanation of how we will implement the suggestion, a response indicating further investigation or an explanation why we are unable to implement the suggestion.

All complaints and suggestions should be recorded on a complaint/suggestion form, and where applicable forwarded to the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC).

Complaint/ suggestion forms will be available on the County Website and in each individual department.

Service Disruption

The County of Elgin is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to the public. However; temporary disruptions in the County's services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or not be within the County's control or knowledge.

The Department Head of the affected "disruption" will ensure that the notice is provided to the public and any staff that needs to be informed.

Advanced notice will be provided where possible directed to the public in a variety of forms. These forms include:

- (a) Posted signage in affected areas
- (b) County of Elgin Website
- (c) Direct Mail/ Weekly Newspaper Advertisement

The notice must include the following information:

- (a) The reason for disruption in service
- (b) Anticipated duration
- (c) Description of alternate facilities or services, if available
- (d) Contact Information

If the County of Elgin website should experience a temporary service disruption, advanced notice where possible, keeping with the conditions of the service disruption section of this policy, shall be provided on the website.

Service Animals

For the purpose of this policy, a 'service animal' is defined as either:

- (i) A "guide dog," as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons Rights' Act, or*
- (ii) A "service animal" for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, 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 the 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.

The County of Elgin will allow the person and the animal onto all County of Elgin owned and operated public facilities, and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. *areas that are open to the public
The care and control of a service animal is the responsibility of the owner and/or support person.

If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the provider's goods or services.

Format of Documents

Should the County of Elgin be required to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, the County of Elgin shall give the person the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Material printed in-house and publications produced on behalf of the County of Elgin should contain a note indicating, "alternate formats are available upon request" and include relevant contact information.

The County of Elgin and the person with a disability will try to agree upon the format to be used for the document or information, subject to feasibility requirements of this policy.

Alternative formats that should be considered by the County of Elgin and the person with the disability will include, but are not limited to:

(i) Print Requests:

Requests for alternative formats should be honoured in the most practical manner depending on the media chosen, the size and complexity of the document, the quality and source of the documents, the feasibility of the request (including the cost) and the number of documents to be

converted. It should be noted that when request for one of these formats is received and deemed feasible, staff should make every attempt to respond to the request in the most practical manner and to the satisfaction of the requestor. If it is determined that the format requested is not feasible, then other alternative methods of providing the information should be explored that will still meet the needs of the requestor (e.g. Audio CD or explaining the information verbally etc.).

- (a) Staff members receives request from member of the public for alternative format.
- (b) Employee fills out alternative format request form.
- (c) Forwards request onto the responsible Department head
- (d) The responsible Department head and Accessibility Coordinator will determine feasibility, if feasible.
- (e) Proceeds with alternative format request.
- (f) If not feasible; contact individual with feasible solution.

(ii) ASL Interpreter Request:

- (a) Employee receives request from public for ASL Interpreter.
- (b) Employee fills out alternative format request form.
- (c) Forwards request onto the responsible manager.
- (d) The responsible department contacts Canadian Hearing Society to make request.
- (e) Once Canadian Hearing Society confirms attendance of ASL Interpreter, the responsible department contacts individual.
- (f) If ASL Interpreter is not available, individual will be contacted with an alternative solution.

Feasibility will be determined based upon cost in relation to size of document and time associated with processing document requests.

The time frame attached to the conversion process varies depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents and number of documents to be converted. Documents shall be returned in a timely manner depending on the factors previously noted.

Conversion shall be processed in-house wherever possible. When a member of the public requests a piece of County documentation in a multiple format, the department of origin shall be responsible for the cost of the conversion, materials and distribution, not the public requestor.

In-house printing, where possible, should adhere to the CNIB's Clear Print Standards.

Training

The County of Elgin shall ensure that the following persons receive training about the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities:

- (a) Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.
- (b) Every person who participates in developing the County's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

The training will include a review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of this policy and instruction about the following matters:

- (a) How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability, as outline in this policy and procedures.
- (b) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person, as outlined in this policy and procedures.
- (c) How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
- (d) What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.

The County of Elgin will log and retain records which will record the details of the training provided, as well as the name of the person, location, and date the training was completed.

The County of Elgin will customize the training going forward, based on the actual experiences and usage of the persons with disability in County of Elgin owned or operated facilities.

The County of Elgin will incorporate the training into the Health & Safety Orientation for new hires. Presentation materials will also be made available so that they can be used during staff meetings and workshops as required.

Assistive Devices

The County of Elgin will allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the County of Elgin.

Should a person with a disability be unable to access the County's services through the use of their own personal assistive device, the County of Elgin will ensure the following measures:

- (a) Determine if service is inaccessible, based upon individual requirements.
- (b) Assess service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual.
- (c) Notify person with disability of alternative service and how they can access the service, temporarily or on a permanent basis.



EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have received, read and understood the preceding Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy for the Corporation of the County of Elgin (Human Resources Policy 2.130).

Employee Name (please print)

Department (please print)

Signature of Employee

Date