



ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

BEST PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Providing Goods & Services to people with Disabilities

The Township of Wellesley will provide goods and services to people with disabilities with particular consideration to the areas contained in this Policy.



BACKGROUND

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario Legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province.

The AODA allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

One of the specific standards that has been developed, and made law, is the Accessible Customer Service Standard. This standard details specific requirements for all service providers.

In general, providers must deliver service in a way that preserves the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Providers must also integrate services and equal opportunity.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Customer Service Standards Policy is to fulfill the requirements set out in Regulation 429/07 to establish a policy for the Township of Wellesley for governing the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities.

STATEMENT

The Township of Wellesley shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles;

- The goods or services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.
- The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities, and others, will be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.
- Persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices and/or support persons in the access of goods and services.
- That the Township of Wellesley employees, when communicating with a person with a disability shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

APPLICATION

This policy shall apply to every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Township of Wellesley, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.



DEFINITIONS

“Accessibility Coordinator” shall mean the person appointed by Council as Accessibility Coordinator for the Township of Wellesley.

“Assistive devices” shall mean an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).

“Disabilities” shall mean the same as the definition of disability found in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Employees” shall mean every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the Township of Wellesley, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

“Persons with Disabilities” shall mean those individuals that are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Service Animals” shall mean any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

“Support persons” shall mean any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend to whom accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

EXCLUSIONS

This Accessibility Customer Service Standards Policy shall not apply during any period where Council has declared a “State of Emergency” as defined under the **Emergency Management Act**.

DOCUMENTATION

The Township of Wellesley shall, upon request, give a copy of the policies, practices and procedures required under the Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service to any person.

PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

To implement this policy, Senior Management shall:

- establish practices and procedures;
- evaluate practices and procedures;
- revise practices and procedures as required.



REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

The Accessibility Coordinator shall be responsible for the review process and any subsequent amendments to this policy document. Review and amendments shall take place within the **first year of each term of Council**.

BEST PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Accessible Customer Service follows four basic principles:

- Dignity
- Independence
- Integration
- Equal Opportunity

What can I do to help people with disabilities access our services?

- Ask how you can help
- Offer a variety of methods of communication
- Understand the nature and scope of the service you offer

FEEDBACK

Feedback from our customers gives the Township of Wellesley Council opportunities to learn and improve. The Township recognizes that the right of our customers to make a complaint, compliment or make suggestions on ways to improve our services. To assist the Township of Wellesley in ensuring that the delivery of goods and service to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the customer is invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, in person, e-mail, or telephone, addressed to:

CAO/Clerk, Susan Duke

E-mail: sduke@township.wellesley.on.ca

Telephone: 519.699.4611

Fax: 519.699.4540

In person, or in writing:

The Corporation of the Township of Wellesley

4639 Lobsinger Line, RR# 1

St. Clements, ON

N0B 2M0

The Accessibility Coordinator will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of feedback and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints.



SERVICE ANIMALS, SUPPORT PERSON(S)

What about service animals and support persons accompanying a person with a disability?

Service animals, such as guide dogs, offer independence and security to many people with various disabilities. Some laws generally prohibit animals in certain areas- such a food preparation areas; however service animal are permitted in most public situations. Support people assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an intervener sign language interpreter, or as a Personal Support Worker providing physical assistance. A support person may also be a friend or relative that will assist and support the customer.

- Every employee shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and/or services.
- Every employee shall allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal unless the animal is excluded by law. Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the persons with disabilities. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.
- When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting, or other harmful behaviour) an employee may ask the persons with disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods or services. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods or services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with disability.
- Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person while accessing goods and/or services.

ADMISSION FEES – ADVANCE NOTICE

In the event that admission fees are charged, advance notice concerning what admission, if any, would be charged to a support person shall be posted in a conspicuous place.



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SERVICE DISRUPTION - NOTICE

It is possible that from time to time there will be disruptions in service, such as an entrance way that is under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, or technology that is temporarily unavailable. If a disruption in service is planned, and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

People with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transit or arranging a ride. By providing notice, you can save that person an unnecessary trip.

Notice will be provided on the website and posted on Township of Wellesley owned or operated facilities.

UNEXPECTED DISRUPTION IN SERVICE - NOTICE

In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, notice may be provided in a variety of ways and will be done as quickly as possible.

In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by the service interruption shall be informed of any alternative methods.

