

SECTION: Administration		POLICY #: ADM-001
Date Approved: March 8, 2010		Accessible Customer Service
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“The Town of Hanover firmly believes effective planning, management and co-ordination of public services assist Hanover and area residents to lead balanced lives, achieve full potential and gain life satisfaction. The Town of Hanover is.....engaged citizens, community pride and meaningful places.”

The Town of Hanover strives to provide public services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The Town is also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access public services and allowing all to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way. The Accessible Customer Service Policy will further enhance the Town of Hanover’s commitment to quality of life opportunities for all residents and visitors to Hanover.

1. POLICY PURPOSE

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* provides for the establishment of accessibility standards. Accordingly, *Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessible Standards for Customer Service*, was enacted. Under this Regulation the Town of Hanover wishes to establish policies, procedures and practices governing 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;
- customer service training for individuals with interaction with persons with disabilities;
- customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- notice of availability and format of documents related to serving persons with disabilities.

2. APPLICATION

This policy applies to all persons who serve the public, including third parties on behalf of the Town; whether the person does so as an employee, member of Council, agent, appointee, contractor, volunteer, student on placement, or 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.

3. DEFINITIONS

“Support Person” means in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid support worker, a volunteer, a friend or a family member. The support person does not need to have special training or qualifications.

“Guide Dogs or Service Animals” means a guide dog as defined in Section One of the *Blind Persons Rights’ Act*. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal of a person with a disability:

- if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or;
- if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

“Assistive Devices” means an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids etc.) to access and benefit from the goods and service offered by the Town of Hanover.

“Barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of the disability. Barriers may include a physical, architectural and altitudinal barrier as well as information, communication or technological barriers, plus a Town policy, procedure or a practice.

“Disability” means;

- 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;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder;
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. 1997.

“Nurse” means a Registered Nurse or Registered Practical Nurse who is registered member in good standing with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

“Physician” means a physician who is a registered member, in good standing, with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

“Principle of Dignity” means the policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat them as customers and clients who are as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer. They do not treat people with disabilities as an afterthought or force them to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

“Principle of Independence” means in some instances, freedom from control or influence of others or freedom to make choices. In other situations, it may mean the freedom to things in your own way.

“Principle of Integration” means integrated services that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers.

“Principle of Equal Opportunity” means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services it means that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods or services as others. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.

“Service Provider” means;

- a) all employees
- b) Mayor and Members of Council
- c) students on placement
- d) appointees
- e) contractors
- f) other political representatives
- g) businesses
- h) volunteers and agents recognized by the Town

4. POLICY STATEMENT

The Corporation of the Town of Hanover is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons that are served by the Corporation.

5. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

a) Establishment of Policies, Practices and Procedures

The Town of Hanover shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the following principles:

- The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- Persons with a disability must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

b) Communication with Persons with Disabilities

When communicating with a person with a disability, the Town will do so in a manner that takes into account the person’s disability. The Town will continue to review the nature, manner and methods with which it communicates to people with disabilities in an attempt to improve the accessibility of information and services.

Town of Hanover Website – the Town will provide its internet site in a format that is accessible to persons with disabilities unless it is not technically feasible to do so. The Town's website uses a preset font type and size for optimal layout, but in all cases the font and size is determined by users to meet their specific needs. Information is readily available in HTML format with Adobe PDF as the standard for documents, forms and reports. The Town is committed to the use of World Wide Web Consortium (W3c.org) best practice technologies when they are available and appropriate for a task, plus use of the latest versions when supported.

These strategies include:

- Use of navigation mechanisms in a consistent manner;
- Essential components of each page work without a mouse;
- Providing information about the general layout of a site (eg. a site map or table of contents);
- Good colour contrast between foreground & background;
- Easily readable text, that can be adjusted by the user using browser controls;
- Providing a text equivalent for no-text elements (e.g. via "alt" or "alternate" text tags);
- Use of full text pages and style sheets.

The Town will provide any document produced by the Town in an alternate format upon request, unless it is not technically feasible to do so and subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Alternate formats can include, but are not limited to web access, large print versions of the document or a text only electronic file which can then be read by a computer or printed in Braille.

c) Notice of Temporary Disruptions to Services and Facilities

The Town is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to the public. However, temporary disruptions in the Town's services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the Town's control or knowledge. The Town will make reasonable efforts to provide notice of the disruption to the public, including:

- The reason, information for disruption and anticipated duration.
- Description of alternate facilities or services, if available, and related contact information.

When temporary disruptions occur to the Town's services or facilities, the Town will provide notice by posting the information in visible places, on the Town's website (www.hanover.ca), or by any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances as soon as reasonably possible.

d) Assistive Devices and other Measures that Assist with Accessibility

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the Town's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the Town has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or others on the premises. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times. Appropriate staff will be trained and knowledgeable of the availability and use of Town owned assistive devices within their public service area. Staff will be available to assist with the assistive devices if requested.

e) Service Animals

Persons with a disability may enter premises owned and/or operated by the Town accompanied by a service animal, keeping the animal with them 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 Town will ensure that alternate means are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Town's goods and services. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the Town may ask the person with a disability for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability. The Town may also ask for 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. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept in control at all times.

f) Support Persons

A person with a disability may enter premises owned/or operated by the Town with a support person and have access to the support person while on the premises. The Town may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on Town premises in situations where it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises. A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the Town's goods and services, will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee is applicable.

g) Training

The Town of Hanover will ensure that the following people will or have received training regarding the provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities;

- Every person who serves the public, including third parties on behalf of the Town of Hanover, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, member of Council, contractor, appointee, volunteer or student on placement.
- Every person who participates in developing the Town of Hanover's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

The training must include, but is not limited to the following:

- Review of the purpose of the AODA and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Ontario Regulation 429/07;
- 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 or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animals or support person;
- Instruction on how to use equipment or devices available at your premises or that you provide otherwise, that may help people with disabilities access Town services, such as TTY telephones, elevators, lifts, accessible interactive kiosks, listening devices or other technology; and
- Instruction on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Town of Hanover's services.

All current employees, agents, members of Council, appointees, students on placement, volunteers, contractors and other third parties must receive training that complies with the above guidelines. A form of ongoing training will be provided to individuals and/or groups as soon as possible after that individual or group is assigned applicable duties. Any substantive amendment to a policy, practice and procedure with respect to the provision of accessible customer service may also necessitate further training.

h) Public Input

The Town of Hanover is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all members of the public it serves. Communication from the public is welcomed, as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements. Comments from the public about the delivery of goods and services to persons with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format or through other methods. Information about the public response process will be readily available to the public and notice of the process will be posted on the Town's website (www.hanover.ca) and other appropriate locations.

i) Emergency Preparedness

The CEMC is responsible for Emergency Preparedness ensuring our community emergency planning and response activities incorporate emergency management practices that have the greatest impact on the needs of people with disabilities. This includes but is not limited to:

- notification
- evacuation
- emergency transportation
- sheltering
- access to medications, refrigeration and back-up power
- access to their mobility devices or service animals while in transit or at shelters
- access to information

Refer to the Municipal Disaster Emergency Services Plan.

6. NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

The Town of Hanover shall provide notice that upon request the Town will provide a copy of the policies, practices and procedures required under Ontario Regulation 429/07 - Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, to any person.

a) **Format of Documents**

Should the Town of Hanover be requested to provide a document or information the Town will take into consideration the communication needs of the person and endeavour to provide the information to the person in a format that takes into account the person's needs. The Town of Hanover and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for any document or information subject to the requirements of this policy.

b) **Exclusions**

This Policy shall not apply during any period where an emergency has been declared by the Mayor of Hanover, or designate.