

ST. CATHARINES PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**POLICY**

Section: General Number: G16	Subject: Accessibility Policy (Formerly Accessibility – Customer Service Policy)	Motion #: 2014-18 2021-104
Policy Level: Library Board	Author: Management	Review: 4 years
Approval Date: 2011-11-17	Effective Date: 2021-09-16	Next Review: 2025
Notes: The <i>Accessibility Customer Service Policy</i> was approved at the Board Meeting of November 17, 2011. The Accessibility Customer Service Policy was amended to include the requirements of IASR and was renamed the “Accessibility Policy.” The Accessibility Policy as amended was approved by the Library Board at the Board Meeting on March 20, 2014, and September 16, 2021.		

POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that St. Catharines Public Library is compliant with the standards set by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and its regulations.

The Library is committed to providing equitable access to library service that meets the changing needs of all its customers including persons with disabilities in a welcoming and supportive environment. The Library will develop and support a service and work environment where the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in accordance with the principles of dignity, independence and integration.

In developing and delivering service and programs to people with disabilities, the Library will be guided by service values of equity and diversity in the treatment of all individuals. The Library will make reasonable efforts to establish, implement, and monitor policies and practices that balance the needs of persons with disabilities and others to support the accessibility standards of customer service, information and communication, employment and the built environment established under AODA.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals who work with or for the Library, volunteer for the Library, individuals who visit and/or use the Library, as well as, the delivery of operations, services and programs provided by the Library.

DEFINITIONS**Accommodation**

Accommodation means that special arrangements made or assistance provided so that persons with disabilities can participate in experiences available to persons without disabilities. Accommodation will vary depending on the person’s unique needs.

Assistive Device

An assistive device is a tool, technology, or other mechanism, that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating or lifting (examples include walkers, magnifiers for reading etc.).

Accessible Formats

Accessible formats may include but are not limited to: large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

Barrier

A barrier is any policy, practice or procedure, or part of the built environment that prevents someone from participating fully in library programs or services because of their disability.

Communication Supports

A tool or device that facilitates communication for a person with a disability, including but not limited to captioning, sign language, and personal listening systems.

Disability

Disability as defined by AODA means:

- 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 co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- 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*.

Reasonable Efforts

The Customer Service Standard requires organizations to make reasonable efforts to meet the needs of people with disabilities. The Library defines reasonable efforts as providing the best possible service within the context of: available resources, balancing the needs of people with disabilities and others who may encounter barriers to access and with the community at large, the health and safety of Library staff and volunteers, the security of Library property and existing laws and contracts.

Service animal

Service animal refers to an animal used by a person for reasons relating to their disability. An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if,

- the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or

- the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability;
 - a member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario;
 - a member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
 - a member of the College of Nurses of Ontario;
 - a member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario;
 - a member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario;
 - a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
 - a member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario;
 - a member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario; or
 - a member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

Support person

A support person is another person who is in relation to a person with a disability and accompanies him or her them in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities.

Specific Directives

General

1. Accessibility Plans
The multi-year City plan includes the Library and outlines the strategy to prevent and remove barriers. The plan is posted on the City's website and can be made available in accessible format upon request.
2. Accessibility Report
The Library provides input for the City's Accessibility Plan Annual Progress report.
3. Documentation
The Library will maintain supporting documentation associated with the Act and make it available upon request.
4. Library Policies
Library Policies will be applied in such a way that considers the needs of people with disabilities and respects the principles of dignity, independence and integration.
5. Procurement
When procuring or acquiring goods, services, self-service kiosks, or facilities the Library will incorporate accessibility criteria and features, except where it is not feasible as defined by the Act.
6. Design of Public Spaces
The Library works closely with the City of St. Catharines to ensure our buildings provide a welcoming and supportive environment to serve all residents including persons with disabilities. All Library construction projects, retrofits and redevelopments will comply with Ontario Building Code requirements, with the City

of St. Catharines Facility Accessibility Features and with AODA 2005 Design of Public Spaces Standards. In the event of new construction or significant building renovation, the Library will reduce barriers by ensuring accessible entrances, walkways, parking and maintaining accessible Library spaces including service desks. The Library will consult with individuals and organizations representing persons with disabilities when designing public spaces.

