



ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

Manual	Governance, Finance and Human Resources/Systems	
Effective date:	January 2014	Policy or Procedure No. HRS22
Date of review and/or update:	September 2018	

1.0 POLICY:
YouthLink is committed to providing excellent customer service to all clients, including people with disabilities. When serving clients with disabilities, reasonable efforts shall be made to provide the same level of service given to other clients and service shall be provided in a manner that respects their dignity and independence.

2.0 PURPOSE:
The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to employees in meeting the requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

3.0 SCOPE:
The policy applies to all employees and volunteers at YouthLink.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES:
The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was created with the goal of developing standards that would improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the province. The AODA allows the provincial Government to develop specific standards of accessibility and enforce them.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into

effect on January 1, 2008. The customer service regulation is the first standard developed under the AODA. Under this standard, YouthLink must establish policies, practices, and procedures that guide the offering of goods and services to people with disabilities.

Objectives

- a. This policy is meant to meet one of the requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the AODA. It applies to the offering of services.
- b. This policy aims to make sure that people with disabilities are given the same chance to get, use and benefit from YouthLink's services. Reasonable efforts will be made to make sure that services offered by YouthLink are delivered in a way that:
 - Respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities
 - Is offered in the same way as to other customers, unless a different way of offering the service is necessary, either on a temporary or permanent basis
 - Gives everyone the same chance to get, use and benefit from the services
 - Communicates with a person with a disability in a way that takes the person's disability into account

Training for Employees

- 1.1 YouthLink shall provide training to all staff, and volunteers who deal with the public or other third parties on its behalf.
- 1.2 This training shall be provided within one month of the date of hire after personnel commence their duties. The following people/positions shall take lead responsibility with respect to this:
 - The hiring manager shall ensure that all newly hired staff members undergo training as part of their orientation.
 - Managers shall ensure all placement students undergo training as part of their orientation to their placement.
 - Managers of volunteers shall ensure all volunteers undergo training as part of their orientation to their position.
- 1.3 Training shall include the following:
 - The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
 - How to interact and communicate with people with various types of

disabilities

- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use the TTY (if applicable for their role)
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing YouthLink's programs and services
- YouthLink's policy on accessible customer service

This training shall be accessed electronically at the following web site:

Serve-Ability: Transforming Ontario's Customer Service

<http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/mcsc/serve-ability/splash.html>

- 1.4 Staff, students and volunteers shall report completion of this training to the appropriate person, as indicated in section 8.2, within one month of their date of hire/placement.

5.0

GUIDELINES:

Use of Assistive Devices (communication aids, wheelchairs, speech generative devices, cognition aids, other medical aids)

Staff teams are responsible for identifying the types of assistive devices their clients and participants may use while accessing YouthLink programs or services, and developing a familiarity with these devices.

Telephone Services

Accessible telephone service is provided to service users within the scope of YouthLink's resources.

When communicating with clients and participants, personnel shall speak clearly and at a pace the person can understand.

If telephone communication is not suitable to a person's communication needs or is not

available, communication with service users can be done through secure e-mail, written means, relay services and TTY services where a TTY machine is available.

Tips for serving customers who have an intellectual or developmental disability:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use clear, simple language.
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.
- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions.
- Be patient and verify your understanding of what they need.
- If you can't understand what is being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant.

Speech Disabilities

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical disabilities include problems with:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- Stuttering or slurring

Tips for serving customers with speech or language disabilities:

- If possible, talk in a quiet environment.
- Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Ask them to repeat as necessary, or to write their message.
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered with 'yes' or 'no'.
- Verify your understanding of what they need.
- Have patience, respect and willingness to find a way to communicate.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities include a range of disorders that affect the getting, keeping, understanding and processing of spoken and non-spoken information. People with a learning disability have average or above average intelligence, but take in and work through information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in difficulties in:

- Reading

- Problem solving
- Time management
- Finding the way
- Processing information

Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing

Hearing loss may cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words. A person who is deaf, deafened, or hard-of-hearing may be unable to:

- Use a public telephone
- Understand speech in noisy places
- Pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers

Tips for serving customers who have hearing disabilities:

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Always ask how you may help. Do not shout. Speak clearly.
- Be clear and use specific information when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood. Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- A person who is deaf may use a sign language interpreter to communicate. Always direct your attention to the person who is deaf, not the interpreter.
- Any personal (e.g. financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area that is not noisy.
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.

Deaf-Blindness Disabilities

Deaf-blindness disabilities are a combination of hearing and vision loss. A person who is deaf-blind has great difficulty getting information and performing daily activities. Deaf-blindness makes communication, learning, orientation and mobility difficult. People who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, including Braille, telephone devices, communication boards or a combination of these systems. Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an Intervener who helps the person understand what is being said and seen, gives information and acts as a sighted guide.

Tips for serving customers who are deaf-blind:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Do not touch or address a service animal. It is working and has to pay attention at all times.

Service Disruption

YouthLink will provide notice of temporary disruptions to service or facilities used by persons with disabilities including the reason(s) for the disruption. The notice shall be posted in a prominent location at the facility and on YouthLink's web site when appropriate. When the disruption is planned, advanced notice will be given.

Emergency service providers must be familiar with emergency procedures. They must know the best and most appropriate ways to assist customers or staff who need assistance during an emergency. A designated area will be stocked with the appropriate equipment after consulting with local emergency services staff.

Service Animals and Support Persons

An animal is a "service animal" for a person with a disability if it is obvious that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to help with his or her disability; or if the person provides a letter from a doctor or nurse that says that the person needs the animal to help with his or her disability (*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2007, Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*).

Use of Service Animals

Service animals are allowed to go with any person with a disability while getting goods and services given in any premise owned, leased, occupied or operated by YouthLink, except where animals are not allowed by law.

If a person with a disability has a service animal with them, the person will be allowed to enter areas of YouthLink that are open to the public with the animal and to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is not allowed by law. Where an animal is not

allowed by law, or may affect the health and safety of other customers, other ways will be explored in order to provide service to a person with a disability.

Use of Support Person

Support Person:

A “support person” means another person that accompanies a person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or to get goods or services (*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2006, Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*).

Use of Support Person

Support persons are allowed to go with any person with a disability in any premise owned, leased, occupied or operated by YouthLink.

If a person with a disability is helped by a support person, the person with a disability may stay with the support person while receiving any of YouthLink’s services.

Sometimes, permission by the person using a support person is needed before letting the support person be at a private meeting or interview.

If a person with a disability is helped by a support person and is going to a private meeting or interview at YouthLink, it will be appropriate for the person with a disability to give documented permission for the support person to attend.

Feedback Process and Requirements

YouthLink will collect and respond to feedback about the way they provide services to people with disabilities. Service Providers will be instructed to note comments provided in person, in writing, online, by telephone, TTY or any other means. A simple-to-use, accessible process for customers to provide feedback or complaints will be in place and communicated to the public. The Accessibility Advisory Committee and/or Designated Manager will consult with customer service staff on a regular basis to gather feedback and complaints to improve customer service.

Feedback about the way YouthLink provides goods and services to people with disabilities should follow the YouthLink Customer Service Policy at a minimum.

This protocol is available in an alternative format, upon request, to accommodate a person with a disability.

6.0 PROCEDURES: (if required)

7.0 No exceptions: Exceptions to this policy are only permitted with approval from the Executive Director and the Board.

APPENDIX