



Providing Services to People with Disabilities

Policy Statement

1. Our Mission

The mission of the Church of St John the Evangelist, Hamilton (SJE) is to answer God's call to help people become followers of Jesus, equipped for ministry in the church and in the world through nurture, evangelism, worship and service.

2. Our Commitment

In fulfilling our mission, the SJE strives at all times to provide its 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 services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as others.

3. Providing services to people with disabilities

SJE is committed to excellence in serving all individuals including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

3.1 Communication

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

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

3.2 Telephone services

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

We will offer to communicate with individuals by e-mail, relay services if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

3.3 Assistive devices

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

We will also ensure that staff know how to use the following assistive devices available on our premises for customers:

- Lift;
- Audio amplification devices;
- Wheelchair designated areas.

3.4 Provision of wheelchair “seating” areas

Special seating areas are available for the placement of wheelchairs in the worship space. There are four locations, one on each side of the centre aisle at the back of the church and one each on the outside aisles at the front of the church.

Special areas reserved for wheelchairs in the worship area should be kept clear and available for wheelchair seating. The placement of tables or chairs in these areas is to be avoided.

3.5 [Insert any other policies, practices or procedures the local church will establish that are specific to the nature of the services offered].

4. Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

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.

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 SJE’s 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.

Fees will not be charged for support persons for admission to SJE's premises for an event where a charge is normally levied.

5. Notice of Temporary Disruption

SJE will provide individuals with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises.

6. Training for Staff

SJE will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of policies, practices and procedures. Individuals in the following positions will be trained:

[Insert list of positions that require training, for example, ushers, children's workers etc.]

This training will be provided within the first month after staff or volunteer commence their duties.

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 lifts and audio assistive devices.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing SJE's services
- SJE's policies, practices and procedures relating to the service standard.

Applicable staff and volunteers will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way services are provided to people with disabilities. Staff and volunteers will

also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

7. Feedback Process

The ultimate goal of SJE is to meet and surpass an individual's expectations while serving individuals with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way SJE provides services to people with disabilities can be made by e-mail, verbally, suggestion box, and visitor card. All feedback will be directed to the Rector. Individuals can expect to hear back within 14 days.

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.

9. Questions about This Policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to individuals 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 Rector of the Church of St John the Evangelist.

Training Introduction

Through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the province is becoming more accessible for people with disabilities. Under the act, accessibility standards are being developed. These are the rules that Ontario businesses and organizations must follow to break down barriers for people with disabilities.

Being accessible to customers with disabilities isn't just the right thing to do, it's also the law.

What's new?

Ontario's first standard under the act — customer service — is law effective January 1, 2012 for churches. This standard applies to all businesses and organizations that provide goods or services and have at least one employee. Under this standard, businesses must train staff about serving customers with disabilities. This training must be provided to everyone who:

- deals with members of the public or other third parties (e.g., business clients)
- develops customer service policies.

From January 1, 2012, updated training is provided if policies, practices or procedures on the provision of services to people with disabilities change at our church.

This booklet will provide an overview of each of the required training topics.

This training will help you serve the needs of persons with disabilities who are accessing our services. This training helps us comply with the training requirements in the customer service standard and our parish policy.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was passed in 2005. The goal of the act is to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025. Ontario is developing mandatory, province-wide standards to achieve this goal and to improve accessibility. Standards are being developed in key areas of everyday life including:

- Customer service
- Employment
- Transportation
- Information and communications
- The built environment, including buildings.

The standards are developed by committees that include people from the disability and business communities. The public then has an opportunity to review and comment on each standard before it is finalized.

AODA Customer Service Standard

Designated public sector organizations and organizations must:

- Document in writing all their policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and meet other document requirements set out in the standard;
- Notify customers that the documents required under the customer service standard are available upon request;
- When giving documents required under the customer service standard to a person with a disability, provide the information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Obligated businesses and organizations must comply with the customer service standard starting **January 1, 2012**.

