

# OP 03 Accessible Customer Service

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## 1. PURPOSE

The commitments in this policy are intended to address the legislated requirements of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\), 2005](#) and its regulations, as they apply to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library and to ensure that accessibility remains a priority in the Library’s decision-making process as well as the development and review of corporate policies, procedures and guidelines.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library remains committed to eliminating barriers for the public we serve as well as for our employees. We promote an inclusive, respectful and caring environment where Library programs, services and facilities are available to everyone, including persons with disabilities.

The Library recognizes the fundamental importance of developing, implementing and enforcing standards in a timely manner in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities.

To achieve our accessibility goals, the Library is committed to the establishment, implementation, maintenance and enhancement of accessibility with respect to employment and the use of all Library goods, services, programs and facilities that:

- Respects the individual’s dignity and independence;
- Ensures reasonable efforts are made so that people with disabilities receive services of the same quality that others receive; and
- Allows individuals with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way to others, to the greatest extent possible.

This policy is intended to benefit the full range of persons with disabilities, as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

### 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Library's:

- Customers
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Visitors
- Applicants for employment with the Library who may require employment accommodation through the recruitment, assessment, selection and hiring process
- Contractors and subcontractors engaged by the Library

### 4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1. **Accessible Formats** - include but are not limited to large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.
- 4.2. **Accommodation** - special arrangements made or assistance provided so that persons with disabilities can participate in the experiences available to persons without disabilities. Accommodation will vary depending on the person's unique needs.
- 4.3. **Communication Supports** - include but are not limited to captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communications.
- 4.4. **Dignity** - service provided in a way that allows the individual to maintain self-respect and the respect of other persons.
- 4.5. **Equal Opportunity** - Service provided to individuals in such a way that they have an opportunity to access goods or services equal to that given to others.
- 4.6. **Integration** - service provided in a way that allows the individuals to benefit from equivalent services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way, as other individuals, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable the individuals to access goods or services.
- 4.7. **Reasonable Efforts** - taking approaches that meet the required needs of the individual.
- 4.8. **Redeployment** - assigning an employee to another job or department, within the organization, as an alternative to layoff, when a particular job or department has been eliminated within the organization.
- 4.9. **Support Person** - as defined in [Ontario Regulation 429/07](#). A 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.

## 5. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 received Royal Assent on June 13, 2005. This Act applies to public and private sector organizations and mandates the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards and regulations. The first standard to become law was the [Accessible Customer Service Standard](#) followed by the *Integrated* [Accessibility Standards Regulation](#) which focused on accessibility issues relating to employment, transportation, design of public space and information and communications.

The following requirements are intended to support the purpose and application of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). At no time will this policy replace or supersede the rights afforded to persons with disabilities under the Code.

## 6. REQUIREMENTS

### 6.1. General

- 6.1.1. Accessibility Plan:** The Library works closely with the Town of Stouffville in the requirements and implementation of AODA accessibility standards and reports, access to premises, and other matters as they are identified. The Library is included in the Town of Stouffville multi-year Accessibility Plan and all accessibility reporting to the Ministry.
- 6.1.2. Procurement:** Criteria for accessibility design and features are incorporated into relevant policies, procedures, and/or proposals with respect to the procurement of goods, services or facilities. Where applicable, preference is given to goods, services and/or facilities that are accessible. Where accessibility is not practicable, an explanation will be provided upon request.
- 6.1.3. Self-Service Kiosks:** If the Library designs, procures or purchases self-service kiosks, consideration will be given to the accessibility features of such machines to make the kiosks accessible to widest range of users. Preference will be given to machines that are accessible.
- 6.1.4. Training:** Training will be provided to all members of the Library as well as volunteers and co-op students on the requirements of the AODA and its regulations, and on the Human Rights Code, as it pertains to persons with disabilities. Training will take place as soon as practicable and upon completion, the Library will keep a record of the training provided, including the name of the person, the method of the training and the date the training was provided.

### 6.2. Accessible Information and Communications

Except as otherwise provided by the AODA, the Library shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities in a timely manner, taking into account the person's accessibility needs and at a cost that is no more than the regular cost

charged to other persons. The Library shall notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

This does not apply to products and product labels, unconvertible information or communications and information that the Library does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship. If it is determined that information or communications are unconvertible, the Library shall provide the person requesting the information or communication with:

- A. an explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and
- B. a summary of the unconvertible information or communications.

**6.2.1. Feedback:** Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of library services provided to persons with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format, or through other methods.

**6.2.2. Accessible Formats:**

**6.2.3. Accessible Websites and Web Content:** The Library website and web content shall conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA.

