

County of Essex Policy Manual

Accessible Customer Service

Policy Number:	09-001
Approved by:	County Council
Department:	All Departments
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1.0 Purpose:

- 1.1 The County of Essex is committed to being responsive to the needs of all its residents and visitors. To do this, we must recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents and visitors by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all. As a provider of goods and services, the County of Essex is committed to ensuring its goods and services are provided in an accessible manner.
- 1.2 The County of Essex will promote accessibility through the development of policies, procedures and practices and by ensuring they consider people with disabilities. To do this we will make reasonable efforts to ensure the policies, procedures and practices address integration, independence, dignity and equal opportunity.

2.0 Principles:

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the following:

- 2.1 That goods and services be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

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- 2.2 The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or permanently, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods and services.
- 2.3 Persons with disabilities will be given an equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from the goods and services.

3.0 Definitions:

3.1 Person with Disabilities

For the purpose of this policy 'disability' is defined according to the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) as:

- 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, 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 developmental disability,
- 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](#).

3.2 Service Animals

For the purpose of this policy, a 'service animal' is defined as either:

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- a) A "guide dog," as defined in Section 1 of the [Blind Persons Rights' Act](#); or
- b) A "service animal" for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,
- c) If it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for the reasons relating to his or her disability; or
- d) If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

3.3 Support Person

For the purpose of this policy, a support person is defined as another person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help him or her with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

4.0 Scope:

- 4.1 Applies to all departments, divisions, or sections within the Corporation.
- 4.2 Applies to all employees, unionized and non-unionized.
- 4.3 Applies to all volunteers and contractors who interact with the public on behalf of the Corporation

5.0 Procedures and Practices:

- 5.1 Departmental procedures and practices will strive to reflect or achieve the following:
- 5.2 Communications will be considered in a manner that takes into consideration a person's disability.
- 5.3 Staff, volunteers and contractors who interact with the public or who are involved in the development of policies, practices and procedures regarding the provision of goods or services for the Corporation will receive appropriate training.

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- 5.4 Persons with disabilities accompanied by a guide dog or service animal will be permitted in those areas of the premises owned or operated by the County of Essex that are typically open to the public unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. Where a service animal is excluded by law, the County shall ensure that other measures are available to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the provider's goods, services or facilities.
- 5.5 The County may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if, after consulting with the person with a disability and considering the available evidence, the County determines that,
- a) a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises; and
 - b) there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and the health or safety of others on the premises.
- 5.5.1 If the County requires a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, the County shall waive payment of the amount, if any, payable in respect of the support person's admission to the premises or in connection with the support person's presence on the premises.
- 5.6 Persons with disabilities accompanied by a support person will be permitted to be accompanied by that support person in premises normally open to the public.
- 5.7 If an amount is payable by a person for admission to the premises or in connection with a person's presence at the premises, the County will ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, payable in respect to the support person.
- 5.8 Notice will be provided when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access the County of Essex services are temporarily disrupted.

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- 5.9 The County of Essex will establish a feedback process to allow people to provide feedback on whether the County is providing accessible goods and services.
- 5.10 The County of Essex acknowledges that persons with disabilities may elect to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by the County of Essex.

6.0 Feedback Process:

- 6.1 Should a member of the public wish to make a complaint regarding the accessible provision of goods or services they have received:
- a) The member of the public can advise the County of Essex of their complaint or concern through any of the following means:
- Make a submission through the on-line feedback form available on the County of Essex website www.countyofessex.ca;
 - Send an e-mail outlining the nature of the complaint or concern to the following e-mail address: accessibility@countyofessex.ca;
 - Contact by telephone the Department Head or designate responsible for delivering the goods or services for which there is a complaint or comment;
 - Attend the office and meet the Department Head or designate responsible for delivering the goods or services for which there is a complaint or comment;
- b) A response will be provided to anyone providing a complaint or comment regarding the provision of accessible goods and services, in the same manner as the complaint or comment was received, within 30 days.
- c) If deemed appropriate, a complaint or comment regarding the provision of accessible goods and services may be directed to the Essex County Accessibility Advisory Committee for recommendations on how to address the complaint or comment.

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- d) If agreement on the resolution of a complaint cannot be reached between the appropriate Department Head or designate and the complainant, the matter will be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer for disposition.
- e) If the Chief Administrative Officer is unable to provide a satisfactory resolution to the complaint, the complainant has the option of presenting the complaint to County Council for final disposition.

