



Accessible Customer Service Policy

Policy Owner: Operations

Type: Policy

Date Approved: August 17, 2011

Approved By: Board

Last Reviewed: New Policy

Policy Summary

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (the “Customer Service Standards”) is an accessibility standard created under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act , 2005* (AODA). Toronto Community Housing is required to comply with the regulation by January 1, 2012.

In fulfillment of its obligations under the Customer Service Standards and in keeping with its own values, this policy outlines Toronto Community Housing’s commitment to provide customer service that is inclusive, barrier free and meets the unique needs of persons with disabilities.

As additional standards identified in the AODA pass into regulation, this Policy will be adjusted to include these new standards.

Policy Statement

Toronto Community Housing recognizes that accessibility for persons with disabilities is an important issue that needs to be addressed throughout our portfolio. Toronto Community Housing is committed to the principles of accommodation outlined in the AODA, the customer service standard and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Toronto Community Housing will continue to provide customer service for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects their dignity and independence while allowing them the same opportunity as any other customer to access and benefit from our services.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to lay out Toronto Community Housing’s commitment to providing accessible customer service. This policy sets

out key customer service commitments in several areas relating to accessibility.

Guidelines will set out detailed procedures and protocols that guide Toronto Community Housing in applying this policy. The Policy and Guidelines will inform tenants and the public of our commitment and will guide them in requesting accommodation in service and providing feedback about our service.

Scope

This policy applies to all persons who interact with tenants, members of the public or other third parties on behalf of Toronto Community Housing, as an employee, contractor, volunteer, Board member or otherwise.

Key Values

In keeping with our values of respect, integrity, inclusion, collaboration and excellence, Toronto Community Housing shall provide accessible customer service in accordance with the following key principles:

Dignity

Service is provided in a respectful manner consistent with the needs of the individual.

Independence

Services for persons with disabilities shall support their independence

while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy. As such, service delivery shall consider the nature of the service and alternative accommodation that may be required.

Equity/Equality of Outcome

Customers with disabilities will be provided the same opportunity to access our services as all other customers

Integration

Customers with disabilities shall fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as all other customers.

Customer Service Commitments

Training

Toronto Community Housing will provide training to all Board Members, employees, volunteers and others who interact with the tenants, the public or other third parties on its behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies and procedures.

Training will include the following:

- The purposes of the AODA; the requirements of the customer service standard; and any subsequent legislation

- Instruction on Toronto Community Housing's policies, and procedures pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, including the customer service standard;
- 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 Toronto Community Housing's goods and services;

New staff will be trained upon their initial orientation. Following initial training, existing staff will receive training on a regular basis and when changes are made to these policies and procedures or regulations.

Service Animals

Toronto Community Housing is committed to welcoming persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

If a service animal is excluded by law, Toronto Community Housing will suggest appropriate alternatives and provide assistance in order to ensure that the person is able to access, obtain, use or benefit from Toronto Community Housing's services where possible.

Support Persons

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a Support Person will be allowed to access any services provided by Toronto Community Housing with his or her Support Person. At no time will Toronto Community Housing prevent a person with a disability who is accompanied by a Support Person from having access to his or her Support Person.

Where there are barriers to access or attendance by a Support Person at sponsored meetings, consultations or events, Toronto Community Housing will seek to facilitate access so as to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities.

Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities shall be permitted to obtain, use or benefit from goods or services through the use of their own assistive devices. Staff will be trained so as to be familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing services.

In the event a person with a disability is hindered from accessing any goods or services offered, Toronto Community Housing will seek to accommodate the person by offering the use of another assistive device

that is available or an alternative way of delivering the same service.

Toronto Community Housing will ensure that staff know how to use assistive devices available in their various locations for customers, and inform customers of the assistive devices that are available.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions

Toronto Community Housing is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to its customers. However, temporary disruptions in services and facilities may occur.

Toronto Community Housing will provide its customers with notice of any disruption to its services, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available.

Notice of service disruptions will be provided as soon as staff is aware of the disruption, or in advance in the case of planned disruptions. Notice will be provided by a variety of methods, depending on the circumstances, and may include postings in conspicuous places at the affected premises, in other Toronto Community Housing facilities, on

Toronto Community Housing's website or by any other means that will ensure that the notice reaches those persons potentially affected by the temporary disruption in a manner that is accessible to them.

Feedback Policy

The goal of Toronto Community Housing is to meet and surpass expectations while providing services to customers with disabilities. Feedback on our services and whether expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback may be provided by a person with a disability in the manner deemed most convenient to them, such as in person, by telephone, in writing, by email or otherwise.

All feedback will be kept in strict confidence and used to improve customer service. In addition, the author of the feedback will be provided a response in the format requested (or the most appropriate format where no request was made) outlining actions taken.

Where an individual is not satisfied with Toronto Community Housing's response to their feedback, staff will direct their complaint to the appropriate individual to respond in accordance with the Toronto Community Housing's Tenant Complaint Procedure.

Definitions

Under the Customer Service Standards (O.Reg. 429/07):

“Assistive Device”

A device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities of daily life or accessing the services provided by Toronto Community Housing including, but not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, note-taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, personal oxygen tanks 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.

“Disability”

(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*;

“Service Animal”

An animal trained specifically to assist an individual with a disability, either where it is readily apparent that the animal is a service animal or where a letter has been provided by a doctor or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to a disability.

“Support Person”

Someone who accompanies a person with a disability and assists them with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Governing and Applicable Legislation

- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*
- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*

Related Policies and Procedures

- Human Rights, Harassment and Fair Access Policy
- Accessibility Policy for Tenants with Disabilities
- Tenant Complaint Procedure

Approvals

Board of Directors (Policy)

Management Executive (Guidelines)

Commencement and Review

This policy was approved by the Board of Directors on August 17, 2011 and will take full effect on December 31, 2011. It will be reviewed on an annual basis thereafter.