### **6.3. Accessible Customer Service**

**6.3.1. Assistive Devices:** Persons with disabilities are welcome to use their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining or using Library services.

Exceptions may occur in situations where the Library has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or to the health and safety of others on Library premises. In these situations, the Library may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist him or her in obtaining and using Library services, where the Library has such other measures available.

Where Library owned assistive devices are available, designated staff will be knowledgeable of their presence and trained in the application and use of the devices.

**6.3.2. Assistive Services:** The Library provides additional services for people with disabilities including but not limited to:

- material in alternate formats
- accessible computer workstation
- Staff assistance to retrieve materials
- Books on Wheels Library Service

**6.3.3. Communication:** When communicating with a person with a disability, Library staff will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

**6.3.4. Fees:** Persons with disabilities will not be charged more to access Library programs or services.

**6.3.5. Service Animals:** Persons with disabilities are welcome to enter Library premises accompanied by a service animal and keep the animal with them, when accessing goods and services provided by the Library, unless superseded by other legislation.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, and complaints are received from other customers, Library staff may ask the customer for confirmation of the animal's accreditation, which would be provided from a regulated health professional. The documentation must confirm that the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that their service animal is kept in control at all times. Reasonable behaviour is expected from those interacting with service animals. The owners of disruptive and aggressive service animals and those who interact with service animals in a negative way may be asked to leave the premises.

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal to our programs, except where they are excluded by law. Where a program involves the preparation, handling and/or storage of food, service animals will not be permitted to enter the program. We will provide a safe place for the service animal to wait, and we are committed to assisting the person with a disability who was accompanied by the service animal.

**6.3.6. Notice of Service Disruptions:** In the event of a planned service disruption to facilities, services or systems that are relied upon by persons with disabilities to access Library goods or services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance.

Notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities, services or systems that may be available.

Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on library premises (i.e. on the door to the premises), on the library web site or by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances.

In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

**6.3.7. Support Persons:** A person with a disability is welcome to enter the Library premises with a support person and have access to the support person while on the premises. A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain or use Library services, will be permitted to attend Library programs at no charge where an admission fee is applicable.

We are committed to protecting the health and safety of all who enter our premises. We require a support person to accompany any person with a disability where there is significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or others, based on the individual's behaviour.

## 6.4. Accessible Workplace

The requirements found in this section only apply to paid employees of the Library. They do not apply to volunteers.

**6.4.1. Recruitment:** The Library will provide written notification to employees and the public of the availability of accommodations for persons with disabilities, upon request, throughout the hiring process, including:

- All employment postings
- Upon participation in the interview process
- When an offer of employment is made

When arranging for the provision of accommodations, the Library will consult with the applicants to determine their specific accessibility needs.

**6.4.2. Informing Employees of Supports:** The Library will inform all employees of its policies and procedures used to support employees with disabilities, including, but not limited to, the provision of workplace accommodations. In doing so, the Library will provide this information to new employees during their workplace orientation training.

**6.4.3. Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees:** When requested, the Library will consult the employee with a disability when providing, or arranging for the provision of, accessible formats or communication supports for information related to the employee's job performance, and information generally provided to all employees.

**6.4.4. Workplace Emergency Response Information:** Where an employee has a disability and the Library is aware of his or her need for accommodation, an individualized emergency response plan will be developed for the employee. This will be done as soon as possible after the Library becomes aware of the need for accommodation.

If the employee who receives an individual workplace emergency response plan requires assistance, with the employee's consent, the Library will provide the workplace emergency information to the person designated by the Library to provide assistance to the employee.

**6.4.5. Individualized Accommodation Plans:** The Library will establish a written policy for the development of individualized accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

Individual accommodation plans will include information about accessible formats and communication supports if they have been requested, the employee's individualized workplace emergency response plan where one has been identified and any other accommodation that is to be provided.

**6.4.6. Return to Work Process:** The Library will develop, and have in place, a return-to-work process for employees who have been absent due to a disability, and require workplace accommodations in order to return to work.

The process will document the steps the Library will take to facilitate the return to work and include an individual accommodation plan.

**6.4.7. Performance Management, Career Development and Redeployment:** The Library will take into consideration the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, and all individualized accommodation plans of its employees with disabilities when providing career development and advancement opportunities, performance management and when considering redeploying of an employee with a disability.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITY**

All employees, volunteers, contractors and subcontractors, any other person acting on behalf of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library and persons involved in the creation of Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library policies are responsible for adhering to and following the commitments set out in this policy.

## **8. REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- 8.1. [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#)
- 8.2. [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)
- 8.3. [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- 8.4. [Integrated Accessibility Standards, O. Reg. 191/11](#)
- 8.5. [Worldwide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#)