



Municipality of Whitestone Accessible Customer Service Policy

Ontario Human Rights Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Commitment

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone understands that obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone is committed to complying with both the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *AODA*.

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

Our accessible customer service policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Assistive devices

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our goods, services or facilities.

In cases where the assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern or may not be permitted for other reasons, other measures will be used to ensure the person with a disability can access our goods, services or facilities.

We will ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices we have on site or that we provide that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods, services or facilities.

Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. This may include the following:

Communicating with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth
- Speak clearly and don't raise your voice
- May use a sign language interpreter to communicate
- Always direct your attention to the person who is deaf not the interpreter
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information

Communicating with a Person who has a Vision Disability

- Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact
- If the person uses a service animal do not touch or approach the animal; it is working
- Verbally describe the setting, form and location as necessary
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull

Communicating with Persons who have a Speech Disability

- If possible, communicate in a quiet environment
- Give the person your full attention
- Don't interrupt or finish their sentences
- Ask them to repeat as necessary or to write their message
- Verify your understanding

Communicating with persons who are deaf-blind

- Direct your attention to your customer not the intervener
- Never suddenly touch a person who is deafblind or touch him or her without permission
- Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible

Communicating with Persons with Mental Health Disabilities

- Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations
- Stay calm and courteous, even if the customer exhibits unusual behaviour
- Focus on the service they need and how you can help
- Take the person away from the situation, noise and distractions to facilitate one on one service

Communicating with Persons with Learning Disabilities

- Learning disabilities are generally invisible and ability to function varies greatly
- Respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling in forms and so on with courtesy and only when asked
- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary

Communicating with Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

- Use clear, simple language
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information
- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions
- Be patient and verify your understanding

We will work with the person with a disability to determine what method of communication works for them.

Service animals

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask a person to provide documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

If service animals are prohibited by another law, we will do the following to ensure people with disabilities can access our goods, services or facilities:

- explain why the animal is excluded
- discuss with the customer another way of providing goods, services or facilities

Service animals are prohibited from the following areas:

The kitchen of the Dunchurch Community Centre and any other area where food preparation could be or is taking place.

Support Persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

- Fee/fare will not be charged for support persons.

In certain cases, the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone might require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for the health or safety reasons of:

- the person with a disability
- others on the premises

Before making a decision, the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone will:

- consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs
- consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence
- determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises

If the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone determines that a support person is required, we will waive the admission fee or fare [if applicable] for the support person

Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone will notify customers promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

The notice will be made publicly available in the following ways:

The Municipality of Whitestone Website
At the location of the disruption

Training

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone will provide accessible customer service training to:

- all Council members
- all employees and volunteers
- anyone involved in developing our policies

- anyone who provides goods, services or facilities to customers on our behalf.

Staff will be trained on accessible customer service within thirty days after being hired. Council and Volunteers will be trained on accessible customer service within sixty days of being appointed.

Training will include:

- purpose of the Accessibility for *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the customer service standard
- the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone's policies related to 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 equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities.
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone's goods, services or facilities

Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service policies.

Feedback Process

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns.

Customers who wish to provide feedback on the way the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone provides goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities can provide feedback in the following way(s):

- By telephone
- By email
- By letter or
- In person at the Municipal Office, 21 Church Street, Dunchurch Ontario

All feedback, including complaints, will be handled in the following manner:

The Municipality of Whitestone Complaint Handling Policy (dated September 2016 as amended or updated from time to time) and will be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk

Customers can expect to hear back as follows:

- Acknowledgement of the Complaint within 5 business days and
- A final response or update within 30 Calendar days

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone will make sure our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

Notice of Availability of Documents

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone will notify the public that documents related to accessible customer service, are available upon request by posting a notice in the following location(s)/way(s):

Municipal Web Site

The Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone will provide this document in an accessible format or with communication support, on request. We will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. We will provide the accessible format in a timely manner and, at no additional cost.

Modifications to this or other policies

Any policies of the Corporation of the Municipality of Whitestone that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.