To comply, all obligated businesses and organizations must:

- Set up policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities;
- Make reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the key principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity;
- Have a policy on assistive devices used by people with disabilities to access your goods or services and a policy outlining any other measures you offer to enable them to access your goods and services;
- Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability;
- Let people with disabilities bring their service animals onto the parts of your premises open to the public or open to other third parties, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law;
- Let people with disabilities bring their support persons with them when accessing goods or services on the parts of your premises open to the public or open to other third parties;
- Let people know ahead of time what, if any, admission fee will be charged for a support person;
- Let the public know when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access their goods and services are temporarily unavailable;

- Ensure that everyone who deals with the public on your behalf, as well as everyone involved in developing your customer service policies, receives training on topics outlined in the customer service standard;
- Set up a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which you provide goods or services to people with disabilities, including what action will be taken on any complaints. Make the information about the feedback process readily available to the public.

This is a summary of the requirements of the customer service standard. More information is available at www.AccessON.ca/compliance.

How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities

Being able to interact and communicate with people with disabilities is a big part of providing accessible customer service. Sometimes the best approach is to ask a person with a disability how you can best communicate with them. Here are some suggested tips to interact and communicate with people who have various disabilities:

People who are deaf or blind

A person who is deaf/blind may have some degree of both hearing and vision loss. Many people who are deaf/blind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional support person who helps with communication.

Tips:

- Speak directly to the individual, not to the intervenor.
- An individual who is deaf/blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note

People who have hearing loss

People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. These are terms used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost.

Tips:

- Attract the individual's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- Make sure you are in a well-lit area where the individual can see your face and read your lips.

- If the individual uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (for example, using a pen and paper).

People who have physical disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities. Only some people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair. Someone with a spinal cord injury may use crutches while someone with severe arthritis or a heart condition may have difficulty walking longer distances.

Tips:

- If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level.
- Don't touch items or equipment, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission.
- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

People who have vision loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not.

Tips:

- Don't assume the individual can't see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight.
- Identify yourself when you approach the individual and speak directly to them.
- Ask the individual if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (for example, a menu or schedule of fees).
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive.
- Offer your elbow to guide them if needed.

People who have learning disabilities

The term "learning disabilities" refers to a variety of disorders, such as dyslexia, that affect how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

Tips:

- Be patient – people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond.
- Try to provide information in a way that takes into account the individual's disability. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math.

People with speech or language impairments

Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or may cause slurring. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

Tips:

- Don't assume that a person with a speech impairment has another disability.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no."
- Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences.

People who have mental health disabilities

Mental health issues can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. For example, some customers may experience anxiety due to hallucinations, mood swings, phobias or panic disorder.

Tips:

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident, calm and reassuring.
- If a customer appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.

People who have intellectual / developmental disabilities

Developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do everyday physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

Tips:

- Don't make assumptions about what a person can do.
- Use plain language.

- Provide one piece of information at a time.

How to interact with people who use assistive devices

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. Personal assistive devices can include things like wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes or speech amplification devices.

Tips:

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.
- Don't move assistive devices or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of the individual's reach.
- Let the individual know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g., public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, etc.).

How to use equipment or assistive devices to help you in the provision of goods and services to individuals with disabilities

Your ministry leader or supervisor will provide direct training on how to use the lift or hearing assistive devices.

How to interact with people with disabilities who require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal

People with vision loss may use a guide dog, but there are other types of service animals as well. Hearing alert animals help people who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard of hearing. Other service animals are trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure.

Under the standard, we are required to allow service animals on the parts of your premises that are open to the public or to other third parties, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. If deemed necessary the Rector or an appointee may ask a person for a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that their animal is required for reasons relating to their disability if it is not readily apparent.

Tips:

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal.
- Avoid touching or addressing service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Avoid making assumptions about the animal. If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask the person with the animal.

How to interact with people with disabilities who require the assistance of a support person

Some people with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person, such as an intervenor. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help the individual with a variety of things from communicating, to helping with mobility, personal care or medical needs.

According to the standard, a support person must be allowed to accompany an individual with a disability to any part of your premises that is open to the public or to third parties. Our policy is not to charge admission for a support person for events where an admission fee is normally required.

Tips:

- If you're not sure which person is disabled, take your lead from the person using or requesting your services, or simply ask.
- Speak directly to the individual, not to their support person.

What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services

If you notice that the individual is having difficulty accessing our services, a good starting point is to simply ask how you can best help. Remember that the individual is your best source for information about their needs. The solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.