



Accessible Customer Service Policy

March 2012

westofwindsor.com

Approved by: WEST Board of Directors

September 19, 2022

Manual:	Accessibility Standards	Issued:	March 16, 2012
Section:	Administration	Effective:	March 28, 2012
Subject:	Accessible Customer Service Policy	Pages:	9
Issue to:	All Manual Holders	Replaces:	Accessible Customer Service Plan September 2011
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors (approved in	Date:	March 28, 2012
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 30, 2013
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 29, 2014
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 21, 2015
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 19, 2016
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	January 16, 2017
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 25, 2017
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 24, 2018
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 16, 2019
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	November 16, 2020
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 27, 2021
Approved by:	WEST Board of Directors	Date:	September 19, 2022

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Policy Statement

1. Policy

1.1. Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc. (WEST Inc.) will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures. Training will be provided as soon as practicable after an individual assumes responsibilities related to the public and will include the following:

- a) The purposes of the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act** and the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service;
- b) Information regarding WEST Inc. policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standards;
- c) How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- d) What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing your goods or services;
- e) How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device, service animal or support person;
- f) How to use the equipment or assistive devices that may be available in WEST Inc.

The amount and format of training will be tailored to suit each person's interactions with the public or his/her involvement in the development of policies, practices and procedures.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this Statement of Policy and Procedure is that WEST Inc. is required to provide training to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and others who deal with the public on WEST Inc.'s behalf. WEST Inc. must also train all others who are involved in the development of policies, practices and procedures.

2.2. This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of WEST Inc. including when the provision of goods and services occurs off the premises of WEST Inc.

3.2. This policy shall also apply to all persons who participate in the development of the WEST Inc.'s policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to members of the public or third parties.

4. **Responsibility**

- 4.1. It is the responsibility of managers, immediate supervisors and department heads to ensure that all employees follow the guidelines set out in this policy.
- 4.2. Each manager, immediate supervisor and department head is responsible to ensure all employees are trained under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and this policy, practices and procedure.

5. **Definitions**

- 5.1. **“Assistive Device”** is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them such as a wheelchair, walker or a personal oxygen tank that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.
- 5.2. **“Disability”** the term disability as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:
 - 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 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.
- 5.3. **“Guide Dog”** is a highly-trained working dog that has been trained at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the *Blind Persons’ Rights Act*, to provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind.
- 5.4. **“Service Animal”** as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:
 - a. It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
 - b. If the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.
- 5.5. **“Service Dog”** as reflected in *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562* a dog other than a guide dog for the blind is a service dog if:

- a. It is readily apparent to an average person that the dog functions as a service dog for a person with a medical disability;
- b. Or the person who requires the dog can provide on request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires a service dog.

5.6. **“Support Person”** as reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, a support person means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods and services.

6. **General Principles**

In accordance with the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, this policy addresses the following:

6.1. Provision of Goods and Services

WEST Inc. will make every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- a. Ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality;
- b. Allowing customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- c. Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- d. Taking into account individual needs when providing goods and services; and
- e. Communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

6.2. Assistive Devices

Customer's own Assistive Device(s):

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services provided by WEST Inc.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, open flames and oxygen tanks cannot be near one another. Therefore, the accommodation of a customer with an oxygen tank may involve ensuring the customer is in a location that would be considered safe for both the customer and business.

6.3. Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. “No pet” policies do not apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs.

Food Service Areas:

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by guide dog or service dog will be allowed access to food service areas that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law.

Other types of service animals are not permitted into food service areas due to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*.

Exclusion Guidelines:

If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law (see applicable laws below) WEST Inc. will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services, when possible (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

Applicable Laws:

Food Safety and Quality Act 2001, Ontario Regulation 31/05: Animals not intended for slaughter or to be euthanized are not allowed in any area or room of a meat plant. It also makes an exception for service dogs to allow them in those areas of a meat plant where food is served, sold or offered for sale to customers and in those areas that do not contain animals or animal parts and are not used for the receiving, processing, packaging, labelling, shipping, handling or storing of animals or parts of animals.

The *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 562 Section 60*, normally does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. It does allow guide dogs and service dogs to go into places where food is served, sold or offered for sale. However, other types of service animals are not included in this exception.

Dog Owners' Liability Act, Ontario: If there is a conflict between a provision of this Act or of a regulation under this or any other Act relating to banned breeds (such as pitbulls) and a provision of a by-law passed by a municipality relating to these breeds, the provision that is more restrictive in relation to controls or bans on these breeds prevails.

Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability, WEST Inc. may request verification from the customer.

Verification may include:

- a. A letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- b. A valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or,
- c. A certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

Care and Control of the Animal:

The customer that is accompanied by a guide dog, service dog and/or service animal is responsible for maintaining care and control of the animal at all time.

Allergies:

If a health and safety concern presents itself for example in the form of a severe allergy to the animal, WEST Inc. will make all reasonable efforts to meet the needs of all individuals.

