

Policy Number: ORG.06.02	
Title: Accessible Customer Service Standards	
Section: Organizational	
Sub-Section: 06 - Accessibility	
Version #: 5	
Original Issue Date: Nov 30, 2015	
Policy Owner: Senior Leadership	
Approval Authority: Executive Director	Approval Date: Jun 26, 2026
Next Review Date: Jun 26, 2030	

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline expectations for the provision of service to persons with disabilities in alignment with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and *Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards*, including customer service requirements.

2.0 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to every person who deals with service users or members of the public, whether the person does so as an employee, student, contractor, agent, or other representative, and to all locations and service delivery channels (in person, virtual, outreach).

3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 Four Counties Addiction Services Team (Fourcast) is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner and in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, *Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
- 3.2 This policy and other required documents will be provided in accessible formats upon request.

3.3 The Provision of Services to Persons with Disabilities

3.3.1 Fourcast will ensure that when delivering programs and services to individuals with disabilities, the services are delivered in a way that:

- a) Ensures all service users receive the same value and quality;
- b) Supports service users with disabilities to access services in ways that respect their independence;
- c) Uses alternative methods when possible, to ensure that service users with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place, and in a similar manner;
- d) Supports service users with disabilities to use assistive devices, service animals, and/or support persons to access services; and
- e) Ensures that employees, will communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that considers the person's disability.

3.4 The Accessible Customer Service Standards policy is posted on Fourcast's website and, upon request, is available in an accessible format or with communication support.

3.5 Accessibility Training

3.5.1 Fourcast will ensure that training on the requirements of the accessibility standards and *Ontario Human Rights Code* as it pertains to persons with disabilities is provided to all employees, students, and other Fourcast representatives delivering services or participating in policy development in accordance with policy *ORG.06.01 Accessibility*.

3.6 Feedback Process

- 3.6.1 Fourcast recognizes the right of a person with a disability to offer suggestions, make a complaint, or provide any feedback on providing and improving its services.
- 3.6.2 Fourcast will maintain processes for receiving and responding to feedback in accordance with policies *ORG.11.06 Service User and Community Feedback & Complaints* and *HR.13.21 Employee Feedback*.
- 3.6.3 Fourcast will ensure that its feedback process is accessible by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Accessibility: The design of products, devices, services, policies, or environments for people with disabilities.

Accessible Formats: May included but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

Assistive Device: Any aid that is used by people with disabilities to help with daily living, including cognition aids, communication aids, medical aids, and personal mobility aids. Examples: canes, crutches, electronic communication devices, hearing aids, oxygen tanks, portable chalkboards, screen readers, speech input systems, walkers, wheelchairs, and white canes.

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in society, including physical, communication, attitudinal, technological, or systemic barriers.

Communications: The interaction between two or more persons or entities, or any combination of them, where information is provided, sent, or received.

Communication Supports: May include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

Disability: As defined by the *Human Rights Code*,

- 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 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;
- 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*.

Guide Dog: A dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed under *Regulation 58* of the *Blind Persons' Right Act*.

Information: Includes data, facts, and knowledge that exists in any format, including text, audio, digital, or images, and that conveys meaning.

Persons with Disabilities: Individuals that have a disability defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Service Animals: Any animal that 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 a regulated health professional confirming that the

person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed, or how it supports the person.

Support Person: Any person who accompanies a person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or access to goods or services. A support person may be a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend. They are not required to have special training or qualifications.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees

- Communicate with persons with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their disability and supports effective communication.
- Be familiar with and support the use of assistive devices, service animals, and support persons.
- Ask service users how best to meet their needs and provide services accordingly.
- Report any barriers, accessibility issues, or service disruptions to their supervisor/manager.
- Participate in required accessibility training and apply the learning in practice.

Teams Leads/Managers

- Ensure employees understand and comply with this policy and related procedures.
- Reinforce accessible customer service practices through supervision and coaching.
- Address accessibility barriers or complaints in a timely manner.
- Ensure notices of disruption are communicated appropriately.
- Support employees in responding to accommodation needs (e.g., communication supports, service animals).

- Ensure new employees, students, and contractors complete accessibility training.

Human Resources

- Coordinate and maintain accessibility training programs in compliance with AODA and the Human Rights Code.
- Track and document completion of training for all applicable individuals.

Senior Leadership

- Ensure organizational compliance with legislative requirements.
- Promote a culture of accessibility, inclusion, and dignity across the organization.
- Allocate resources to support accessibility initiatives and barrier removal.
- Monitor organizational performance related to accessibility and address systemic issues.
- Act as policy owner and review/revise policy every four (4) years.

