

## Goal

The Ajax Public Library is the gateway to the information and recreational resources that meet the varying needs of all members of its communities within available resources. The Library is committed to using its services to provide all individuals, including those with disabilities, an equal opportunity to effectively use the Library in an independent, dignified manner. The following policy statement details the Library's Customer Service standards for community members with disabilities. This policy will be made available, upon request, to any member of the public, in a format suitable to the requestor.

### 1. Definitions

- a) **Accessible** - means that a program, activity, meeting, or any other event is readily available to an individual, regardless of his or her abilities. When used in reference to a facility, it means that a facility can be approached, entered, and used by any individual, regardless of his or her abilities.
- b) **Assistive Devices** – are products, equipment, or technological aids used by people with disabilities that help prevent, relieve, or neutralize a disability.
- c) **Disability** – as per the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) sec. 2, “disability” 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*.

The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as invisible disabilities, and disabilities for which the effects may come and go.

- d) **Multiple Formats** – means a form of communicating information that may be: oral; written; in sign language; recorded; through computer technology; or, other means that are readily understandable to, and usable by a person, regardless of his or her disability.
- e) **Personal Assistive Devices** – are products, equipment or technological aids used by people with disabilities that help prevent, relieve, or neutralize a disability. Such devices include, but are not limited to: walkers, magnification devices, or personal oxygen tanks.

- f) **Service Animal** – an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if: it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or, if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability. Service animals may be used by people with low vision, low hearing, autism, mental health disabilities, and/or physical or dexterity disabilities.
- g) **Support Person** – in relation to a person with a disability, a support person is someone who accompanies him or her in order to assist with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs.
- h) **Third Party** – An individual or group who is not a member of the public or service user. A third party may be a volunteer or agent of the municipality, a temporary support staff, a technician, a business associate and/or any other stakeholder who is not an employee or service user.

## 2. Customer Service Standards

### 2.1 Accessibility to Library Services and Facilities

- a) The Library will permit people with disabilities to enter Library facilities accompanied by a service animal except where excluded by applicable law (for example, the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990* or the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001*). Where a service animal is excluded by law, the Library will make reasonable efforts to ensure access to Library goods and services are provided by alternative means. A customer who is accompanied by a service animal shall be considerate of the health and safety of themselves and others.
- b) The Library will permit people with disabilities to enter Library facilities accompanied by a support person. The Library will not prevent any person with a disability from having full access to his or her support personnel while s/he is in any branch of the Library.

The Library may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of other persons in the Library. The Library will not make such a requirement without consulting the person with the disability and only after considering the following situations:

- i. When there is a significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or other persons in the Library;
- ii. That risk is greater than the risk associated with other customers;
- iii. That any potential risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means;

- iv. The assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the duration of the risk, the nature and severity of the potential harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm; and,
- v. The assessment of the risk is based upon the individual's actual characteristics, not merely on generalizations, misperceptions, ignorance, or fears about a disability.
- c) The Library will provide advance notice of fees payable for a Library service. The Library will waive program fees, when practicable, for support persons assisting clients.
- d) The Library will provide public notice of all temporary interruptions to the availability of Library services or facilities.
- e) The Library will make reasonable efforts to ensure that people with disabilities are able to use their personal assistive devices in Library facilities unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- f) The Library will ensure that Library staff have the proper training in order to effectively illustrate the use of the assistive equipment that the Library has available to assist people with disabilities.

## 2.2 Communications

The Library will make every effort to make its communications accessible by:

- i. Making original communications more accessible through plain language;
- ii. Changing the usual method of communication to meet an individual's need;
- iii. Through the use of assistive devices or services.

Additional details are outlined in Appendix "A" - Ensuring Accessible Communications

The Library will ensure that patrons are made aware of its *Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy*. The Coordinator of Marketing and Communications will publish the Library's *Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy* (AP-ADM-006) on the Library's website.

The Library will provide the *Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy*, upon request, in alternate formats and upon request, staff members will make print copies of the *Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy*, free of charge.

The Library will follow a process for receiving and responding, in a timely manner, to feedback about the manner in which it provides goods or services to persons with disabilities. The Library shall make information about the process readily available to the public. Additional details are outlined in Appendix "B" – Managing Feedback Regarding Library Accessibility.

## 2.3 Accessible Library Services

### a) Facility

The Library's four facilities are accessible to people using wheelchairs, scooters, or walkers. There are accessible parking spots close to the Libraries' entrances. The main entrances are at street level. There are automatic doors at all entrances. Aisles within the facility are large enough to accommodate wheelchairs and scooters. There is an elevator in the two storied Main Branch. There are accessible washrooms at all branches. Washroom fittings are at appropriate heights for patrons using a wheelchair. The sinks are equipped with hands free technology to facilitate ease of use. Most service desks are at a height which permits wheelchair/scooter approach.

### b) Collections

The Library's collection includes print materials in large print. There are also audio books and films, and other online accessible content, such as electronic databases, music, ebooks, e-audiobooks and movies. Some of the films are captioned and/or have described video. In partnership with CELA (the Centre for Equitable Library Access), the Library offers audiobooks that can be played on a Daisy Reader. Braille titles are affixed to the cases of CELA audio visual materials.

### c) Services

The Main Branch of the Library has a walker available for the use of patrons.

For customers with low or no vision, the Library offers the following services and resources: the use of a CCTV; and, a computer workstation with assistive software and hardware.

For customers with hearing and/or speech disabilities, the Library offers the use of an UbiDuo face-to-face communication device.

The Library delivers materials to customers who are temporarily, or permanently, homebound.