6.4. Support Persons

If a customer with a disability is accompanied by a support person, WEST Inc. will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person.

There may be times where seating and availability prevent the customer and support person from sitting beside each other. In these situations WEST Inc. will make every reasonable attempt to resolve the issue.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the customer, prior to any conversation where confidential information might be discussed.

Admission Fees

If payment is required by a support person for admission to the premises WEST Inc. will ensure that notice is given in advance by posting notice of admission fees for support persons where WEST Inc. fees are posted.

6.5. Notice of Disruptions in Service

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of WEST Inc. In the event of any temporary disruptions to facilities or services that customer's with disabilities rely on to access or use WEST Inc.'s goods or services, reasonable efforts will be made to provide advance notice. In some circumstances such as in the situation of unplanned temporary disruptions, advance notice may not be possible.

Notifications will Include:

In the event that a notification needs to be posted the following information will be included unless it is not readily available or known:

- a. goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable
- b. reason for the disruption
- c. anticipated duration
- d. a description of alternative services or options

Notifications Options:

When disruptions occur WEST Inc. will provide notice by:

- a. Posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the WEST Inc. website;
- b. Contacting customers with appointments;
- c. Verbally notifying customers when they are making a reservation or appointment; or
- d. By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

6.6. Customer Feedback

WEST Inc. shall provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to customers with disabilities. Information about the feedback process will be readily available to all customers and notice of the process will be made available by being posted on the Health and Safety bulletin board. Feedback forms along with alternate methods of providing feedback such as verbally (in person or by telephone) or written (hand written, delivered, website or email), will be available upon request.

Submitting Feedback

Customers who wish to provide feedback by completing an onsite customer feedback form or verbally can do so to any WEST Inc. employee. Any employee receiving feedback from a client must forward this information to the Human Resources Department immediately.

Customers that provide formal feedback will receive acknowledgement of their feedback, along with any resulting actions based on concerns or complaints that were submitted.

6.7. Training

Training will be provided to:

- a. All employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of WEST Inc.; for example: salespersons, drivers, vendors, event operators, call centers and third party marketing agents; and,
- b. Those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions

As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- a. A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- b. A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.
- c. Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

- d. Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - i. Use assistive devices;
 - ii. Require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal; or
 - iii. Require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- e. Instructions on how to use equipment or devices that are available at our premises or that we provide that may help people with disabilities.
- f. Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your services.
- g. WEST Inc.'s policies, procedures and practices pertaining to providing accessible customer service to customers with disabilities.

Training Schedule

WEST Inc. will provide training as soon as practicable. Training will be provided to new employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractor who deal with the public or act on our behalf during orientation. Revised training will be provided in the event of changes to legislation, procedures and/or practices.

Record of Training

WEST Inc. will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the number of employees who attended the training.

6.8. Notice of Availability and Format of Documents

WEST Inc. shall notify customers that the documents related to the *Accessibility Standard for Customer Service* are available upon request and in a format that takes into account the customer's disability. Notification will be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place owned and operated by WEST Inc., the WEST Inc.'s website and/or any other reasonable method.

7. **Administration**

If you have any questions or concerns about this policy or its related procedures please contact:

Rose Anguiano Hurst, WEST Inc. Executive Director
Director@westofwindsor.com
 519-256-6621 ext. 222

Amendment to Accessible Customer Service Policy

(Approved by Board of Directors January 16, 2017)

To add the following to **Accessible Customer Service Policy**

5.0 Definitions

5.7 “**Accessible Formats**” Include but are not limited to large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

5.8 “**Communication Supports**” Include but are not limited to captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

6.0 General Principles

6.9 Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

Unless deemed unconvertible, Women’s Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities, upon request. Accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and at no additional cost to the individual.

Women’s Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. will take into account the person's accessibility needs when customizing individual requests and shall consult with the individual making the request to ensure suitability.

Women’s Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. will make the availability of accessible formats and communication supports publicly known.

6.9.1 Exceptions

The Information and Communications Standard does not apply to:

- Products and product labels;
- Unconvertible information or communications; or
- Information that the organization does not control either directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship.

6.9.2 Unconvertible Information or Communications

If it is determined, in consultation with the requesting party, that information or communications are unconvertible, Women’s Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. will ensure that the individual who made the request is provided with an explanation and a summary of the information.

Women’s Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. will classify information or communications as unconvertible where:

- It is not technically practicable to convert; or
- The technology required to make the conversion is not readily available.

6.10 Recruitment, Assessment and Selection

- Women's Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. will notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for job applicants who have disabilities. Applicants will be informed that these accommodations are available, upon request, for the interview process and for other candidate selection methods. Where an accommodation is requested, Women's Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. will consult with the applicant and provide or arrange for suitable accommodation.
- Successful applicants will be made aware of Women's Enterprise Skills Training Of Windsor Inc. policies and supports for accommodating people with disabilities.