



# **Accessible Customer Service Policy**

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act - AODA

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Definitions

## 1. Purpose and Background Information

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (“the AODA”) is a Provincial Act with the purpose of developing, implementing and mandating 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” (“the Regulation”), came into force on January 1, 2008. The 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.

The objective of this policy is to identify what the equal treatment provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code, through the AODA and the Regulation, require as a minimum legal standard in program design and service delivery to persons with disabilities and addresses the following:

- the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities;
- the use of service animals by persons with disabilities;
- the use of support persons by persons with disabilities;
- notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities;
- training;
- customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities; and
- notice of availability and format of documents

## 2. Scope

Family Services of Peel (“FSP”) strives at all times to provide services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. It applies to all members of the Agency, including employees, volunteers, customers/clients, visitors, and third party contractors.

## 3. Policy Statement

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities, Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Family Services of Peel herein also referred to as “the Agency”, is committed to providing an environment that is accessible and inclusive to all persons who work or visit the Agency. It is the policy of the Agency that its working environments will be free from discrimination and harassment as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code.

#### **4. General Principles**

The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

The Agency will strive to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following core principles as outlined in the AODA.

Dignity – Services are provided in a manner that is respectful to persons with a disability and does not diminish the person’s importance.

Independence – Accommodating a person’s disability means respecting their right to do for themselves and to choose the way they wish to receive services.

Integration – Persons with disabilities can access all services. This may require alternative formats and flexible approaches. It means inclusiveness and full participation. This is a fundamental human right.

Equal Opportunity – Service is provided to persons with disabilities in a way that their opportunity to access services is equal to that given to others.

#### **5. Components of the Policy**

##### **5.1. Communication with Persons with Disabilities**

When communicating with a person with a disability, the Agency will do so in a manner that takes into account the person’s disability. The Agency commits to provide training on customer service to all current and future employees and volunteers. This training will, in particular, include how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.

##### **5.2. Notice of Planned or Unplanned Disruption in Services and Facilities**

In the event of a service disruption affecting employees, visitors, customers/clients, contractors or members of the general public, it is the responsibility of Family Services of Peel to take reasonable steps to report such disruption in a timely fashion through appropriate information channels. Such channels include, but are not limited to, the FSP website, physical postings (temporary signage) on or immediately adjacent to the affected area, and/or communication via email to affected individuals, departments or groups. In accordance with the AODA, notice must be conspicuous and indicate any alternatives that exist to allow access to persons with disabilities during the disruption. The required information necessary for any communication of a temporary disruption may include:

- The time, date and location of the disruption,
- Information about the reason for the disruption,
- Anticipated duration of the disruption,
- Descriptions of alternative facilities or services, if any, and
- Contact information for the responsible service area.

### 5.3. Assistive Technology

Personal assistive technologies are permitted and unrestricted in all areas of the Agency to which employees, volunteers and customers/clients have access, except when subject to operator safety. Family Services of Peel will train, on an ongoing basis, current and future employees and volunteers in the use of various assistive devices and related policies. It should be noted that the provision, use and safety of personal assistive devices is the responsibility of the person with a disability.

### 5.4. Service Animals

Persons with a disability who are accompanied by a service animal may access premises owned or operated by the Agency, if the public has access to such premises and the animal is not otherwise excluded by law. If a service animal is excluded by law, the Agency will ensure that alternate means are available within reasonable time and location to provide persons with a disability access to the Agency's services.

There may be rare circumstances where, for reasons of health and safety of another person, allowing a person with a disability to enter a premises accompanied by a service animal needs to be considered. An example of such a situation includes, but is not limited to, where a person is allergic to animals and adversely affected if they are in close proximity to an animal. If deemed necessary, a risk assessment will be conducted by the relevant administrative manager, in consultation with the Director of Client Services. This assessment will identify: a) the risks inherent with the service animal being in the area of concern; and b) alternate measures available to enable the person with a disability to access this service.

If it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, the person with the service animal may be asked to provide verification of the animal's duty. It should be noted that the use and safety of the service animal is the responsibility of the person with a disability.

### 5.5. Support Persons

Family Services of Peel welcomes staff, customers/clients and volunteers who are accompanied by a support person, when the support person has been hired or chosen by the person with a disability to accompany them in order to assist in accessing services and/or for the purposes of providing support with mobility, personal assistance and/or communication. Persons with a disability who require a support person may access premises owned and/or operated by the Agency with their support person.

