



## TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH STORMONT

Title: Standard for Accessible Customer Service Policy

Department: All Departments

Effective Date: October 23, 2019

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Township of South Stormont is committed to providing accessible and inclusive services and facilities to all people, including people with disabilities.

In providing good accessible customer service the Township of South Stormont shall **use reasonable efforts** to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

1. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
2. The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities, and others, will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
3. Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.
4. Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of goods and services.
5. That the Township of South Stormont employees, when communicating with a person with a disability, shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

### 2. APPLICATION

This policy applies to every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Township of South Stormont, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

### 3. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) requires that obligated organizations establish and implement policies

and procedures governing how the organization will achieve accessibility through meeting its requirements under the Act and its regulations.

#### **4. DEFINITIONS**

**"Assistive devices"** shall mean an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids)

**"Disabilities"** shall mean the same as definition of disability found in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

**"Employees"** shall mean every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Township of South Stormont, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

**"Persons with Disabilities"** shall mean those individuals that are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

**"Service Animals"** shall mean any animal that is of service to a person with a disability

**"Support Person"** shall mean any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, friend who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

#### **5. PRINCIPLES**

Accessible Customer Service follows four basic principles:

1. Dignity – service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
2. Independence – when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
3. Integration – service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.
4. Equal Opportunity – service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access your goods or services equal to that given to others.

These basic principles will be taken into account when serving individuals with disabilities.

Staff will do the following:

1. Question what can I do to help people with disabilities access our services?
2. Ask the individual "how can I help?"
3. When communicating with a person with a disability, do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.
4. Offer a variety of methods of communication.
5. Understand the nature and scope of the service you offer.

## **6. EXISTING POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES**

Existing policies, practices and procedures will be reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis as gaps in policies are identified and impact the ability to provide goods or services to customers with disabilities. Feedback from customers will be used to identify policy gaps.

## **7. ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

Every employee shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and/or services.

## **8. SERVICE ANIMALS**

Service animals, such as guide dogs, offer independence and security to many people with various disabilities. If it is questionable whether an animal is a service animal, a person may be asked to provide a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to a disability.

1. Every employee shall allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal unless the animal is excluded by law. Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained and other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with the disability.
2. The service animal shall be under the care and control of the person with the disability. If a service animal is unruly or disruptive, an employee may ask the person with the disability to remove the animal from the area, and other reasonable

arrangements to provide goods or services shall be explored with assistance from the person with a disability.

## **9. SUPPORT PERSON(S)**

Support person(s) assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an intervener sign language interpreter, or as a Personal Support Worker providing physical assistance. A support person may also be a friend or relative that will assist and support the customer.

1. If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the Township of South Stormont shall ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises.
2. In the event that admission fees are charged, there will be no charge to the support person.
3. The Township of South Stormont may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.

## **10. SERVICE DISRUPTION – NOTICE**

It is possible that from time to time there will be disruptions in service, such as an entrance way that is under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, service to an elevator, or technology that is temporarily unavailable. If disruption in service is planned, and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

1. Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities.
2. Notice will be provided on the website, signs posted at appropriate sites, and if suitable advertised in local newspaper or radio a week in advance of the disruption.

## **UNEXPECTED DISRUPTION IN SERVICE – NOTICE**

1. In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, notice may be provided in an appropriate manner and as quickly as possible.
2. Notice will be provided on the website, signs posted at appropriate sites, and if suitable advertised on local radio station.
3. In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by service interruption shall be informed of any alternative methods.
4. In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, notice may be provided in an appropriate manner and as quickly as possible.
5. Notice will be provided on the website, signs posted at appropriate sites, and if suitable advertised on local radio station.
6. In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by service interruption shall be informed of any alternative methods.

## **11. FORMAT OF DOCUMENTS**

If a copy of a document is requested in a different format than available to accommodate a person with a disability, the Township of South Stormont will make every attempt to provide the information requested in a format that is useful to the individual. The Township will make every effort to ensure the information is provided in a timely manner and at a cost that is no more than the regular costs charged to other persons.

## **12. DOCUMENTATION**

1. Notice that the Township has a Standard for Accessible Customer Service Policy will be posted at a conspicuous place on premises operated by the Township of South Stormont and posted on the Township website.
2. A copy of the documents will be given upon request and consideration will be given to format to accommodate a person's disability.

### **13. TRAINING**

Training on Accessible Customer Service Standards will be as follows:

1. Training will be given to every person who participates in developing the policy, practices and procedures under Ontario Regulation 191/11 – Customer Service Standards.
2. Training will be given to every person who deals with the public on behalf of Township of South Stormont, including third parties i.e. employees, agents, volunteers, management.
3. Training will include:
  - i. A review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the customer service standard.
  - ii. A review of the Township of South Stormont's Standard for Accessible Customer Service Policy.
  - iii. A review of the Ontario Human Rights Code where it relates to people with disabilities.
  - iv. A review of the accessibility standards that are relevant to their work responsibilities.
  - v. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.
  - vi. 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.
  - vii. How to use equipment or assistive devices available on our premises, or otherwise provided, that may help with the provision of goods, services or facilities to a person with a disability.
  - viii. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing our goods, services or facilities.
4. Current employees, Council, agents, volunteers, management, etc. shall receive training no more than 3 years from their previous training session.
5. New employees, agents, Council, volunteers, management, etc., shall receive training as soon as "practicable", after being assigned.

6. Ongoing training on changes to policies, procedures, and new equipment shall be provided.
7. The method and amount of training shall be geared to the trainee's role in terms of accessibility.
8. Training records shall be kept, including the dates when the training is provided, names of individuals to whom the training was provided.

#### **14. FEEDBACK**

Feedback from customers gives the Township of South Stormont the opportunity to learn and improve. The Municipality encourages individuals to make suggestions on ways to improve our services, and recognizes the right of customers to make a complaint.

1. To ensure that the delivery of goods and services to those individuals with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the customer is invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, in person, e-mail, telephone, or disk, (or any other agreed upon method) addressed to:

Township of South Stormont  
P.O. Box 84, Long Sault, ON K0C 1P0  
Attention: Director of Corporate Services/Clerk

Email: info@southstormont.ca  
Phone: 613-534-8889, Extension 201  
Fax: 613-534-2280

2. The Director of Corporate Services/Clerk will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail, telephone, or disk (or any other agreed upon method) acknowledging receipt of feedback and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints or suggestions.
3. Feedback will be encouraged by Township staff and the process for feedback will be explained to customers and posted on the Township website.
4. Feedback will be used to assist with the revision of policies and procedures to provide accessible customer service.