7.0 Service Disruption

- 7.1 If, in order to obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods or services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services (for example, elevators) and if there is a planned temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, the County of Essex shall give notice of the disruption to the public.
- 7.2 Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or service, if any, that are available
- 7.3 Notice will be given by posting the information about the service disruption at a conspicuous place on premises owned and operated by the County of Essex, as well as by posting the information on the County of Essex website (www.countyofessex.on.ca) and providing audio messages by the automated telephone attendant for the facility where the service disruption is going to take place. If deemed appropriate and time permits, planned disruptions of services may also be published in local newspapers and broadcast on local radio stations.
- 7.4 If a temporary service disruption of the website is planned, advance notice to the extent possible, keeping with the conditions of the service disruption [section](#) of this policy, shall be provided.
- 7.5 In the event of an unplanned service disruption, notice will be given as soon as feasibly possible in the manner described in [Section 7.3](#).

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8.0 Format of Documents:

- 8.1 Should the County of Essex be requested to provide a copy of a document to a person with a disability, the County of Essex shall give the person the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.
- 8.2 Material printed in-house and publications produced on behalf of the Corporation of the County of Essex should contain a note indicating "alternate formats are available upon request" and include relevant contact information.
- 8.3 The County of Essex will consult the person requesting the document to determine what an accessible alternate format of the document or information would be, in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
- 8.4 The time frame attached to the conversion process varies depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents and number of documents to be converted. Documents shall be returned in a timely manner depending on the factors previously noted.
- 8.5 Conversion shall be processed in-house wherever possible. When a member of the public requests a County document, or portion thereof, in an alternate format, the department of origin shall be responsible for the cost of the conversion, materials and distribution, not the public requestor.
- 8.6 In-house printing, where possible, should adhere to the CNIB's Clear Print Standards or any subsequent accessible information and communication policies. (See Appendix A)

9.0 Training:

- a) Training shall take place as soon as practicable and on-going whenever there are policy changes.
- b) The County of Essex shall ensure that the following persons are trained on the policies, practices and procedures

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establishing the accessible provision of its goods and services to persons with disabilities:

- c) Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.
- d) Every person who participates in developing the County's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

9.1 This training will include a review of the purposes of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) and the requirements of this policy and instruction about the following matters:

- a) How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities, as outlined in this policy and associated practices and procedures.
- b) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person, as outlined in this policy and associated practices and procedures.
- c) How to use equipment or devices available on premises owned or leased by the County of Essex otherwise provided by the County of Essex that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
- d) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing goods or services provided by the County of Essex.

9.2 The County of Essex will log and maintain records which will record the details of the training provided, as well as the name of the person, location, and date the training was completed.

10.0 Assistive Devices:

10.1 The County of Essex acknowledges that persons with disabilities may elect to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use

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or benefit from the goods and services offered by the County of Essex.

- 10.2 Should a person with a disability be unable to access the County's goods and services through the use of their own personal assistive device, the County of Essex will ensure the following measures:
- a) Determine if the provision of the good or service is inaccessible, based upon the individual's requirements.
 - b) Assess potential accessible service delivery options to meet the needs of the individual.
 - c) Notify the person with a disability of an alternative method of providing the goods or service and how they can access the alternative, temporarily or on a permanent basis.

11.0 Clear Print – Accessibility Guidelines

Readability shouldn't be an afterthought when producing materials.

It should be the first step in making your merchandise, service, location or information accessible to everyone.

Keep Clear Print guidelines in mind as you design your products and you'll reach a wider audience.

11.1 **Contrast**

Use high contrast colours for text and background.

Good examples are black or dark blue text on a white or yellow background, or white/yellow text on a black/dark blue background.

11.2 **Type Colour**

Printed material is most readable in black and white.

If using coloured text, restrict it to things like titles, headlines or highlighted material.

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11.3 **Point Size**

Bigger is better. Keep your text large, preferably between 12 and 18 points, depending on the font (point size varies between fonts).

Consider your audience when choosing point size.

11.4 **Leading**

Leading is the space between lines of text and should be at least 25 to 30 per cent of the point size.

This lets readers move more easily to the next line of text.

Heavier typefaces will require slightly more leading.

11.5 **Font Family and Font Style**

Avoid complicated or decorative fonts.

Choose standard fonts with easily-recognizable upper and lower-case characters.

Arial and Verdana are good choices.

11.6 **Font Heaviness**

Opt for fonts with medium heaviness and avoid light type with thin strokes.

When emphasizing a word or passage, use a bold or heavy font. Italics or upper-case letters are not recommended.

11.7 **Letter Spacing**

Don't crowd your text: keep a wide space between letters.

Choose a monospaced font rather than one that is proportionally spaced.

11.8 **Margins and Columns**

Separate text into columns to make it easier to read, as it requires less eye movement and less peripheral vision.

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Use wide binding margins or spiral bindings if possible.

Flat pages work best for vision aids such as magnifiers.

11.9 **Paper Finish**

Use a matte or non-glossy finish to cut down on glare.

Reduce distractions by not using watermarks or complicated background designs.

11.10 **Clean Design and Simplicity**

Use distinctive colours, sizes and shapes on the covers of materials to make them easier to tell apart.