

<b>Department:</b>	Corporate Services	<b>Effective Date:</b>	2010-01-01
<b>Division:</b>	Financial Planning & Revenue Services	<b>Approval Level:</b>	Corporate
<b>Section/Function:</b>	Accessibility	<b>Revision #:</b>	N/A

## 1.0 PURPOSE

1.1. This procedure implements, in part, the City of Peterborough's Accessible Customer Service Policy. The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidelines for effective communication between Customer Service Representatives and people with disabilities.

## 2.0 APPLICATION

2.1. This procedure applies to:

- a.) Every Customer Service Representative (CSR).
- b.) Anyone who participates in developing City policies, practices, and procedures governing the provision of City goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.
- c.) Premises, where City goods or services are offered, to which the public or other third parties have access.
- d.) Managers/supervisors of facilities and service areas where City goods or services are provided who are responsible for ensuring compliance with this procedure.

## 3.0 DEFINITIONS/ACRONYMS (As Required)

**Agent** – A person or business providing goods or services on behalf of the City through a contract or agreement.

**Assistive Device** - A device that is used by people with disabilities to help with daily living, including cognition aids, communication aids, medical aids, and personal mobility aids. Examples include: wheel chairs, walkers, white canes, oxygen tanks, portable chalkboards, and electronic communication devices.

**City** – The Corporation of the City of Peterborough.

**City Goods or Services** – Goods or services provided by the City or an agent on behalf of the City.

## COMMUNICATING AND INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**Customer Service Representative (CSR)** – An employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise who, on behalf of the City, provides or oversees the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

**Disability** – "Disability" as defined in the Human Rights Code, means:

(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; ("handicap").

**Service Animal** - An animal that is readily apparent to be used by a person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or if the person provides documentation from a health care practitioner confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to his or her disability.

**Support Person** – A person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to assist the person with a disability with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

**Third Party** – A representative of a business or organization who is receiving City goods or services or acting in an official capacity. Examples include: Provincial inspectors, vendors, or local media.

### 4.0 PROCEDURE

#### 4.1. The following topics are covered under this Section:

- 4.2 Providing Customer Service to People with Disabilities
- 4.3 How to Provide Customer Service to People with Specific Disabilities
  - 4.3 a) Physical Disabilities
  - 4.3 b) Hearing Disabilities

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- 4.3 c) Deaf-Blindness Disabilities
  - 4.3 d) Visual Disabilities
  - 4.3 e) Intellectual Disabilities
  - 4.3 f) Speech Disabilities
  - 4.3 g) Learning Disabilities
  - 4.3 h) Mental Health Disabilities
  - 4.3 i) Smell Disabilities
  - 4.3 j) Touch Disabilities
  - 4.3 k) Taste Disabilities
  - 4.3 l) Other Disabilities
- 4.4 Serving People with Disabilities on the Telephone

The following resources are available as appendices to this procedure:

Appendix A Acceptable Terminology Chart

### 4.2. Providing Customer Service to People with Disabilities

CSRs will use reasonable efforts to ensure that customer service is consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

CSRs will consider the following when providing service to people with disabilities:

- Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Use tolerance, optimism and a willingness to find a way to communicate.
- Smile and relax.
- Don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities a person has.
- If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "How may I help you?". Offer to help — don't just jump in. Your customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- Some disabilities are not visible. Take the time to get to know your customers' needs.
- Find a good way to communicate. A good start is to listen carefully.
- If you can't understand what your customer is saying, just politely ask again.
- Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Look at your customer, but don't stare. Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their support person.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- Don't touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Be knowledgeable of best practices, accommodations and special services available

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### **4.3. How to Provide Customer Service to People with Specific Disabilities**

Each person with a disability may need a slightly different type of accommodation to receive City services. CSRs will communicate in a way that take a person's disability into account. They will provide customer service in a way that demonstrates an understanding of the typical needs of the following disabilities:

#### **4.3. a) Physical Disabilities**

Physical disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, to muscle weakness, tremors, and paralysis. Physical disabilities can be congenital such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendonitis. A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to:

- Perform manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key or gripping a doorknob.
- Move around independently.
- Control the speed or coordination of movements.
- Reach, pull, or manipulate objects.
- Have strength or endurance.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with physical disabilities, CSRs will:

- Avoid touching, moving, or leaning on wheelchairs or other mobility devices as they are part of the person's personal space.
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter.
- Step around a counter to provide service if it is too high or wide.
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.

