



Policy Statement:

On January 1, 2008 Ontario's Customer Service Accessibility Standards, a Regulation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005* came into effect. The Customer Service (CS) Accessibility Standards is the first step in the Ontario government's plan to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards with a goal to raise the bar of accessibility, while removing the barriers facing persons with disabilities in Ontario.

Under the AODA, 2005 all agencies must meet the requirements of accessibility standards established by regulation. This policy establishes the accessibility standards for customer service for the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA), in accordance with Ontario Regulation 429/07 which requires implementation by January 1, 2010. This policy applies to all employees of the SVCA, its agents, volunteers, contracted service staff (contractors) and elected officials

Purpose:

The SVCA is committed to being responsive to the needs of all customers and members of the public. To do this, the SVCA must recognize the diverse needs of all residents and respond by trying to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all. As an employer and provider of public service, the SVCA is committed to ensuring its services are provided in an accessible manner.

The SVCA will promote accessibility through the development of policy, practices and procedures and by ensuring that consideration is given to persons with disabilities. To do this, policies, practices and procedures shall address **dignity, equity, inclusion, independence** and **responsiveness**.

Principles:

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the following:

- (i) That goods and services be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- (ii) The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, and others, will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or permanently, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services.

- (iii) Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity – equal to that given to others – to obtain, use and benefit from the goods and services.

Definitions:

Accessible means customer service is provided in a manner that is capable of being easily understood and appreciated; easy to get at; capable of being reached, or entered; obtainable.

Disability means:

- a) Any degree of physical 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 impairment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other service 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
- e) An injury or disability which benefits are claimed or are received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES:

Procedures and practices will strive to reflect or achieve the following:

- (i) Communication will be considered, in a manner that takes into consideration a person's disability.
- (ii) Staff will receive appropriate training.
- (iii) Persons with disabilities accompanied by a guide dog or service animal will be permitted in those areas of the premises owned or operated by the SVCA that are open to the public.
- (iv) Persons with disabilities accompanied by a support person will be permitted to be accompanied by that support person in premises open to the public.
- (v) Admission fees will be waived for a support person who accompanies a person with a disability.
- (vi) Notice will be provided when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access SVCA services are temporarily disrupted.
- (vii) The SVCA will establish a feedback process to allow people to provide feedback on how we are providing services to persons with disabilities.

- (viii) The SVCA will allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the SVCA.

PROCEDURES

Support Persons

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.

The SVCA will allow people with disabilities, who require to be accompanied by a support person in all SVCA owned and operated public facilities. The SVCA reserves the right to request the person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises.

The SVCA will waive admission fees for support persons who accompany a person with a disability, into facilities where admission is charged or at special events where admission fees apply.

- (a) Member of public should notify a staff member regarding the presence of the support person.
- (b) Admission fees will be waived for the support person.
- (c) If there is confidential information to be disclosed, consent must be received from the person with the disability.

Feedback Process

How to receive feedback:

- All feedback, regardless of submission method, shall be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate
- Feedback may be received in the following ways:
- In person to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate, during normal business hours
- By telephone to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate at 519-367-3040
- In writing to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate, at 1078 Bruce Road 12, Box 150, Formosa, ON N0G 1W0
- By electronic mail to j.coffey@svca.on.ca
- By any other means of communication to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate
- Feedback forms to be available at all SVCA facilities including the website
- Website to allow for online submissions

- Ability to submit feedback to be promoted on SVCA's website and SVCA facilities through advertising (i.e. display posters/boards with feedback forms)

How to respond to feedback:

- Chief Administrative Officer or designate must complete Record of Feedback form
- Chief Administrative Officer or designate to acknowledge receipt of feedback within five (5) business days
- Chief Administrative Officer or designate to forward feedback to appropriate Department Head
- Department Head to determine appropriate action
 - Forward to appropriate manager
 - Contact person submitting feedback for additional information (if required)
 - Contact employee, if identified, for additional information (if required)
- Department Head/Manager to review barriers identified in feedback
 - Must determine if feasible (economical/physically) to remedy the barrier. It may not be feasible to eliminate all barriers
 - If feasible to remedy the barrier, a plan to remedy the barrier must be developed
 - This plan to include timeline, costs and delegation of responsibilities
 - Decision regarding feasibility of addressing feedback must be made within:
 - 5-10 business days if no plan needs to be developed
 - 15-30 business days where a plan is required
 - 30 business days or more where a plan is required, or significant additional information and requires extensive details (i.e. outside quotes are required, requests for proposals are required etc)
- Department Head/Manager must advise the Chief Administrative Officer or designate of the decision and reasons for it
- Where the response is to exceed 10 business days, an update must be provided to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate
- Chief Administrative Officer or designate must advise the person who submitted the feedback of the decision and reasons for it, or provide and update

How to make the feedback process public:

- Feedback forms and processes to be advertised:
 - At all SVCA facilities
 - SVCA website

- Advertising to be available in alternate formats (when requested)
- Advertising to include information about the different methods of submitting feedback
- Shall note that personal information is optional
- Shall explain that the Chief Administrative Officer, or designate, is responsible for receiving all feedback
- Shall explain that an acknowledgement will be received within five (5) business days

NOTE: the following schedules are attached:

Schedule A - Complaint Form
Schedule B - Suggestion Form
Schedule C - Feedback Form
Schedule D - Record of Feedback Form

Service Disruption (Regular and Temporary)

If, in order to obtain, use or benefit from a provider's goods or services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services of the provider (for example, elevators) and if there is a regular or temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, the SVCA shall give notice of the disruption to the public.