TRAINING

- Every person who participates in developing the policy, practices and procedures under Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.
- Every person who deals with the public on behalf of the Township of Wellesley, Including 3rd parties i.e. employees, agents, volunteers, management.
- Current employees, agents, volunteers, management, etc. shall receive training by January 1, 2010.
- New employees, agents, volunteers, management, etc. shall receive training as soon as “practicable”, after being assigned.
- Ongoing training on changes to policies, procedures, and new equipments shall be provided. The method and amount of training shall be geared to the trainee’s role in terms of accessibility.

TRAINING RECORDS

Training records shall be kept, including the dates when the training is provided, number of individuals to whom the training was provided.



TERMINOLOGY

Talk about Disabilities – Choose the Right Word

Words can influence and reinforce the public's perception of people with disabilities,. They can create either a positive view of people with disabilities or an indifferent, negative depiction.

Here are some general tips that can help make your communication and interactions with or about people will all types of disabilities more successful:

- Use disability or disables, not handicap or handicapped
- Never use terms such as retarded, dumb, psycho, moron or crippled. These words are very demeaning and disrespectful to people with disabilities.
- Remember to put people first. It is proper to say person with a disability, rather than disabled person.
- If you don't know someone or if you are not familiar with the disability, it is better to wait until the individual describes his/her situation to you, rather than to make your own assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.

The following preferred words and phrases will help you choose language that is neither demeaning nor hurtful. People with disabilities prefer these items:

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.



INSTEAD OF:	PLEASE USE:
Blind (the), visually impaired (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. 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.
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."



INSTEAD OF:	PLEASE USE:
Blind (the), visually impaired (the)	
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 whatever their specific diagnosis 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 and 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 a visual impairment. A person with low vision. A person with vision loss. A person with a vision disability.



PHYSICAL disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through 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 task such as holding a pen; turning a key or grip a door knob
- Move around independently
- Control the speed or coordination of movements
- Reach, pull or manipulate objects
- Have strength or endurance

Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to your customer. Don't speak to someone who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things. As before you help.
- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, don't touch, move or lean on them.
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter.
- Provide your customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms etc).
- If a counter top is too high or wide, step around it to provide service.
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.
- Be Patient. Customers will identify their needs to you.



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

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

Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. Remember, customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may require assistive devices when communication.

Here are some tips on service customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing:

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout. Speak clearly.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- Deaf people may use sign language interpreter to communicate – always direct your attention to the Deaf person – not the interpreter.
- Any personal (eg. Financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.
- Don't touch service animals – they are working and to pay attention all the times.



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DEAF-BLINDNESS is 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 various sign language systems, Braille, telephone devices, communication boards and any combination thereof. Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an Intervener who relay information and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as a sighted guides.

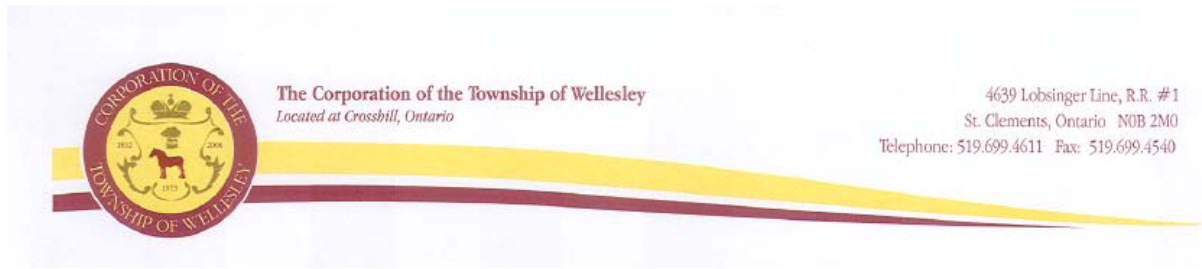
Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervener; a professional who helps with communicating.

Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hand of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some tips on serving customers who are deaf-blind:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them. do not touch or address the service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency.
- Understand that communication can take some time – be patient.
- Direct your attention to your customer, not the intervener.



VISION disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. 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.

Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

Vision disabilities can restrict your customers' abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Others may use a service animal or white cane.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have vision disabilities:

- 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, location as necessary.
- Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it is an emergency.
- Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Don't walk away without saying good bye.

INTELLECTUAL disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors such as Downs Syndrome, exposure to environmental toxins, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disorders. A person with an intellectual disorder may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken and written information
- Conceptual information
- Perception of sensory information
- Memory

Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These abilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or use body language.

As much as possible, treat your customers with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have an intellectual or developmental disability:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do
- Use clean, 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.
- If you can't understand what is being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant.