In the event of a disruption to Library services that negatively impacts the ability of persons with disabilities to use or benefit from the Library's services, the Library will provide notice of the disruption to the public. Disruptions that are planned will be advertised with reasonable advanced notice. Appendix "C" - Procedure to be Followed in the Event of Temporary Disruptions to Library Services outlines staff responsibilities during a service disruption.

### 3. Training

All members of staff, all volunteers, and all third parties, who deal with members of the public on behalf of the Library, will receive the appropriate level of training about the provision of Library goods and services to persons with disabilities.

All persons who participate in developing the Library's policies and procedures governing the provision of Library services to members of the public or other third parties will receive the appropriate level of training about the provision of Library goods and services to persons with disabilities.

The training will include:

- a) A review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the customer service standard;
- b) Instruction on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities;
- c) Instruction on how to interact with people with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, other service animal or a support person;
- d) Instruction on how to use equipment or devices available at the Library that may help people with disabilities access the Library's services; and,
- e) Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the Library's services.

Training will be provided to all new employees and volunteers as part of the orientation process. All existing employees will receive the appropriate training on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to the policies and procedures governing the provision of Library services to persons with disabilities.

A record of training provided to Library staff and volunteers, including the dates on which the training is provided, and the number of individuals to whom it is provided will be maintained.

Additional details are outlined in Appendix "D" – Training Regarding the Provision of Library Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities.

Appendix "A"

**Ensuring Accessible Communications**

**Goal**

The Ajax Public Library is committed to communicating with its customers so that all customers, including those with disabilities, are able to optimize their use of the Library's services. Library staff will:

**Make original communications more accessible**

Documents are to be written in easily understood language. The layout of documents will be designed for easy viewing and in an easily accessible font size and style.

The pages of the Library's website will be created so that they will be accessible to people using assistive software.

**Changing the usual method of communication to meet an individual's need**

When a customer with disabilities is unable to communicate with Library staff, or understand Library communications, staff will make every effort to determine the customer's preferred method of communication in a patient and respectful manner. Alternate methods of communication may include, but are not limited to: handwritten or typed communications for customers who are Deaf or hard of hearing; or, the use of assistive software when communicating with customers with low or no vision; or, reading documents out loud to customers with intellectual disabilities or to customers with low or no vision. Library staff will use the appropriate communication method that takes into account the person's disability in the particular situation.

**Through the use of assistive devices or services**

Library staff will be trained on the features of the Library's assistive devices in order to help customers with disabilities effectively communicate, or to optimize the use of the Library's services. This training will be part of the orientation process for new employees. Refresher training will be given periodically for existing staff.

Appendix "B"

**Managing Feedback Regarding Library Accessibility**

**Customer Feedback**

Customers will be encouraged to provide feedback regarding the Library's provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.

Feedback will be received: in person; by telephone, in writing; or by electronic text through email or on USB key.

All feedback received will be directed to the Chief Librarian and Executive Officer (CLEO) or his/her designate for review.

Upon review, the CLEO will decide if any further action is required. Further actions could include, but are not limited to: the purchase of assistive equipment; a change in the Library's policies, procedures, or practices; or, additional staff training, upon resource availability.

The CLEO, or his/her designate, will respond to customer feedback, if the customer has left his/her name, informing the customer of the action(s) taken. The response will be delivered using the communication method desired by the customer.

## Appendix "C"

### **Procedure to be Followed in the Event of Temporary Disruptions to Library Services**

#### **Notice of Disruption**

In the circumstance where any disruption to Library services, negatively impacts the ability of persons with disabilities to use or benefit from the Library's services, the Library will provide notice of the disruption to the public. Disruptions that are planned will be advertised with reasonable advanced notice.

Such disruptions may include, but are not limited to: problems with the Main Branch elevator that require it to be made in-operational; problems with the accessible washrooms that require them to be closed to the public; problems with the assistive hardware and software or the CCTV; and, problems with the electronics that operate the Library's doors.

The notice will be prepared by the in-charge person should a disruption occur.

The notice of the disruption must include the following pieces of information:

1. The reason for the disruption;
2. The anticipated duration of the disruption; and,
3. A description of alternative services, if any, that are available. Such alternative services may include information regarding the secondary accessible washrooms, or services that staff is able to directly assist with – such as the retrieval of material from the second floor when the elevator is not operating properly.

The Notice of Disruption (LIB-010) template must be used and is to be posted at the relevant branch entrance and on the Library's website, if possible.



## Appendix "D"

### **Training Regarding the Provision of Library Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities**

#### **Responsibility for Training**

It will be the responsibility of the Chief Librarian and Executive Officer (CLEO) or his/her designate to ensure that Library staff and volunteers receive the necessary training regarding the provision of library goods and services to persons with disabilities required by the Library's *Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy*, AP-ADM-006.

#### **Training Records**

The CLEO or his/her designate will ensure that permanent records of the training provided for members of the Library's staff and volunteers. The records will include the name, date, and training format.

This record will be updated, by the CLEO or his/her designate, each time an employee receives additional training.

Corporate Services staff will be responsible to maintain permanent records of the training provided for Library volunteers.

#### **Training of Staff**

All new staff members will undergo training as part of the orientation process. Training will include the reading of the *Accessible Customer Service Policy* and all the accompanying procedures. It will also include a discussion/explanation of the Policy and the accompanying procedures with the CLEO or his/her designate.

Existing staff members will also read the *Accessible Customer Service Policy* and all the accompanying procedures. At one or more staff meetings, the CLEO or his/her designate will discuss/explain the Policy and the accompanying procedures with all existing staff.

#### **Training of Volunteers**

The senior Management team will determine which Library volunteers interact with members of the public. All volunteers who interact with members of the public will receive appropriate training regarding the provision of Library goods and services to persons with disabilities.