- a) Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.
- b) Notice will be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the provider of goods or services, as well as by posting it on the SVCA website.
- c) If the SVCA Website should expect a temporary service disruption, advance notice where possible, keeping with the conditions of the service disruption section of this policy, shall be provided on the website.

Service Animals

For the purpose of this policy, a 'service animal' is defined as either:

- (i) A "guide dog," as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons Rights' Act*; or

- (ii) A “service animal” for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,
 - (a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for the reasons relating to his or her disability; or
 - (b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

The SVCA will allow the person and the animal onto all SVCA owned and operated public facilities that are open to the public, and will ensure that the person is permitted to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. *areas that are open to the public including areas where food is prepared or where it endangers the health and safety of others

If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the provider’s goods or services.

It is noted that the care and control of all service animals is the sole responsibility of the owner at all times while accessing and receiving SVCA services.

Format of Documents

Should the SVCA be requested to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, the SVCA shall give the person the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person’s disability.

Material printed in-house and publications produced on behalf of the SVCA should contain a note indicating, “alternate formats are available upon request” and include relevant contact information with the exception of maps created on behalf of the SVCA.

The SVCA and the person with a disability will try to agree upon the format to be used for the document or information, subject to feasibility requirements of this policy.

Alternative formats that should be considered by the SVCA and the person with the disability will include, but are not limited to:

- (i) Print Requests:

Requests for alternative formats should be honoured in the most practical manner depending on the media chosen, the size and complexity of the document, the quality and source of the

documents, the feasibility of the request (including the cost) and the number of documents to be converted. It should be noted that when request for one of these formats is received and deemed feasible, staff should make every attempt to respond to the request in the most practical manner and to the satisfaction of the requestor. If it is determined that the format requested is not feasible, then other alternative methods of providing the information should be explored that will still meet the needs of the requestor (e.g. Audio CD or explaining the information verbally etc.).

- (a) Staff members receives request from member of the public for alternative format.
- (b) Employee fills out alternative format request form (attached as Schedule E).
- (c) Forwards request onto the responsible manager.
- (d) The responsible manager will determine feasibility, if feasible;
- (e) Proceeds with alternative format request.
- (f) If not feasible; contact individual with feasible solution.

NOTE: the following schedules are attached:

Schedule E – Alternate Format Request

- (ii) American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter Request:
 - (a) Employee receives request from public for ASL Interpreter.
 - (b) Employee fills out alternative format request form.
 - (c) Forwards request onto the responsible manager.
 - (d) The responsible department contacts Canadian Hearing Society to make request.
 - (e) Once Canadian Hearing Society confirms attendance of ASL Interpreter, the responsible department contacts individual.
 - (f) If ASL Interpreter is not available, individual will be contacted with an alternative solution.

Feasibility will be determined based upon cost in relation to size of document and time associated with processing document requests.

The time frame attached to the conversion process varies depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents and number of documents to be converted. Documents shall be returned in a timely manner depending on the factors previously noted.

Conversion shall be processed in-house wherever possible. When a member of the public requests a piece of SVCA documentation in a multiple format, the department of origin shall be responsible for the cost of the conversion, materials and distribution, not the public requestor.

In-house printing, where possible, should adhere to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's (CNIB) Clear Print Standards.

Training

The SVCA shall ensure that the following persons receive training about the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities:

- (a) Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the SVCA, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer, contracted service staff (contractor) and elected officials or otherwise.
- (b) Every person who participates in developing the SVCA's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

The training will include a review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of this policy and instruction about the following matters:

- (a) How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability, as outlined in this policy and procedures.
- (b) 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, as outlined in this policy and procedures.
- (c) How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
- (d) What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.

The SVCA will log and retain records which will record the details of the training provided, as well as the name of the person, location, and date the training was completed.

The SVCA will customize the training going forward, based on the actual experiences and usage of the persons with disability in SVCA owned or operated facilities.

NOTE: the following schedules are attached:

Schedule F – Training Record

Assistive Devices

The SVCA will allow persons with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the SVCA.

Should a person with a disability be unable to access the SVCA's services through the use of their own personal assistive device, the SVCA will ensure the following measures:

- (a) Determine if service is inaccessible, based upon individual requirements.
- (b) Assess service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual.
- (c) Notify person with disability of alternative service and how they can access the service, temporarily or on a permanent basis.

Contact Information

For more information about this policy, or questions related to accessibility at the SVCA, please contact us:

Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority
1078 Bruce Road 12, Box 150
Formosa, ON
N0G 1W0
(519) 367-3040
(519) 367-3041 (fax)
Email: publicinfo@svca.on.ca
Website: www.svca.on.ca

Links and Resources

Customer Service Standard, Ontario Regulation 429/07:

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws_src_regs_r07429_e.htm

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005:

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm

Ministry of Community and Social Services:

<http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario>

AccessON: www.accesson.ca

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Clear Print Standards

<http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/accessibility/text/clearprint/Default.aspx>

Blind Persons Rights Act

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/legc/statutes/blindper.htm>

AMCTO – Accessibility Toolkit

<http://www.accessiblemunicipalities.ca/>