

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) Customer Service Policy

Introduction:

The goal of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, is to make Ontario accessible to people with disabilities by 2025. The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service have been created to ensure that goods and services are accessible to all Ontarians and that persons with disabilities are treated with respect, dignity and equality.

Policy Statement:

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

All goods and services provided by Portfolio Contracting shall follow the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

The policy applies to all Portfolio Contracting employees, volunteers, or agents in Ontario who deal with the public or other third parties.

Portfolio Contracting is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities can access our goods and services.

Definitions:

Accessible means 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 all goods and services can be accessed by a larger audience.

Assistive Devices are 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.

Disability as defined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and the Ontario Human Rights Code, refers to:

- 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 coordination, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment (inclusive of partial, total or fluctuating hearing loss), muteness or speech impairment, or physical reliance on a Guide Dog or other animal or sighted guide for persons with visual impairment or total blindness or on a wheelchair or other remedial or assistive device;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;

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- 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, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

Guide Dog is a highly trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the Blind Persons' Rights Act, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.

Service Animal as reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, an animal is a service animal for 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; or
- if the person provides a valid identification card or training certificate from a recognized service animal training school.

Support Person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

General Principles:

In accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07, this policy addresses the following:

1. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities
2. The Use of Assistive Devices
3. The Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals
4. The Use of Support Persons
5. Notice of Service Disruptions
6. Customer Feedback
7. Training
8. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities:

Portfolio Contracting will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality;
- allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- using alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;

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- taking into account individual needs when providing goods and services; and
- communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

The Use of Assistive Devices:

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services provided by Portfolio Contracting.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, open flames and oxygen tanks cannot be near one another. Therefore, the accommodation of a customer with an oxygen tank may involve ensuring the customer is in a location that would be considered safe for both the customer and business. Or, where elevators are not present and where an individual requires assistive devices for the purposes of mobility, service will be provided in a location that meets the needs of the customer.

The Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals:

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by a Guide Dog or Service Animal will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public or other third parties unless otherwise excluded by law. If the animal is excluded by law, Portfolio will provide another means of accommodating the person. "No Pet" policies do not apply to Guide Dogs or Service Animals.

There may be rare circumstances where, for reasons of health and safety of another person, allowing a person with a disability to enter premises accompanied by a Guide Dog or Service Animal needs to be considered. Examples of such situations include but are not limited to: a) a shop where chemicals and/or equipment present hazards to other persons and/or to the service animal; and b) where a person is allergic to animals and adversely affected if they are in close proximity to the Guide Dog or Service Animal. In these circumstances, alternate measures will be made available to enable the person with a disability to access the service.

The use and safety of the Guide Dog or Service Animal is the responsibility of the person with a disability. Portfolio is aware that Guide Dogs and Service Animals are usually well trained and well behaved. In the unlikely event that this is not the case, Guide Dogs and Service Animals may be removed from Portfolio's premises after discussion with the user for anyone to the following reasons:

- Disruptive or aggressive behaviour; such as growling or other signs of threatening or aggressive behavior. **PLEASE NOTE:** If the Guide Dog in this case is a Seizure Response Dog – this is an expected response from the animal when assisting the person with a disability.
- Causing damage; including causing damage to any person or property.
- Poor health; such as a contagious disease where the animal risks spreading the disease to others.

Some municipalities exclude certain animals from their jurisdictions. Depending on the specifics of the by-law, this may give reason for Portfolio to exclude certain Service Animals from its premises.

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The Use of Support Persons:

Portfolio Contracting is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter public and third party areas of the premise to which they would normally have access to with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on the premises.

When addressing a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person, employees will communicate directly with the person with a disability. If confidential/personal information is being exchanged and the person with a disability requests to discuss the information in private, the request will be accommodated and the support person asked to wait in another area.

A support person is required to abide by the same rules and regulations as any other person on the premises. For example, both the person with a disability and his/her support person may both be expected to sign-in a log book when entering our premises.

A support person will not be required to pay admission/fees for services provided to a person with a disability unless they are also a recipient of the service.

Notice of Service Disruptions:

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of Portfolio Contracting. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customer's with disabilities rely on to access or use Portfolio's goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notices will be placed in a conspicuous place on the premise and in a format that considers the types of disabilities of persons who use the disrupted service. For example, a notice of disruption for an elevator will be placed at a height that would be at the line of vision for an individual using a wheelchair.

Customer Feedback:

Portfolio Contracting is committed to providing fair and equal access to our premise, facilities and services for everyone, including persons with disabilities. Feedback or complaints about the delivery of goods and services from persons with disabilities may be given in person, by telephone/TTY, in writing, electronically or through other methods. Please direct your feedback to HR Manager info@portfolio-contracting.com or www.portfolio-contracting.com/contact.html also, you may call 905-760-8542 or Fax 905-760-2855.

All feedback will be tracked and monitored to ensure the client has received a timely response.

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Training:

Portfolio Contracting will ensure appropriate levels of training to all employees, volunteers, agents and others who interact with the public on behalf of Portfolio as well as those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training will be provided in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of Ontario 429/07. Records of training will be kept that include the dates on which training occurred and the number of persons trained.

As reflected in Ontario Regulation 429/07, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.
- A review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - use assistive devices;
 - require the assistance of a guide dog or service animal; or
 - require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- Portfolio Contracting policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents:

Portfolio Contracting shall notify customers that the documents related to the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place owned and/or operated by Portfolio, Portfolio's website and/or any other reasonable method.

References:

- Ontario Human Rights Code (2009)
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)
- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
- Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (2007)
- Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562
- Food Safety and Quality Act 2001, Ontario Regulation 31/05
- Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario

Lloyd Segal – President

