

# Accessible Customer Service Policy

## Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all employees, learners, volunteers and members of the community that are on ACPN premises or are using ACPN services have full and equal access to its facilities, services, and information. Accessibility makes it possible for people with all levels of ability to take advantage of ACPN's services.

This policy meets the requirements of the customer service standards included in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. It applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

## Definitions

**Assistive device:** A technical aid, communication device, or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them, such as a wheelchair, walker, or a personal oxygen tank, and that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering, or reading.

**Disability:** As defined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and the Ontario Human Rights Code, refers to:

- 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 coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impairment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- A learning disability, or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- A mental disorder; or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

**Guide Dog:** A highly trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the Blind Persons' Rights Act, to provide mobility, safety, and increased independence for people who are blind.

**Service Animal:** A service animal for a person with a disability if:

1. The animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
2. The person provides documentation from a member of one of the following regulated health professional colleges confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:
  - College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
  - College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
  - College of Nurses of Ontario;
  - College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
  - College of Optometrists of Ontario;
  - College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
  - College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
  - College of Psychologists of Ontario; or
  - College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

**Support Person:** In relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or access to goods and services.

## **Guidelines**

### **The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities**

ACPN will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices, and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity by:

- Ensuring that all employees, learners, volunteers and members of the community receive the same value and quality;
- Allowing all employees, learners, volunteers and members of the community with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services, as long as this does not present a health and safety risk;
- Using alternative methods when possible, to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- A mental disorder; or
- Taking into account individual accommodation needs when providing goods and services; and
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

### **The Use of Assistive Devices**

#### **Customer's Own Assistive Devices**

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services provided by the company. In cases where the assistive device presents a health and

safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services, up to the point of undue hardship.

Alternatively, where elevators are not present and where a customer requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the customer.

## **Guide Dogs and Service Animals**

Employees, learners, volunteers and members of the community with a disability who are accompanied by a guide dog or service animal will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. “No pet” policies do not apply to guide dogs or service animals.

Staff may respectfully ask if an animal is a service animal and will not ask the nature of the person’s disability or purpose of the animal.

## **Exclusion Guidelines**

If a guide dog or service animal is excluded by law (see applicable laws below), ACPN will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services, when possible. For example, the company might accommodate a customer’s disability by securing the animal in a safe location and offering the assistance of an employee to facilitate the delivery of goods and services.

## **Applicable Laws**

*Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001, Ontario Regulation 31/05:* Animals not intended for slaughter or to be euthanized are not allowed in any area or room of a meat plant. An exception is made for service dogs to allow them in those areas of a meat plant where food is served, sold, or offered for sale to customers and in those areas that do not contain animals or animal parts and are not used for the receiving, processing, packaging, labelling, shipping, handling, or storing of animals or parts of animals.

*Dog Owners’ Liability Act, 2005:* If there is a conflict between a provision of this legislation or of a regulation under this or any other act relating to banned breeds (such as pit bulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails. Staff will respectfully explain that the service animal must be removed from the public area due to a municipal by-law and make alternate arrangements or provide the service outside the public area.

## **Recognizing a Guide Dog or Service Animal:**

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the employee, learner, volunteer or member of the community for reasons relating to their disability, ACPN may request verification.

### **Care and Control of the Animal:**

The employee, learner, volunteer or member of the community who is accompanied by a guide dog or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all times.

### **Allergies and Other Health and Safety Concerns:**

If a health and safety concern presents itself, for example, in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, ACPN will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals. Pursuant to the company's obligations under the Human Rights Code and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, each customer's accommodation needs will be considered on a case-by-case basis, up to the point of undue hardship.

Due diligence needs to be paid to address health and safety requirements. For example, if a person's health and safety could be seriously affected by the presence of a service animal on the premises open to the public, management must fully analyze all options for safely accommodating the service animal. Options could include creating distance between the two individuals to eliminate in-person contact, changing the time the two individuals receive service, or using air purifiers and other measures that could allow the person to use their service animal on the premises.

In very exceptional circumstances where a service animal becomes out of control, causing a clear disruption or a threat to the health and safety of others, and the animal's behavior is not corrected by the owner, a person with a disability can be asked to remove their service animal from the premises.

As a courtesy, particularly if the person and service animal have been in attendance on the premises for a long time, staff may ask whether the animal requires water, may designate an area in which the service animal can relieve itself, or ask whether the staff can be of assistance pertaining to the service animal.

### **The Use of Support Persons**

Any aid or interpreter may attend our programs along with our learner for free. In the case where an aid must be hired to accompany a participant to one of our workshops (such as an interpreter for a hearing-impaired participant), we offer a \$100 bursary to help make participation in our workshops more generally accessible.

If an employee, learner, volunteer or member of the community with a disability is accompanied by a support person, ACPN will ensure that both persons may enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person.

There may be times where seating and availability prevent the customer and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations, the company will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the customer before any potentially confidential information is mentioned.

## **Notice of Disruptions in Service**

Service disruptions may occur for reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of ACPN. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that an employee, learner, volunteer or member of the community with disabilities rely on to access or use goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances, such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

ACPN will make every effort to notify employees, learners, volunteers or members of the community with disabilities of any planned or unexpected disruptions to our services or facilities. This notice will include information on the reasons for disruptions to our services or facilities. This notice will include information on the reasons for disruption, the expected length of the disruption and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. There may be situations where advanced notice will not be possible.

Where practical, this information will be posted on the premises, our website, and persons with appointments will be contacted and informed of the disruption.

## **Feedback and Available Format Requests**

We encourage all of our employees, learners, volunteers and members of the public to provide feedback on our services provided to persons with disabilities. Feedback may be submitted in the following ways:

By regular mail:

Attention: People & Culture Team

By email: [info@acpnglobal.org](mailto:info@acpnglobal.org)

Through our website: [www.acpnglobal.org](http://www.acpnglobal.org)

Customers who provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

Additionally, ACPN has a process in which our customers may provide regular written and verbal feedback when interacting with any of our employees. This will be passed along to our People & Culture Team for handling.

Alternate formats of our Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and our services are available upon request through any of the means noted above.

## **Training**

Training will be provided to:

- Every employee of or a volunteer with ACPN;
- Every person who participates in developing the policies of ACPN; and
- Every other person who provides goods, services, or facilities on behalf of ACPN.

## **Training Provisions**

Regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005;
- A review of the requirements of the customer service standards;
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
  - Use assistive devices;
  - Require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal; or
  - Require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees);
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities;
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our services; and
- Policies, procedures, and practices of the company pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

## **Training Schedule**

ACPN will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees, volunteers, agents, and contractors within the first week of them joining ACPN. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures, policies, or practices.

## **Record of Training**

ACPN will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

## **Notice of Availability and Format of Documents to Customers**

ACPN shall notify customers that the documents related to the customer service standards are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information on the website of ACPN.

## **Administration**

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy or its related procedures, please contact:

[info@acpnglobal.org](mailto:info@acpnglobal.org)

This policy and its related procedures will be reviewed as required in the event of legislative changes or changes to company procedures.