#### **4.3. b) Hearing Disabilities**

Hearing disabilities can cause problems with distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds, or words. A person who is deaf, deafened or hard-of hearing may be unable to:

- Use a traditional public telephone.
- Understand speech in noisy environments.
- Pronounce words clearly enough to be easily understood.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with hearing disabilities, CSRs will:

- Direct their attention to the person with a hearing disability, instead of the person's interpreter.
- Write notes back and forth to share information, if necessary.
- Provide documents or images to provide information.
- Face the person and keep their hands and other objects away from their face and mouth.

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- Speak clearly at a moderate pace and avoid shouting.
- Verify that all parties understand what has been communicated.

### **4.3. c) Deaf-Blindness Disabilities**

Deaf-blindness disabilities involve a combination of hearing and vision loss. The result for a person who is deaf-blind is significant difficulty accessing information and performing daily activities. Deaf-blindness interferes with communication, learning, orientation, and mobility. People who are deaf-blind communicate using any combination of various sign language systems, Braille, telephone devices, and communication boards.

Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an intervener who relay information, facilitate auditory and visual information, and act as sighted guides.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with deaf-blindness disabilities, CSRs will:

- Start by verbally identifying themselves.
- Be patient and understand that communication may take some time.
- Direct their attention to the person with a deaf-blindness disability, instead of the person's intervener.
- Verify that all parties understand what has been communicated.

### **4.3. d) Visual Disabilities**

Visual disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity to total blindness. Vision loss can result in:

- Difficulty reading or seeing faces.
- Difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar places.
- Inability to differentiate colours or distances.
- A narrow field of vision.
- The need for bright light, or contrast.
- Night blindness.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with vision disabilities, CSRs will:

- Start by verbally identifying themselves.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.
- Avoid touching service animals – they are working animals.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, and location as necessary.
- Offer their arm to guide the person, without grabbing or pulling the person.

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### **4.3. e) Intellectual Disabilities**

Intellectual disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. A person with an intellectual disability may have difficulty with:

- Standard information, either written or spoken.
- Conceptual information.
- Perception of sensory information.
- Memory.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with intellectual disabilities, CSRs will:

- Use clear and simple language at a moderate pace.
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.
- Remember that the person is an adult and, unless otherwise determined, can make his or her own decisions.
- Be patient.
- Verify that all parties understand what has been communicated.

### **4.3. f) Speech Disabilities**

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical speech disabilities include problems with:

- Pronunciation.
- Pitch and loudness.
- Hoarseness or breathiness.
- Stuttering or slurring.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with speech disabilities, CSRs will:

- Communicate in a quiet environment, if possible, in order to better hear the customer.
- Give the customer full attention and avoid interrupting or finishing sentences.
- Ask the customer to repeat as necessary, or to write a message.
- Verify that all parties understand what has been communicated.

### **4.3. g) Learning Disabilities**

Learning disabilities are generally invisible and can result in a host of different communications difficulties for people. Learning disabilities include a range of disorders that affect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding, and processing. People with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in difficulties with:

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- Written communication.
- Problem solving.
- Time management.
- Way finding.
- Information processing.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with learning disabilities, CSRs will:

- Be patient and willing to find a way to communicate.
- Ask “How may I help you?”.
- Speak clearly and directly to the customer at a moderate pace.
- Respond to any requests for verbal information.
- Offer assistance in completing forms.
- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.
- Verify that all parties understand what has been communicated.

### **4.3. h) Mental Health Disabilities**

CSRs will not know that a customer has a mental health disability unless they are informed of it. Usually mental health disabilities will not affect customer service at all.