6.0 PROCEDURES

6.1 Communication

- 6.1.1 All communication (in person, by phone, written, or by email) will be respectful and preserve a person's independence and dignity.
- 6.1.2 All employees will receive training on how to communicate with people with disabilities in accordance with policy *ORG.06.01 Accessibility*.
- 6.1.3 All employees will ask the person with a disability on the best way(s) to communicate (i.e. verbally, large print, adaptive technology, etc.).
- 6.1.4 Employees will offer alternative forms of communication in a format that best meets the needs of the person.

6.2 Assistive Devices

- 6.2.1 Employees will inform a person with a disability about the accessible features in the immediate area, as appropriate. This may include automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevators, and ramps.
- 6.2.2 Employees will support people with disabilities to use their assistive devices to access services provided, ensuring independence and equal opportunity of services.
- 6.2.3 Employees will not deny access to services to people with a disability due to the use of an assistive device.
- 6.2.4 In cases where the assistive devices present a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern or may not be permitted for other reasons, other measures will be used to support the person with a disability to access services.
- 6.2.5 Employees will not touch a person's assistive device without asking for permission.

6.3 Support Person

- 6.3.1 If an individual with a disability is accompanied by a support person, employees will ensure that both persons may enter the premises together and that the individual is not prevented from having access to the support person.
- 6.3.2 There may be times where seating and availability prevent the individual and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations, employees will make every reasonable effort to resolve the issue.
- 6.3.3 In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the service user before any potentially confidential information is mentioned.

6.3.4 If Fourcast requires a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons, employees will:

- a) Consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs;
- b) Consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence; and
- c) Determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises.

6.4 Service Animals

6.4.1 A person with a disability who is accompanied by a guide dog or service animal will be welcomed to premises that are open to the public. "No pet" policies do not apply to guide dogs or service animals.

6.4.2 If it is not readily apparent that an animal is being used by an individual for reasons relating to a disability, employees may respectfully ask if an animal is a service animal. The employee will not ask about the nature of the person's disability or how the animal supports them.

6.4.3 In rare circumstances where another person's health and safety could be seriously impacted by the presence of a service animal (such as severe allergies), employees will consult their Team Lead/Manager to fully consider all options for safely allowing the service animal.

6.4.4 As a courtesy, particularly if the person and service animal have been in attendance on the premises for a long time, employees may ask whether the animal requires water, designate an area in which the service animal can relieve itself, or ask whether employees can be of assistance pertaining to the service animal.

6.4.5 In the very exceptional circumstance where a service animal becomes out of control, causing a clear disruption or a threat to the health and safety of others, and the animal's behaviour is not corrected by the owner,

employees may ask the person with a disability to remove their service animal from the premises.

6.5 Notice of Temporary Disruptions

6.5.1 In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to any location, technology, or method that a person with a disability must use in order for services to be available to them, Fourcast will provide notice of the disruption by:

- a) Posting notice on the main entry to the physical premises of the affected location;
- b) Providing notice on its phone system; and
- c) During a planned service disruption, in advance on the organization's website and social media platforms.

6.5.2 The Notice of Disruption will include the following information:

- a) Type of disruption;
- b) Reason for disruption;
- c) Anticipated duration of disruption; and
- d) Description of alternate locations or services, if available.

6.6 Making Emergency Information Accessible to the Public

6.6.1 In the event that emergency or public safety information is requested, Fourcast will ensure that the information is delivered in accessible formats or with communication supports, upon request, in a timely manner.

6.7 Feedback Process

- 6.7.1 Fourcast provides service users and visitors with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to people with disabilities in accordance with policy *ORG.11.06 Service user and Community Feedback and Complaints*. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all individuals and notice of the process will be made available on the Fourcast website.
- 6.7.2 The Complaint and Feedback Form, along with alternate methods of providing feedback verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (handwritten, delivered, website, or e-mail), will be available upon request.
- 6.7.3 Individuals who provide formal feedback and provide contact information will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

7.0 RELATED INFORMATION

Policies

ORG.06.01 Accessibility

ORG.07.01 Communications Principles

ORG.07.03 Public Information

ORG.07.04 Fourcast Website

ORG.11.06 Service User and Community Feedback and Complaints

PRG.01.02 Service User Rights and Responsibilities

Forms

Complaint and Feedback Form

Reference Documents or Resources

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Blind Persons' Right Act, 1990 and Regulation 58

O. Reg. 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

8.0 REVIEW HISTORY

Version #	Date Mmm DD, YYYY	Description of Review or Revision
1	Nov 30, 2015	New policy <i>HR 6.04d Customer Service Standards (AODA)</i> .
2	Oct 31, 2019	New policy <i>HR. 6.05b Service Animals (AODA)</i> .
3	Jul 31, 2021	Reviewed and revised <i>HR. 6.05b Service Animals (AODA)</i> .
4	Oct 31, 2023	Reviewed and revised <i>HR 6.04d Customer Service Standards (AODA)</i> .
5	Jun 26, 2026	Reviewed and revised. Merged former <i>6.04d</i> and <i>6.05b</i> .