



Serving Our Customers with Disabilities
Policies and Procedures

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
Customer Service Standard

Compliance – January 1, 2012

September, 2011

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Ontario General Contractors Association **Policy and Procedures**

Introduction

The Ontario General Contractors Association is committed to providing a high level of customer service to its members/visitors, including those members/visitors with a disability. OGCA is also committed to providing reasonable accommodation to its members/visitors with disabilities and is dedicated to continuous improvement, and will continue to evolve its practices in this regard. OGCA staff works in partnership with staff, members/visitors and the communities to identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation.

Definition of Disability

“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*; (“handicap”).

Ontario Human Rights Commission/Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) became law on June 13, 2005. Under this landmark legislation, the government of Ontario is developing mandatory accessibility standards that identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. The standards apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario. The goal is for the province to be accessible by 2025.

The five key areas of focus are:

- Customer Service
- Integrated Standard:
 - Information and Communication
 - Employment
 - Transportation
- Built Environment.

The Customer Service Standard is the first standard developed to become a regulation and came into force on January 1, 2008. Compliance is required by January 1, 2012. The standard addresses business practices to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.

Information and Communication, Employment and Transportation have been combined into one standard, which was enacted July, 2011.

The Built Environment public comments are being integrated into the Ontario Building Code, so only one piece of legislation will provide the standards.

The Customer Service Standard (AODA)

Every business and organization operating in Ontario that provides goods and services to the public or other organizations and has at least one employee in Ontario has **to comply by January 1st, 2012**. To meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standard, organizations must:

1. Establish policies and procedures on providing goods or services to clients and visitors with disabilities.
2. Provide training on how to serve clients and visitors with disabilities to staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone else who interacts with the public or other third parties on your behalf, and those involved in developing customer service policies, practices and procedures.
3. Establish a process for receiving feedback on how you provide service to clients and visitors with disabilities and how you will respond to feedback and take action on any complaints. Make information about the feedback process readily available to the public.
4. Communicate with clients and visitors with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Let clients and visitors with disabilities bring their service animals onto any part of your premises open to the public, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law.
6. Let clients and visitors with disabilities bring their support person with them when accessing goods or services on parts of your premises open to the public.
7. Let the public know when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access your goods or services are temporarily unavailable.

8. Document all policies, practices and procedures to providing accessible customer service and notify the public that these documents are available upon request.

Effective January, 2012, organizations with 20 or more employees will have to begin to file online accessibility reports annually with the Government of Ontario, regarding their compliance with the standard. (See Appendix 1)

Economic Impact of Accessibility

Disability impacts the lives of many Ontarians and the numbers of people with disabilities is increasing.

- In 20 years, one in five Ontarians are likely to have some kind of disability compared with approximately one in seven today.
- 10 – 20% of the general population have hearing loss; 50% of people over 65 have hearing loss.
- 600,000 Canadians have self identified as having vision loss.
- 6% of people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair.
- 70% of disabilities are hidden and often forgotten.
- Many of our veterans have disabilities. Men and women, who want to carry on their life activities with friends and family, will demand access to do so.
- It is projected that the older population will double in the next 25 years.

The disability sector is a growing market. Research indicates accessible service attracts more visitors with disabilities, resulting in return visits and increased revenue.

- Persons with disabilities spend an estimated 25 billion a year in consumer spending. An individual with a disability impacts the spending decision of another 12 to 15 Canadians. (Source: Royal Bank, 2000).
- Many communities are adopting age friendly principles focusing on access, to address the needs of the older population.
- A new report, “Releasing Constraints – Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario”, commissioned by the Province of Ontario, examines the economic impact of achieving substantially higher levels of accessibility on individuals, on markets and on social units. (Report prepared by the Martin Prosperity Group, the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre and the Institute for Competiveness and Prosperity). Highlights include:
 - Positive growth generated by greater participation in the economy.
 - Accelerated growth in the retail and tourism sectors.
 - Increases in individual and family income.

Customer Service Standard – Ontario General Contractors Association’s Policies and Procedures

OGCA has had a long standing commitment to accessibility for members/visitors with disabilities. The AODA Customer Service Standard now mandates a requirement to meet the needs of persons with disabilities with clearly defined policies and procedures by January 1, 2012.

In preparing for the compliance requirements, OGCA has made reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies and procedures are consistent with the following principles, as defined by the Customer Service Standard, AODA:

- All goods and services at OGCA will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity of people with disabilities.
- **Dignity:** service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
- **Independence:** when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own, without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- **Integration and Equal Opportunity:** service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with disability to access goods or services. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept inconvenience or lesser quality. Sometimes this may mean that OGCA has to treat individuals slightly differently so that they can benefit fully from the services.

Assistive Devices

Policy:

OGCA is committed to serving people with disabilities, who use assistive devices. Assistive devices are devices that are used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations.

Procedures:

We ensure that those members/visitors who use assistive devices are welcome and accommodated, if required.

Communicating with a Visitor with a Disability

Policy:

OGCA's policies and procedures take a person's disability into account when communicating with the individual. Two-way communications is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. To communicate in an effective way, OGCA considers how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications. Where possible, OGCA asks the member directly the best way to communicate with him/her.

Procedures:

OGCA uses a variety of ways, wherever possible, to make communications more accessible by:

- Considering the needs of people with disabilities during the planning stage of services and communication development.
- Using plain language to make a document easier to read for people with certain learning disabilities.
- Offering information in alternate formats, on request:
 - Hand-write or type information back and forth;
 - Braille;
 - Printed hand-outs of commonly used information;
 - Large print;
 - E-mail as an alternate channel to provide accessible communication.