Mental health disabilities include a range of disorders, however there are three main types of mental health disabilities:

- Behavioral
- Anxiety
- Mood

If someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms, they may seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; be perceived as pushy or abrupt or be unable to make a decision.

To communicate and interact effectively with people with mental health disabilities, CSRs will:

- Treat each person as an individual - ask what would make him or her the most comfortable and respect his or her needs as much as possible.
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations.
- Stay calm and courteous and focus on the service they need and how to help, even if the person exhibits unusual behavior.

### **4.3. i) Smell Disabilities**

Smell disabilities can involve the inability to sense smells or a hypersensitivity to odors and smells. A person with a smelling disability may have allergies or sensitivities to certain odors, scents, or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.

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CSRs will not know that a customer has a smell disability unless they are informed of it. Usually smell disabilities will not affect customer service.

If a customer identifies that they have a smell disability, the CSR will ask “How may I help you?” and will make reasonable efforts to deliver service in a way that takes the person’s ability into account. For example, a customer with a sensitivity to scents may need to be served by an alternate CSR who is not wearing perfume.

### **4.3. j) Touch Disabilities**

Touch disabilities can affect a person’s ability to sense texture, temperature, vibration, or pressure. Touch sensations may be reduced or heightened. This could result in either a hypersensitivity to touch, temperature, or the opposite, numbness and the inability to feel touch sensations.

CSRs will not know that a customer has a touch disability unless they are informed of it. Usually touch disabilities will not affect customer service.

If a customer identifies that they have a touch disability, the CSR will ask “How may I help you?” and will make reasonable efforts to deliver service in a way that takes the person’s ability into account. For example, a customer with a sensitivity to temperature may need to be served in an alternate location that is more temperate.

### **4.3. k) Taste Disabilities**

Taste disabilities can limit the experience of the four primary taste sensations - sweet, bitter, salty, and sour. A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify spoiled food or noxious substances.

CSRs will not know that a customer has a taste disability unless they are informed of it. Usually taste disabilities will not affect customer service.

If a customer identifies that they have a taste disability, the CSR will ask “How may I help you?” and will make reasonable efforts to deliver service in a way that takes the person’s ability into account. For example, a customer with a taste disability may need a CSR to confirm the freshness of a food item.

### **4.3. l) Other Disabilities**

Other disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses, and diseases including ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDs, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement.

CSRs may not know that a customer has another disability unless they are informed of it.

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If a customer identifies that they have another disability, the CSR will ask “How may I help you?” and will make reasonable efforts to deliver service in a way that takes the person’s ability into account. For example, a customer with heart disease may need a chair to sit during lengthy transactions.

### **4.4. Serving People with Disabilities on the Telephone**

To communicate effectively with people with disabilities on the telephone, CSRs will:

- Speak clearly and directly.
- Concentrate on what is being said.
- Be patient and not interrupt or finish the person’s sentences. Give the customer time to explain him/herself.
- Ask the customer to clarify if the CSR does not understand - avoid guessing what the customer is saying.
- If uncertain what was said, repeat or rephrase what they have heard.
- If a telephone customer is using an interpreter or a TTY line, direct your conversation to the customer through the interpreter or TTY.
- If the customer has great difficulty communicating, offer to make arrangements to call back when it’s convenient to speak to a support person.

## **5.0 APPENDIX, RELATED DOCUMENTS & LINKS**

### **5.1. Pertinent Resources:**

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)

[Accessibility Standards for Customer Service \(Ontario Regulation 429/07\)](#)

[How to Talk About Disabilities – Choose the Right Word](#)

[Human Rights Code](#)

### **5.2. Related Policies:**

Accessible Customer Service Policy

### **5.3. Related Procedures:**

Accessible Customer Service Training 0020-P01

Assistive Devices and Services for People with Disabilities Procedure 0020-P02

Feedback for Accessible Customer Service Procedure 0020-P04

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Availability of Accessible Customer Service Documents Procedure 0020-P05

Service Animals for People with Disabilities Procedure 0020-P06

Support Persons for Persons with Disabilities Procedure 0020-P07

Temporary Service Disruptions Procedure 0020-P08

### 5.4. Related Forms:

N/A

### 5.5. Miscellaneous:

Plain Language Writing Tips

## 6.0 AMENDMENTS/REVIEWS

		Next Review Date:	July 2015
Date (yyyy-mm-dd)	Section # Amended	Comments	
2010-02-10		Procedure approved by Administrative Staff Committee through Report CPFPRS10-005 – Accessible Customer Service Procedures.	

