

Customer Service Policy Statement Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

Our Mission

The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie is resolved to identify and remove barriers to full participation for persons with disabilities and to encourage our community partners to share our vision of a fully accessible community. We hereby make a commitment to prevent further barriers from being created in our future planning processes and implementation.

Our Commitment

In fulfilling our mission, the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

This policy covers the following departments/services:

- Office of the CAO
- Clerk's Department
- Community Services Department
- Engineering and Planning Department
- Finance Department
- Fire Service
- Human Resources
- Legal Department
- Public Works and Transportation
- Social Services Department

The Police Service, Public Library, Economic Development Corporation, and Conservation Authority are not governed under the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie. They retain their own policies, practices and procedures. Please refer directly to them.

The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

1. Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

We will train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

1.1 Telephone Services

We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. We will train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.

We will offer to communicate with customers by email, TextNet, Bell Relay Services (1-800-855-0511) if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

1.2 Assistive Devices

We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

We will ensure that staff in their respective departments knows how to use the following assistive devices available on our premises for customers to use independently:

A. Civic Centre:

- Office of the CAO: Portable ramp
- Council Chambers and meeting rooms: FM System for Hearing Impaired available on request to the City Clerk at 759-5388
- Stair Chairs: for emergency evacuation

B. John Rhodes Community Centre:

- Pool Lift (slings/chair),
- Accessible Change Table and lift in Family Change Room
- Pool commodes
- Arena 2: Sledges and Lift available for independent use during Public Sledge Skate

C. Essar Centre: Assistive Listening Devices

D. Day Nurseries: Maycourt and Jessie Irving Children's Centres:

- Assistive devices are provided by parents or guardians or from the Early Learning Resources organization that provides staff training.

1.3 Billing

We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers. For this reason, invoices will be provided in the following formats upon request: hard copy, large print, email.

We will answer any questions customers may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone, TextNet or email.

2. Use of Service Animals

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

2.1 To be considered a service animal under the standard, it must either be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a disability must provide a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that it is required because of his or her disability

2.2 Exotic animals are prohibited under:

Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie By-Law 81-180 Animal Control by-law to prohibit the keeping of certain kinds of animals.

2.3 Service Animals are excluded from the following locations:

- Food preparation stations at all city facilities

3. Use of Support Persons

Support Person is defined as: an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services. Personal care needs may include, but are not limited to, physically transferring an individual from one location to another or assisting an individual with eating or using the washroom. Medical needs may include, but are not limited to, monitoring an individual's health or providing medical support by being available in the event of a seizure. The support person could be a paid personal support worker, a volunteer, a friend or a family member. He or she does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

3.1 We are 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 our premises 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 our premises.

3.2 Fees will not be charged for support persons attending with persons with disabilities who are conducting business at departments of the Corporation. Our community pools and arenas require users to provide their own support worker at no charge for municipally scheduled swims and skates.

3.3 American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters will be provided on request at no charge to persons with disabilities who are conducting business at departments of the Corporation.

3.4 Fees for events, services and facilities: Support persons may be charged depending on the events. Please contact the facility directly for event costs.

4. Notice of Temporary Disruption

The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.

4.1 This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

4.2 Notice of disruption at any department/division will be placed at their public entrance and service counters. Notice will also be posted on the city website.

4.3 Unplanned disruptions: City staff will post on the city website, press release and/or at public entrances where possible

4.4 Notice of planned disruptions will be posted on the Corporate Page of the Sault Star as well as city website.

5. Training

The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

5.1 Corporate Accessible Customer Service training will be provided to all new staff as part of staff orientation training. Department specific components will be provided by the department no later than one month after staff commences their duties.

A. Training will 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 equipment or devices available on department/division premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our goods and services
- Our policies, practices and procedures relating to the Accessible Customer Service Standard.

- B. Staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to people with disabilities.
- C. Staff will be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

7. Feedback process

The ultimate goal of the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way departments of the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie provide goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by telephone, email, in person, by letter or feedback form and directed to the department. All feedback will be directed to the responsible manager or person identified on the feedback form. Customers can expect to hear back within three to five business days.

Copies of all Records of Customer Feedback will be forwarded to the Accessibility Coordinator for retention.

8. Modifications to this or other policies

We are committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities.

Any policy of the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

9. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of a policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to, the Accessibility Coordinator of the Social Services Department at: (Tel) 541-7310 * (TTY) 541-2815 * (Email) l.rosso@cityssm.on.ca