



## POLICY MANUAL

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF ESSEX		
<b>SECTION: CORPORATE - COUNCIL</b>	<b>DOCUMENT NO: 006</b>	
	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: October 19, 2009</b>	
<b>SUBJECT: ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>	<b>REPLACES ISSUE OF: N/A</b>	
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### 1.0 OBJECTIVE

The Town of Essex is committed to being responsive to the diverse needs of all of its residents and visitors and to this end will strive to provide equal access to its programs, goods, services and facilities.

The Town of Essex will meet its commitment to providing Accessible Customer Service through policies and procedures that ensure all of its programs, goods, services and facilities are provided to persons with disabilities in a manner that—

1. Respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities,
2. Is integrated into the method of service delivery as fully as possible,
3. Allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers thereby ensuring equality of outcome,
4. Is sensitive to an individual's needs, and
5. Is responsive by delivering service in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the specific accommodation required.

### 2.0 LEGISLATION

*The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the "Act") was passed by the Ontario Legislature in July 2007 with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the Province. The Act allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) adopted on January 1, 2008 is one of the standards that has been developed in response to the Act. This standard details specific requirements for service delivery for all service providers such that the dignity and independence of people with disabilities is preserved. Service providers must also integrate services and equal opportunity.

As a public sector organization the Town of Essex must comply with the standards by January 1, 2010. The following are the key requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service—

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures for providing goods or services to people with disabilities,
2. Communicate with a person with a disability in a way that takes their disability into account,
3. Set a policy to allow people to use their own personal assistive devices to access the Town's goods or services,
4. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of our premises that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by law,
5. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person in those areas that are open to the public.

### 3.0 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided for purposes of this policy—

**“Assistive Devices”** are defined as devices that people may use to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services provided by the Town of Essex and may include, but are not limited to—

- (i) wheelchairs
- (ii) walkers
- (iii) white canes used by people with visual disabilities
- (iv) note-taking devices
- (v) portable magnifiers
- (vi) recording machines
- (vii) assistive listening devices
- (viii) personal oxygen tanks and devices

**“Disability”** is defined in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* as—

- (i) 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, 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 developmental disability,
- (iii) 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.

**“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. 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.

**“Support Person”** is defined as another person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help him or her with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

## **4.0 APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public, including third parties acting on behalf of or representing the Town of Essex, regardless of whether the person does so as an unionized or non-unionized employee, member of Council, agent, volunteer, member of a Committee of Council, student, including students on placement, contractor, or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing the Town’s policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

## **5.0 GENERAL PRACTICES & PROCEDURES**

The following general practices and procedures will be followed in carrying out the Accessible Customer Service Policy—

## 1. Communications

When communicating with a person with a disability, the Town will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. General tips on how to communicate with persons with varying types of disabilities are provided in Appendix "A" attached.

All communications from the Town of Essex to its residents or visitors will take into consideration, to the extent possible, the needs of persons with disabilities. The Town of Essex will incorporate the "Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines"<sup>1</sup> (refer to Appendix "B") in all printed communications it issues.

## 2. Assistive Devices

The Town will continually review facilities, programs and services in an effort to remove all barriers that may prevent persons with disabilities who use an assistive device from participating in or accessing the programs, goods, services and facilities provided by the Town of Essex.

Refer to Appendix "C" which provides information on how to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices in carrying out activities or accessing programs, goods, services and facilities.

## 3. Guide Dogs or Other Service Animal

Persons with disabilities accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal will be permitted to enter those areas of the premises owned and operated by the Town of Essex that are typically open to the public unless the animal is excluded by law. Refer to Appendix "D" which provides information on how to interact with persons with disabilities who use the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal.

In cases where a service animal is excluded by law in an area within premises owned and operated by the Town of Essex, the Town will ensure that other measures are made available to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from programs, goods, services and facilities.

## 4. Support Person

Persons with disabilities accompanied by a support person who is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises, will be permitted to be accompanied by that support

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<sup>1</sup> Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines are available from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind by mail: CNIB National Office, 1929 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, ON M4G 3E8, by telephone: 1.800.563.2642 or online: [www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca).

person in premises owned and operated by the Town of Essex that are normally open to the public.

In cases where persons with disabilities are accompanied by a support person and are participating in a paid program, the support person will not be required to pay a program fee if it can be determined that the program is of no interest to the support person or the support person will not participate, on a personal level, in the program and that the support person is required to protect the health or safety of the person with the disability or the health and safety of others. In the event that a program fee is deemed to be payable by a support person because the program is of interest to that person or the support person intends to participate in the program and the support worker is not required to protect the health or safety of the person with the disability or the health and safety of others, the Town will ensure that the support worker is given notice, in advance, of the amount payable.