## COMMUNICATING AND INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### APPENDIX A Acceptable Terminology

To communicate and interact effectively with people with disabilities, CSRs will remember to put a person first - it is proper to say a person with a disability, rather than a disabled person.

CSRs will use the following preferred terms when communicating with or about people with disabilities:

Instead of...	Please use...
Afflicted by cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.	Person who has cerebral palsy. Person who has multiple sclerosis. Person who has arthritis, etc. Person with a disability.
Aged (the)	Seniors
Autistic	A person with autism. A person who has autism.
Birth defect, congenital defect, deformity	A person who has a congenital disability. A person with a disability since birth.
Blind (the)	A person who is blind. A person with a vision disability. A person with vision loss. A person with a visual impairment A person with low vision.
Brain damaged	A person with a brain injury. A person with a head injury.
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound	A person who uses a wheelchair.
Crazy, insane, lunatic, psycho, mental, mental patient, maniac, neurotic, psychotic, unsound mind, schizophrenic	A person with a mental health disability. A person who has depression. A person with schizophrenia.
Cripple, crippled, lame	A person with a disability. A person with a mobility impairment or, more specifically, a person who walks with crutches. A person who uses a walker. A person who uses a mobility aid. A person with arthritis, etc.
Deaf (the), hearing impaired (the)	A person who is deaf (person with profound hearing loss who communicates using sign language.) A person who is deafened (deaf later in life.) A person who is hard of hearing (person with hearing loss who communicates primarily by speech.) A person with a hearing loss.

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	When referring to the deaf community and their culture (whose preferred mode of communication is sign language) it is acceptable to use "the Deaf."
Deaf and dumb, deaf mute	A person who is deaf without speech.
Deaf-Blind (the)	Person who is deaf-blind (person who has any combination of visual and auditory impairments.)
Differently Abled	A person with a disability.
Disabled (the)	People with disabilities.
Elderly (the)	Seniors, older adults.
Epileptic	Person who has epilepsy.
Fits, spells, attacks	Seizures.
Handicapped (the)	Person with a disability. The term handicapped may be used when referring to an environmental or attitudinal barrier as in "a person who is handicapped by a set of stairs leading to the entrance."
Hidden disability	Non-visible disability.
Invalid	Person with a disability.
Learning disabled, learning disordered, the dyslexics	A person with a learning disability or people with learning disabilities.
Mentally retarded, idiot, simple, retarded, feeble minded, imbecile	A person with an intellectual disability. A person with a developmental disability.
Midget, Dwarf	A person of short stature. A person who has a form of dwarfism. A little person. A person diagnosed with "Achondroplasia, SED, or what ever their specific diagnoses is", a form of dwarfism.
Mongoloid, Mongolism	Person with Down Syndrome. One can use this terminology only when it is directly relevant. A person with an intellectual or developmental disability.
Normal	Person who is not disabled. Person who is able bodied. Specifically, a person who is sighted, a hearing person, a person who is ambulatory.
Patient	Person with a disability. The word patient may be used when referring to a relationship between a medical professional and a client.
Physically challenged	Person with a physical disability.
Spastic	Person who has muscle spasms.
Stutterer	A person with a speech impairment or impediment.
Victim of/suffers from/ stricken with cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, etc.	Person who has cerebral palsy. Person who has multiple sclerosis, etc. Person with a disability.
Visually impaired (the)	A person with low vision. A person with vision loss. A person with a vision disability.