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

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

Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

Some people have problems communication. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Here are some tips on serving customer with speech or language impairments:

- If possible, communicate in a quiet environment.
- Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt until they finish their sentence.
- Ask them to repeat as necessary, or to write their message.
- Verify your understanding
- Patience, respect and willingness to find a way to communicate are the best tools.

LEARNING disabilities include a range of disorders that effect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding and processing. People with a learning disability have average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in:

- Difficulties in reading
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Way finding
- Processing information

Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

- Learning difficulties are generally invisible and ability to function varies greatly – respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling forms and so on with courtesy.
- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.

MENTAL HEALTH disabilities include a range of disorders however, there are these main types of mental health disabilities:

- Anxiety
- Mood
- Behavioral

People with mental health disabilities seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; be perceived as shy or abrupt; be unable to make decisions; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Best practices and procedures for Customer Service:

- Treat each person as an individual. 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 behavior, focus on the service they need and how you can help.



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

TOUCH disabilities can affect a person's ability to sense texture, temperature, vibration to pressure. Touch sensations may be reduced or heightened resulting in a hypersensitivity to touch, temperature, or the opposite, numbness and the inability to feel touch sensations.

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.

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.

Disabilities are not always visible or easy to Distinguish



ASSISTIVE DEVICES

The term “assistive devices” refers to an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (IE canes; crutches; wheelchairs or hearing aids). The following assistive aids are available within the Township of Wellesley:

1. Accessible Telephone Service

The Township of Wellesley Administration Office is scheduled to have a TTY machine installed by the end of 2009.

2. Electronic Door Openers

The following Township locations are equipped with electronic door openers:

- ✓ Township Administration Office
4639 Lobsinger Line
- ✓ Linwood Community Centre
5279 Ament Line, Linwood
- ✓ Wellesley Community Centre/Arena
1000 Maple Leaf Street, Wellesley
- ✓ St. Clements Community Centre/Arena
1 Green Street, St. Clements

(NOTE: Wellesley & St. Clements to have electronic door openers installed in 2010)

- ✓ Linwood Library
5279 Ament Line, Linwood

3. Accessible Parking & Accessible Ramps

- ✓ Township Administration Office
4639 Lobsinger Line
- ✓ Linwood Community Centre
5279 Ament Line, Linwood
- ✓ Wellesley Community Centre/Arena
1000 Maple Leaf Street, Wellesley
- ✓ St. Clements Community Centre/Arena
1 Green Street, St. Clements
- ✓ Linwood Library
5279 Ament Line, Linwood

4. Elevator

- ✓ St. Clements Community Centre
1 Green Street, St. Clements



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MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Municipalities must meet or exceed the accessibility requirements of the Municipal Elections Act and the barrier-free design requirements of the Ontario Building Code when address the accessibility of municipal voting facilities.

When making arrangements for municipal elections, the CAO/Clerk:

- ✓ Will provide election materials in accessible formats (upon request)
- ✓ Shall make such changes to some or all of the ballots as considered necessary or desirable to allow electors with visual impairments to vote without assistance
- ✓ Shall have regard to the need of the electors with disabilities when choosing a voting location
- ✓ Shall instruct a Deputy Returning Officer to attend on an elector anywhere within the are designated as the voting place, in order to allow a person with a disability to vote

COUNCIL MEETING & COMMITTEE MEETINGS held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The Council Chambers is scheduled for accessibility renovations 2009/2010.



USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS & SUPPORT PERSONS

Service animals, such as guide dogs, offer independence and security to many people with various disabilities. Some laws generally prohibit animals in certain areas (such as food preparation areas) however service animals are permitted in most public situations.

Support people assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an intervener, sign language interpreter, or as a Personal Support Worker providing physical assistance. A support person may also be a friend or relative that will assist and support the customer.

- Every employee shall use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and/or services.
- Every employee shall allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal unless the animal is excluded by law. Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded shall be explained to the persons with disabilities. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with the disability.
- When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting or other harmful behaviour) an employee may ask the person with the disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods and services. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods or services shall be explored with the assistance of the person with the disability.
- Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person while accessing good and/or services.



NOTICE OF DISRUPTION IN SERVICE

1. Temporary Disruption in Service

It is possible that from time to time there may be disruptions in service. If a disruption of service is planned, and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

People with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transportation or arranging a ride. By providing notice, you can save the person an unnecessary trip.

Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the Township of Wellesley, by posting it on the Township's website or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

2. Unexpected Disruption in Service

In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, notice may be provided in a variety of ways and will be done as quickly as possible.

In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted by service interruptions shall be informed of any alternative methods.

Note: A template Disruption of Service and Unexpected Disruption of Service Notice forms part of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy .