

QUINTE WEST PUBLIC LIBRARY

TITLE: Accessible Customer Service Policy

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 25, 2017

REVIEWED: January 27, 2021

Purpose / Background Information

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is a law that was passed by the Province of Ontario, which allows the government to develop and enforce specific standards for accessibility. The standards are intended to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to customer service, transportation, the built environment, information and communication, and employment.

The Quinte West Public Library establishes and implements practices and procedures that respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. The Quinte West Public Library is committed to ensuring that each employee, volunteer and patron receives equitable treatment with respect to employment and services without discrimination, and receives accommodation where required, in a timely manner and in accordance with the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the AODA and its regulations.

Responsibilities

- For the purposes of the AODA, the library provides services on behalf of the municipality, and therefore is considered, along with the municipality, to be a “small designated public sector organization with at least one but fewer than 50 employees” as defined within the *O.Reg. 165/16*. The library complies with the obligations for this sector as set out in the AODA regulations.
- The Quinte West Public Library Board (Board) ensures that the library complies with the spirit, principles and intent of AODA and designates the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as the individual accountable for the organization’s compliance with legislation.
- The CEO will ensure that policies and procedures comply with the AODA and any regulations made under the AODA.

1. Application

This policy applies to all persons including those who deal with members of the public, and other third parties, on behalf of the Quinte West Public Library. This requirement applies whether the person is considered an employee, a member of the Board, a volunteer, a student on placement, or otherwise.

This policy applies to all services offered at both locations of the Quinte West Public Library, as well as all public events hosted by the Library, regardless of where the event takes place. The policy also applies to all external groups or agencies that use facilities owned, leased, or operated by the Quinte West Public Library to hold a public event.

Definitions

Assistive Device

A device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of organizations covered by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07)*. Assistive devices may include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, oxygen tanks, and electronic communication devices.

Braille

A system of writing for the visually impaired that uses characters made up of raised dots.

Disability

- a) 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 impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a 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; or,
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Service Animal

Any animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to a disability, where the person provides documentation from a regulated health professional that they require the animal for reasons relating to their disability. Service animals may include a variety of animals used to assist with various disabilities.

Support Person

A person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist them with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

2. Customer Service Policies

a. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

The Quinte West Public Library will use all reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- the goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities; and
- the provision of the goods and services to persons with disabilities are integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities, unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the library's goods and services.

b. Communication with Persons with Disabilities

All library communications will be written in a manner so that the intended audience understands the message clearly. This will be done using the principle of "plain language", which is defined as language that avoids obscurity, inflated vocabulary, and convoluted sentence structure.

When communicating with a person with a disability, the library will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

The library trains all persons who communicate with patrons on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

The library shall make its communications available, upon request, in accessible formats for persons with disabilities and make the public aware of the availability of communication support. In this context, the types of communications include:

- a. Policies
- b. Accessibility plans

- c. Emergency procedures, plan and public safety information prepared for the public
- d. Forms, surveys and other tools used to gather feedback
- e. Information on collections/materials in accessible format
- f. Employment standards

Telephone Services

The Quinte West Public Library is committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. The library will train all relevant persons to communicate with patrons over the telephone in clear and plain language, to speak clearly and slowly, and to tailor their responses as much as possible in support of the individual.

The library will offer to communicate with patrons in person, by email, or by web based services if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

Website Services

The Quinte West Public Library is committed to maintaining its website and providing on-line resources that are fully accessible to our patrons.

Additional Communication Services

Should a patron require an alternative form of communication not listed above, such as a document printed in Braille or the need for the services of a sign language interpreter, the library will make every possible attempt to accommodate those needs. In order to accommodate certain requests and services, the patron may be required to provide advance notice to the library. The costs of any additional communication services will be covered by the Quinte West Public Library.

Public Education

The Quinte West Public Library is committed to promoting public awareness and educating the public about the Accessible Customer Service Policy, as well as the various accessible services that it provides.

c. Assistive Devices

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the library's goods and 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 a person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

The library may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist them in obtaining, using and benefiting from the library's goods and services, where the library has such other measures available.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that their assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

d. Service Animals

A person with a disability may enter either location of the Quinte West Public library accompanied by a service animal, and may keep the animal with them.

At times it may be difficult to differentiate between a person with a disability using a service animal and an individual being accompanied by a pet. The library may ask the person with a disability for a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability. If proper documentation is not produced, then the person may be asked to remove the animal from the premises.

It is the responsibility of the person with the disability to ensure that their service animal is kept in control at all times. This will include controlling the behavior of the animal (e.g. barking or growling), cleaning up after the animal (e.g. defecation), and being responsible for any damage the animal may cause to property.

e. Support Persons

A person with a disability may enter either location of the Quinte West Public Library with a support person, and is entitled to have access to the support person at all times while on the premises.

The library may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on library premises in situations where it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with the disability or the health and safety of others.

In situations where privacy and consent issues are applicable, a support person may be subject to the same confidentiality requirements as the person with a disability that they are assisting. A support person may be required to sign a waiver with respect to any privacy or confidentiality issues.

In order to accommodate a person with a disability and their support person at an event where attendance is by pre-arranged seating, advanced booking may be required. Admission requirements will be clearly posted on the library's website, and at the entrances of all applicable areas.

Admission Fees

The following policies apply to support persons and admission fees:

- Where an admission fee is charged to gain access to an event or program and the revenue from the fee is payable directly to the library, the support person is permitted to attend at no cost; and,
- Where an admission fee is charged to gain access to an event or program and the revenue from the fee is payable to a third party (e.g. a concert provider), the library will encourage the third party to allow the support person to attend at no cost.

f. Feedback

Feedback from the public is welcomed, as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of goods and services to persons with disabilities may be given in writing, in electronic format, or through other methods. All feedback will be directed to the CEO, and patrons can expect an acknowledgement of their message in a timely manner. All personal information collected will be managed in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public, and notice of the process will be posted on the library's website and/or in other relevant locations.

g. Training

The Quinte West Public Library ensures that all persons to whom this policy applies receive training as required by the AODA.

The content of the training will include:

- a review of the purposes and requirements of the AODA;
- instruction on the policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- what to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the library's goods or services;
- how to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal; and,
- information about the equipment or devices available on the premises that may help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

The Quinte West Public Library will keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided. The names of individuals trained will be recorded for library administrative purposes. All personal information collected will be managed in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

3. Availability of Documents

All documents required by the *AODA*, including the library's Accessible Customer Service policy, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

Where a person with a disability requests a document in an alternate format, the City will provide the document or the information contained in the document, (where suitable advance notice is given) in the format that is requested and that takes the person's disability into consideration.

Notice of the availability of all documents required by the *AODA* will be posted on the library's website, and will be made available through the CEO's Office.

4. Amendments

All amendments to the Accessible Customer Service Policy must be approved by the Board.