Support persons are permitted to accompany employees, customers/clients and volunteers with disabilities to their work and/or service environments.

Support persons shall be permitted entry to all FSP facilities, except when there are fees applied against participants by a third party. Where there are admission fees for an event organized by FSP, persons with a disability shall be expected to pay the same fee as other attendees, but no admission fee shall be charged to their support person.

5.6. Feedback

Feedback about the delivery of services to persons with disabilities is welcomed, as it may identify areas that require change and assist in continuous service improvement. Such feedback may be by telephone, in person, in writing, or by delivering an electronic text via email, or otherwise. The Agency will make best efforts to provide a response in the same format in which the feedback was received.

Where possible, feedback will be addressed immediately. Some feedback may, however, require more effort to address and may need to be reviewed before an action is taken. Family Services of Peel will respond within twenty-one (21) working days. Information about the feedback process will be posted on the Agency's website at:

<https://fspeel.org>

Feedback may be provided directly to the department concerned and/or to:

Mail:

Human Resources Department  
Family Services of Peel  
300 - 5975 Whittle Rd.,  
Mississauga ON, L4Z 3N1

Telephone: 905-270-2250

Fax: 905-270-2869

Email: [fsp@fspeel.org](mailto:fsp@fspeel.org)

In Person:

Family Services of Peel  
300 - 5975 Whittle Rd.,  
Mississauga ON, L4Z 3N1

### 5.7. Training

Family Services of Peel shall provide training on AODA customer service to all current employees and volunteers and, in particular, to those providing services and who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, procedures and practices. New employees will be provided such training as part of their orientation. Through the relevant hiring department, the Agency shall also require volunteers, new employees, and/or third party contractors to provide proof of AODA customer service training as a condition of contract. Such training shall include:

- A review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service,
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities,
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person,
- How to use the available equipment or devices that may assist with the provision of services to persons with disabilities,
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing FSP services, and
- How to develop and review policies, procedures and practices relating to the provision of services to persons with disabilities.

Documentation of training of employees, volunteers, and third party contractors shall be maintained by the relevant department and submitted to the Human Resources Department, as required by law.

### 5.8. Availability and Format of Documents (Alternative Formats)

All documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, including the Agency's Accessible Customer Service Policy, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ("FIPPA"). When providing these documents to a person with a disability, the Agency will endeavor to provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes the person's disability into account.

Notice of the availability of documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service will be posted on Family Services of Peel's website at <https://fspeel.org>.

## **Definitions**

**Accessible:** Obtainable, usable, readable, audible, visible, understandable, clear, able to be entered and exited, flexible, etc. To be accessible to all people, a variety of accessibility plans are necessary. Ensuring inclusive practices will ensure that the full range of Agency services can be accessed by a larger audience.

**Alternate Formats:** Alternate ways to provide goods and services. This may be through forms of communication such as speech or writing, or methods such as in person or over the phone. Other examples are large print, electronic text (Word or html), Braille, sign language interpretation, communication devices, media caption, etc.

**Assistive Devices:** Equipment that people with disabilities utilize to assist in their daily lives at home, work, school, etc. Such devices could be a walker, scooter, cane, magnification or specialized learning software, communication board, etc.

**Assistive Technology:** Equipment or software such as screen reading, audio recording and voice recognition which people with disabilities use to obtain information and communicate with others.

**Customer:** The term used in the AODA Legislation to describe patrons, stakeholders or anyone in receipt of goods and services.

**Disability:** Under the AODA, the definition of “disability” is the same as the definition in the Ontario Human Rights Code:

- (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.

**Employee:** Refers to any FSP staff, manager, and contract or temporary employee.

**Service Animal:** The Regulation defines a service animal as an animal for a person with disability. In this policy, a service animal is any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to the disability or where the person provides a letter from a physician



confirming that they require the animal for reasons relating to their disability; or where the person provides a valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada or a certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

Support Person: Someone who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist them. Their assistance may include, but is not limited to, communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to services.

Agency Premises: Any buildings and/or lands owned, leased, operated, controlled or supervised by Family Services of Peel.

Volunteer: A person who provides services to the Agency for which they are not being paid.

Working Days: Mondays to Fridays and most Saturday mornings, excepting Sundays, statutory holidays, and any Agency shutdowns observed by Family Services of Peel.



Sandra Rupnarain  
Executive Director  
Family Services of Peel

This policy may be made available in alternate formats upon request.