7. Training

The Library will provide and document ongoing training on the AODA legislation and requirements for employees, volunteers and contractors who interact with the public or who participate in the development of policies on behalf of the Library. Training shall be appropriate to the duties of the employees, volunteers and other persons.

8. Collections

The Library offers resources in a wide range of formats with both vision and hearing enhancements suitable for customers with disabilities. Such resources include (but are not limited to):

- Downloadable e-Audiobooks
- Downloadable eBooks and digital periodicals, which allow the customer to customize the text size and typeface
- Books on CD
- Large Print books
- DVDs and Blu-ray videos with subtitle and descriptive narration options
- Online resources with text-to-speech capabilities

Collections are displayed and shelved in a manner to facilitate access to customers with disabilities, and staff are trained to assist customers with accessing the collection.

Information and Communication

9. Accessible Formats

The Library shall provide access to or arrange for the provision of access to accessible materials where they exist.

The Library may provide accessible formats for archival materials, special collections, and rare book donations.

The Library will upon request, provide or arrange for the provision of its documents in an accessible format or communication support. When providing accessible formats, the Library will take into account the person's disability and individual communication needs by consulting with the person directly.

10. Accessible Website

The St. Catharines Public Library will make its content conform with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

11. Communication

Library staff and volunteers will communicate with persons-with-disabilities in a way that takes their needs into consideration.

The Library will make information about the availability of accessible materials publicly available and shall provide the information in accessible format upon request.

12. Feedback

The Library welcomes feedback and makes information available on how to provide feedback. Feedback is accepted in the Library in a variety of formats including but not limited to: email, telephone, in person. Staff assistance is available to support all residents in providing feedback.

13. Emergency Plans

The Library will provide publicly available emergency procedures, plans or public safety information in an accessible format upon request as soon as possible.

14. Notice of Temporary Service Disruption

The Library will provide notice of service disruptions which will include the reason for the disruption, how long the disruption will last and a description of the available alternative, if any. In the event of unplanned disruption, notice will be provided as quickly as possible.

Accessible Customer Service

15. Provision of Services and Programs

The Library will promote accessibility through the development of policies, procedures and practices that are consistent with the principles of integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the provision of services and programs to persons with and without disabilities are integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use, attend or benefit from services or programs. Library programming, including programs conducted by community partners or external presenters, will be developed and delivered with consideration given to the principles of accessibility, equity and inclusiveness.

16. Assistive Devices

Persons with a disability may be able to use their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining or using Library Services and may have free access to assistive devices available in the Library. The Library will endeavour to make available a broad range of assistive devices to help meet the reading needs of people with disabilities. The Library also recognizes that accessibility can be achieved and provided in different ways.

17. Service Animals

The Library welcomes service animals that are needed to assist persons with disabilities. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, Library staff may ask the person for confirmation of the animal's status. It is the responsibility of the person with the disability to ensure that his or her service animal is kept under control at all times.

18. Support People

The Library welcomes support people who may accompany a person with a disability to assist with communication, mobility, or medical needs or with access to Library Services. When admission fees are charged for library programs or services, admission fees will be waived for support people, or advance notice will be given of any support fees that support people may need to pay if it is not a library program.

19. Notice of Service Disruptions

The Library will provide notice of service disruptions which include the reason for the disruption, how long the disruption will last, and a description of available alternatives, if any. In the event of an unplanned disruption, notice will be provided as quickly as possible.

Employment

20. This applies to all current employees and applicants for employment of St. Catharines Public Library, including full and part-time, casual, contract, permanent, and temporary employees.

The Library will notify:

- Employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities during the assessment or selection process.
- Job applicants selected to participate in an assessment or selection process relating to the materials or processes to be used that;
- Accommodations are available upon request
- Accommodations will take into consideration the applicants disability
- Accommodations will be based on consultation between the employer and applicant.
- Successful applicants of Library policies and other additional supports pertaining to accommodation of employees with disabilities.

The Library will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication job supports, upon request.

The Library will provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, upon request.

The Library will develop a written process for the development of individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

The Library will develop a return-to-work process for employees who have been absent due to a disability, and require disability-related accommodation in order to return to work.

The Library's performance management, career development and redeployment will take into consideration the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and all individualized accommodation plans.

Implementation

The policy shall be implemented by the C.E.O and Management.