

RVCA Accessible Customer Service Policy

1. Rationale

The purpose of this Customer Service Standards Policy is to fulfill the requirements set out in Regulation 429/07, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, to establish a policy for Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) for governing the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities.

2. Policy

RVCA 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 is the same for all our clients unless an alternative method 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.
- RVCA employees and RVCA representatives, when communicating with a person with a disability, shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

3. Scope

This policy shall apply to every employee, volunteer, board member and anyone else who provides goods or services on behalf of the RVCA.

4. Responsibility

All employees and volunteers are required to undergo training and implement deliverables related to this policy. It is the responsibility of the immediate supervisor to ensure that all employees and volunteers follow the guidelines set out in this policy.

The Human Resource Specialist is responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure on-going compliance with regulated accessibility standards and legislated obligations.

5. Definitions

Assistive Device

A device used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of organizations covered by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07). Assistive devices may include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, oxygen tanks, and electronic communication devices.

Disabilities

- 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 service 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.

Service Animal

Any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

Support Person

Any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend that accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care of medical needs or with access to goods or services.

6. Procedure

RVCA is committed to excellence in serving all customers, including people with disabilities, and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

6.1 Communication:

When communicating with a person with a disability, the RVCA will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

Training will be provided to staff on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

6.2 Telephone services:

We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone services to our customers. We will train all staff, volunteers and others to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.

6.3 Assistive devices:

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the RVCA's goods and services. Exceptions may occur in situations where the RVCA has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability, the health and safety of others on the premises or the RVCA's facilities and natural habitat.

The RVCA may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures to assist them in obtaining, using and benefiting from the RVCA's goods and services, where the RVCA has such other measures available.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that their assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

6.4 Service Animals

A person with a disability may enter public sites owned or operated by the RVCA accompanied by a service animal, and may keep the animal with them if the public has access to such premises and the animal is not otherwise excluded by

law. If the service animal is excluded by law, the RVCA will ensure that alternative means are available to enable the person with disability to obtain, use or benefit from the RVCA goods and services.

If the animal cannot easily be identified as a service animal, we will ask the person to provide documentation from a regulated health professional.

We will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

6.5 Support Persons

A person with a disability may enter public sites owned or operated by the RVCA with a support person, and is entitled to be accompanied by the support person at all times while on the premises.

The RVCA may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on RVCA premises in situations where it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with the disability or the health and safety of others. Before making that decision, we will consult with the person to better understand their needs; we will consider health and safety reasons based on available evidence; and we will determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises.

In situations where privacy and consent issues are applicable, a support person may be subject to the same confidentiality requirements as the person with a disability that they are assisting. A support person may be required to sign a waiver with respect to any privacy or confidentiality issues.

In order to accommodate a person with a disability and their support person at an event where attendance is by pre-arranged seating, advanced booking may be required.

Admission requirements will be clearly posted on the RVCA website, and at the entrances and customer service areas of all applicable facilities.

Where an admission fee is charged to gain access to an event, facility, or service, and the revenue from the fee is payable directly to the RVCA, the support person is permitted to attend at no cost. For courses or training opportunities, a support person may attend at no cost; however, no certification will be provided.

6.6 Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

The RVCA is aware that the operation of its services and facilities is important to the public. However, temporary disruptions in the RVCA's services and facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the RVCA's control or knowledge.

The RVCA will provide notice of the disruption to the public, including:

- Information about the reason for the disruption;
- Its anticipated duration; and,
- A description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available.

Where the disruption to the service or facility is planned, the RVCA will provide notice in advance of the disruption. However, in the case where the disruption is unplanned, the RVCA will provide notice as soon as possible.

When temporary disruptions occur to the RVCA's services or facilities, the RVCA will provide notice by posting the information in relevant visible locations, on the RVCA website (www.rvca.ca), and/or by any other method that is reasonable and applicable under the circumstances. Other methods of notification may include e-mail messages to stakeholders, and the use of various forms of local media.

6.7 Training

The RVCA will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies are trained as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07).

The content of the training will include:

- A review of the purposes of the AODA;
- The requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07);
- Instruction on the RVCA policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities;
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the RVCA goods or services;
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or who require the assistance of a support person or service animal; and,

- Information about the equipment or devices available on the RVCA premises that may help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Timeline for Training

New employees and volunteers will be trained within 30 days of their first day on the job. In-depth training for frontline staff will be completed as deemed necessary. As well, training will be done on a regular basis as updates become available and as deemed necessary.

Records of Training

RVCA's Human Resources Specialist will keep records of training delivered to employees, including the date on which training is provided, the names of individuals who participated and the nature of the training that is provided. Supervisors of volunteers will keep records of their training.

7. Feedback

The RVCA is committed to providing high quality goods and services to all members of the public it serves. Feedback from the public is welcomed, as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvements.

Feedback from a member of the public about the delivery of goods and services to persons with disabilities may be given by telephone, in person, in writing, in electronic format, or through other methods suggested by the person with the disability. All feedback will be directed to the Human Resources Specialist and the Director of Communications, and customers can expect an acknowledgment of their message normally within five (5) business days. Upon receipt, the matter will be investigated with the appropriate personnel and a written response will be provided within thirty (30) days.

Information about the feedback process will be readily available to the public, and notice of the process will be posted on the RVCA website and/or in other relevant locations. Clients wishing an alternative method of providing feedback can contact the Director of Communications.

8. Availability of documents

All documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429-07)*, including the RVCA Accessibility Customer Service policies, procedures and practices, notices of temporary disruptions, training records, and written feedback process are available upon request, subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*.

Where a person with a disability requests a document in an alternate format, the RVCA will provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in the format that is requested and that takes the person's disability into account.

Notice of availability of all documents required by the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)* will be posted on the RVCA website and will be made available on request.

9. Amendments

The RVCA Board of Directors must approve all amendments to the Accessible Customer Service Policy.