Refer to Appendix "E" which provides information on how to interact with persons with disabilities who use the assistance of a support person.

#### 5. Notice of Temporary Disruptions of Service

The Town of Essex recognizes that persons with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access programs, goods, services and facilities provided by the Town (for example, making special arrangements for transportation often days in advance of planned access) and is committed to ensuring that notice is provided for any temporary disruption of service.

Reasonable notice of a temporary disruption in the provision of goods, services and facilities must be provided in advance for all planned and expected disruptions in service resulting from such things as elevators under repair, renovations that limit access to an area or technology that is temporarily unavailable, etc.

In cases where a temporary disruption in service is not planned or expected, such as power outages, advance notice will not be possible but the Town will provide notice immediately after the service is disrupted.

Notice should be provided at least 48 hours and up to one week prior to a planned or expected temporary disruption of service and as quickly as possible following an unplanned temporary disruption. Notice should be provided in as many ways as possible and should include information about the reason(s) for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or methods and timing of services, if any, that may be available.

The Town will provide notice by posting the information in visible places on properties owned or operated by the Town of Essex, and/or on the Town's

website ([www.essex.ca](http://www.essex.ca)) and/or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

The format of any notice of a temporary disruption in services should take into account the Clear Print Accessibility Guidelines provided in Appendix "B".

## 6. Feedback

Feedback from customers about the delivery of programs, goods, services and facilities provides the Town of Essex with opportunities to identify areas requiring change and leads to continuous improvements in service delivery.

The Town recognizes that every customer has the right to make a complaint, provide a compliment or make suggestions on ways that the Town can improve its services. In an effort to facilitate feedback the Town offers various methods for providing feedback, including feedback by telephone or fax, in person, in writing, by email and electronically using the Feedback Form attached to this policy as Appendix "F". Customers may also provide feedback directly to the Town of Essex Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Feedback provided to the Town of Essex on Customer Service will be reviewed as received by the Town's senior management team, consisting of the Chief Administrative Officer, the Director of Finance & Administration & Treasurer, the Director of Infrastructure and Development, the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Clerk/Deputy-Treasurer, and if necessary, in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Any changes to service delivery approved by the senior management team resulting from public input will be communicated to affected departments together with an expected completion date.

## 7. Training on Accessible Customer Service

The Town of Essex will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies as set out in Section 4.0, "Applicability" of this Policy will receive training as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The degree and format of training provided will be tailored to suit the degree of each individual's interactions with the public and his/her involvement in the development of policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services. All full-time employees of the Town of Essex will be required to receive the highest level of training, regardless of their degree of interaction with the public.

The content of the training will include, but will not be limited to—

- A review of the purposes of the Act,
- The requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service regulation (Ontario Regulation 429/07),

- Instructions on the City's policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of programs, goods, services and facilities to persons with disabilities,
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities,
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Town's programs, goods, services and facilities,
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices, guide dogs, other service animals or support persons,
- The process for addressing feedback from customers on customer service,
- Information about the equipment or devices available on the Town's premises that may help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Training will be provided to every individual identified in Section 4.0, "Applicability" of this Policy as soon as practicable upon an individual being assigned to his/her duties with the Town of Essex. The degree and content of training by the Town of Essex will be revised as the requirements of the Act change or as changes occur in the Town's policies and procedures.

The Town will maintain records on all training provided, including the date on which training was provided and the names and signatures of the individuals participating in the training. The names of individuals trained will be recorded for training administration purposes only and disclosure of training records will be subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ("MFIPPA").

#### 8. Disclosure of Information Required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Regulation 429/07)

All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, including the Town's Accessible Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and the written feedback process are available upon request, subject to the MFIPPA. The Town's policy on Accessible Customer Service will be available at all Town-owned facilities and will be posted on Town's website at [www.essex.ca](http://www.essex.ca).

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

## APPENDIX "A"

### PROVIDING SERVICE TO CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

1. HEARING DISABILITIES	
Definition	Tips for Serving Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Deaf</b> – severe to profound hearing loss</li> <li>• <b>Hard of Hearing</b> – a person who uses their residual hearing and speech to communicate</li> <li>• <b>Deafened</b> – caused to hear poorly or not at all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract the customer’s attention before speaking by waving your hand and say “Hello” from outside of their personal space</li> <li>• Look directly at the person when speaking</li> <li>• Use pen and paper to communicate if necessary</li> <li>• Speak clearly, keep your hands away from your face</li> <li>• Reduce background noise</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate lighting</li> </ul>

2. DEAFBLIND DISABILITIES	
Definition	Tips for Serving Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot see or hear to some degree</li> <li>• Many will be accompanied by a support person to help them communicate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak directly to your customer, not the support person</li> <li>• Identify yourself to the support person</li> <li>• The customer may explain how you should communicate with them</li> </ul>

3. INTELLECTUAL OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES	
Definition	Tips for Serving Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can mildly or profoundly limit ability to learn and process information, communicate, perform everyday activities and live independently</li> <li>• May be an invisible disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow room for personal space</li> <li>• Don’t assume what the customer can or cannot do</li> <li>• Don’t repeat a question unless asked to do so</li> <li>• Use plain language</li> <li>• Take your time, be patient and allow ample time for customer to respond</li> <li>• Use a medium level of voice</li> <li>• After assisting, ask: “Do you require additional information?”</li> <li>• Provide one piece of information at a time – step-by-step instructions</li> <li>• Limit background noise or high-pitched music</li> <li>• Offer information in simple concepts</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX "A"

### PROVIDING SERVICE TO CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

4. LEARNING DISABILITIES	
Definition	Tips for Serving Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affects how person acquires, interprets, retains, processes or takes in information</li> <li>• May affect—               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- language-based learning</li> <li>- mathematics</li> <li>- writing, fine motor skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your time, be patient and allow ample time for customer to respond</li> <li>• Demonstrate a willingness to assist</li> <li>• Speak normally, clearly, directly to your customer using a medium level of voice</li> <li>• Don't repeat a question unless asked to do so</li> <li>• Provide information in a way that works for your customer (i.e. pen and paper)</li> <li>• Be prepared to explain any materials you provide or rephrase information provided using less complicated vocabulary</li> <li>• Be prepared to write verbal answers to questions provided by a customer on forms</li> <li>• Use plain language and avoid using technical terms and acronyms</li> </ul>

5. MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES	
Definition	Tips for Serving Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental illness is not a single disease but a broad classification for many disorders, including—               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder, which affect how one feels</li> <li>- schizophrenia, which affects how one perceives the world</li> <li>- anxiety disorders which affect how fearful one perceives places, events or situations to be</li> <li>- personality disorders, which affect how one sees oneself in relation to others</li> <li>- eating disorders (i.e. anorexia or bulimia), which influence how one feels about food and one's body image</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be confident and reassuring</li> <li>• Do not be confrontational</li> <li>• If the customer is in crisis, ask how best to help</li> <li>• Take your customer seriously</li> <li>• Don't take things expressed by or actions of the customer personally</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX "A"

### PROVIDING SERVICE TO CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

6. SPEECH OR LANGUAGE DISABILITIES	
Definition	Tips for Serving Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have problems communicating</li> <li>• May have difficulty pronouncing words, may slur or stutter</li> <li>• May use communication boards or other assistive devices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't make assumptions</li> <li>• Give them time to get their point across – be patient</li> <li>• Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible</li> <li>• Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences</li> <li>• You may want to use pen and paper</li> <li>• Say "I don't understand, can you repeat the question?"</li> </ul>

7. PHYSICAL OR DISABILITIES AFFECTING MOBILITY	
Definition	Tips for Serving Customers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May restrict a person in the following ways—               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- control or speed of movements</li> <li>- coordination or balance</li> <li>- ability to grasp some objects</li> <li>- ability to walk long distances</li> <li>- ability to sit or stand for prolonged periods</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Can be present at birth, result from disease, injury or be temporary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak directly to the customer</li> <li>• Ask before you help</li> <li>• Respect personal space</li> <li>• Don't move any items the customer may have</li> <li>• Describe what you are going to do beforehand</li> <li>• Don't leave your customer in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX "B"**

### **CLEAR PRINT ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES**

Readability shouldn't be an afterthought when producing materials. It should be the first step in making your merchandise, service, location or information accessible to everyone.

1. **Contrast**                      Use high contrast colours for text and background. Good examples are black or dark blue text on a white or yellow background, or white/yellow text on a black/dark blue background.
2. **Type Colour**                Printed material is most readable in black and white. If using coloured text, restrict it to things like titles, headlines or highlighted material.
3. **Font Size**                    Bigger is better. Keep your text large, preferably between 12 and 18 points, depending on the font (point size varies between fonts). Consider your audience when choosing point size.
4. **Leading**                        Leading is the space between lines of text and should be at least 25 to 30 per cent of the point size. This lets readers move more easily to the next line of text. Heavier typefaces will require slightly more leading.
5. **Font Family & Font Style**    Avoid complicated or decorative fonts. Choose standard fonts with easily-recognizable upper and lower-case characters. Arial and Verdana are good choices.
6. **Font Heaviness**            Opt for fonts with medium heaviness and avoid light type with thin strokes. When emphasizing a word or passage, use a bold or heavy font. Italics or upper-case letters are not recommended.
7. **Letter Spacing**              Don't crowd your text: keep a wide space between letters. Choose a monospaced font rather than one that is proportionally spaced.
8. **Margins & Columns**        Separate text into columns to make it easier to read, as it requires less eye movement and less peripheral vision. Use wide binding margins or spiral bindings if possible. Flat pages work best for vision aids such as magnifiers.
9. **Paper Finish**                Use a matte or non-glossy finish to cut down on glare. Reduce distractions by not using watermarks or complicated background designs.
10. **Clear Design & Simplicity**    Use distinctive colours, sizes and shapes on the covers of materials to make them easier to tell apart.

**APPENDIX "C"**  
**INTERACTING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**  
**WHO USE ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devices that people may bring with them or that are already on the premises and are used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the programs, goods, services, facilities provided by the Town of Essex</li> <li>• Include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes used by people who are blind or who have low vision, note-taking devices, portable magnifiers, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the customer is permitted to enter the premises with the assistive device and can utilize the device in the premises unless excluded by law</li> <li>• Remove potential barriers to the use of assistive devices where possible</li> <li>• Offer assistive devices in a manner that respects the person's dignity and independence</li> <li>• Ensure persons with disabilities are aware of assistive devices available on the Town's premises or otherwise supplied by the Town</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lean on or reach over a customer or their assistive device</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX "D"**  
**INTERACTING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**  
**WHO USE A GUIDE DOG OR OTHER SERVICE ANIMAL**

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An animal specially trained to assist an individual with a disability. Many times it is readily apparent that the animal is used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to their disability—for example, a guide dog wearing a harness</li> <li>• If it is not apparent that the animal is a service animal, then a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to a disability, or the customer may be asked to present a certificate to confirm that the service animal has been trained to assist a person with a disability by a professional service animal institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow service animals anywhere customers normally have access</li> <li>• Permit the customer to keep the service animal with him/her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises—for example, areas where food is prepared.</li> <li>• Service animals are permitted access to dining or food ordering areas.</li> <li>• Leave the care and supervision of the service animal with the customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to, touch or make eye contact with the service animal.</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX "E"**  
**INTERACTING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**  
**WHO USE A SUPPORT PERSON**

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who accompany a person with a disability to help them with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permit customers and their support person to enter the premises together.</li> <li>• Provide the person with a disability access to their support person while on the premises.</li> <li>• Obtain consent from the customer if confidential information is going to be shared while a support person is present.</li> <li>• Speak directly to your customer, not to the support person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not charge support persons an access fee or a fee to participate in a program in cases where it can be determined that the program is of no interest to the support person or the support person will not participate in the program but the support person is required to protect the health or safety of the person with the disability or the health and safety of others.</li> <li>• A separate fee for additional food or lodging is permissible.</li> <li>• Where a program fee is deemed to be payable by a support person, the Town will ensure that the support person is given notice, in advance, of the amount payable.</li> </ul>



33 Talbot St. South  
Essex, ON N8M 1A8  
www.essex.ca

t 519-776-7336  
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# Customer Service Initial Complaint and Feedback Form

## Section A - General Information

The Town of Essex is committed to providing high quality customer service. We value all of our customers and strive to meet everyone's needs. We welcome your comments to help us monitor and improve our services and customer experiences. Please submit your completed form to the Town of Essex Municipal Office.

**Please tell us the date and time of your contact with us:**

YYYY/MM/DD

Time

**Did we respond to your customer service needs:**  Yes  No (please explain below)

**Was our customer service provided to you in an accessible manner:**  
 Yes  Somewhat  No (please explain below)

Please provide the details of your customer service experience

## Section B - Contact Information

**Your Full Name:**

Surname

Given Name

**Address:**

Street

City

Province

Postal Code

**Home Phone Number:** (       )

**Business Phone Number:** (       )

**Email Address:**

Personal information contained on this form is collected pursuant to Ontario Regulation 429/07, the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and will be used for the purpose of responding to your feedback. Questions should be directed to the Clerk for the Town of Essex, 33 Talbot Street South, Essex Ontario, N8M 1A8, or at 519-776-7336 extension 10 or 11.

## Section C - OFFICE USE ONLY

**Form received by:**

Surname

Given Name

Date Received

**Referred to:**

Surname

Given Name

Date Referred

Comments