Service Animals

Policy:

OGCA is committed to welcoming members/visitors with disabilities who are accompanied by a trained, accredited service animal. A service animal may accompany a client or visitor or any third party with a disability to all parts of our premises that are open to the public. Service animals may be used for, but not limited to, the following disabilities: vision loss, physical disability, hearing loss, autism, epilepsy etc. Although service animals are most commonly dogs, other service animals could include, but are not limited to, ferrets, monkeys, etc. OGCA ensures that all employees and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities, who are accompanied by a service animal.

Procedures:

To be considered a service animal under this standard, it must either be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a disability may be asked to provide a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that it is required because of his or her disability. OGCA does enforce a general By-law that does not permit pets on the

premises, including OGCA property surrounding the building. Service animals are not pets - they are working animals. They are used by people with disabilities to overcome barriers much like assistive devices such as a white cane or a wheelchair.

Guide dogs or other service animals, including service animals in training, are allowed to accompany people with disabilities on OGCA premises open to the public.

If the service animal is causing a disturbance for other members/visitors, the person and accompanying service dog may be required to leave the area or OGCA premises.

The owner is responsible to "stoop and scoop".

OGCA anticipates there will be special situations and is prepared to make every effort to accommodate the circumstances on an individual basis, as they arise, keeping safety to all members, visitors, staff, volunteers and service animals in mind.

Support Persons

Policy:

OGCA is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is allowed to enter OGCA premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on OGCA premises.

A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

Procedures:

Members/visitors are informed of this through OGCA communication to the public.

Temporary Disruption of Service

Policy:

OGCA is aware that temporary disruptions of services (daily functions – elevators, physical operations) and programs may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within OGCA control or knowledge. OGCA makes a reasonable effort to provide advance 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.

Procedures:

The notice is made available for broadcasting news and updates through the following networks, as appropriate.

- Website;
- Telephone recordings;
- Temporary signage.

In the event of an unexpected disruption, advance notice is not possible. In such cases, OGCA provides notice, as soon as possible, through its communication networks.

Process to Receive and Respond to Feedback

Policy:

OGCA has a process in place for receiving and responding to feedback about how goods and services are provided to clients and visitors with disabilities.

Procedures:

Members/visitors with disabilities can offer their feedback in the following ways:

- Through the OGCA Client Satisfaction Survey;
- E-mail and telephone, (re-directed, as required, to the appropriate response employee);
- Annual General Meeting;
- In writing where correspondence is re-directed to the appropriate response employee;
- Focus groups;
- In person to OGCA staff.

The member is requested to provide their name and contact information (phone, e-mail).

Once feedback is received, the following actions are taken to respond:

- The feedback is directed to the appropriate person for action.
- The feedback is assessed for appropriate action. (Note: the customer service standard does not require a response to be provided for all feedback).
- Members/visitors who provide feedback can expect an answer within five business days.

The feedback process is readily available to the public through:

- A sign in OGCA locations;
- A document describing the feedback process, available on request in different formats;
- Other communication networks, as appropriate.

The notice includes the following:

*Dear Valued Member and Visitor,
We strive to improve accessibility for our clients and visitors with disabilities. We welcome your feedback. Please call (905) 671-3969 or e-mail julie@ogca.ca to share your comments, or request a copy of our accessibility policy.*

*Thank you,
Management*

Customer Service Training

Policy:

OGCA provides training to all employees and volunteers and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies and procedures on providing goods and services to clients and visitors with disabilities. OGCA ensures that third party and others, who deal with the public, have the required AODA training.

Procedures:

The staff and Board are trained by OGCA.

After January, 2012, new staff and volunteers will also receive training. This training will be provided as soon as practicable or as soon as it can be done in the circumstances, after an employee or volunteer commence their duties.

The training content, required by the Customer Service Standard, includes the following:

- The history of the legislation and the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of 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 assistive devices available on the OGCA premises or otherwise that may help with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing OGCA goods and services.
- OGCA policies and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
- On-going training in connection with any changes to OGCA policies and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to people with disabilities is provided.

An evaluation process is in place for continuous improvement in training content and delivery.

Training is completed by December 31st, 2011 to be compliant with January 1st, 2012 deadline.

Training is recorded for staff and includes name, date and content.

Posting of Documents

Policy:

Notices are posted, informing the public that the documents required by the Customer Service Standard are available upon request and will be provided in a format that takes a person's disability into account.

Procedures:

Documents are available through the following networks, as appropriate.

- Website;
- Publications;
- Signage.

2010 Customer Service Accessibility Report
Customer Service Standard

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services

The following are the questions for the accessibility report on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Each question includes a reference to the corresponding section of the standard.

1. a) Does your organization have policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities? [s. 3(1)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
1. b) Does your organization use reasonable efforts to ensure that these policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity? [s.3(2)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do your organization’s policies address the use of assistive devices by people with disabilities to access your organization’s goods or services, or any available alternative measures that enable them to do so? [s. 3(3)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do your organization’s policies, practices and procedures require your organization to take a person’s disability into account when communicating with the person? [s. 3(4)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do members/visitors of the public or other third parties have access to premises that your organization owns or operates? [s. 4(1)] If no, then skip to question 7 below.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
5. a) Does your organization permit people with disabilities to keep their service animals with them on the parts of your premises that are open to the public or other third parties, except where the animal is excluded by law, and is this included in your policies, practices and procedures? [s. 4(2) & (7)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
5. b) If a service animal is excluded by law from your premises, does your organization ensure that alternate measures are available to enable the person to access your goods or services (s.4.(3)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Does your organization permit people with disabilities to enter the parts of your premises that are open to the public or other third parties with their support person, and provide notice of any fee charged for the support person, and is this included in your policies, practices and procedures? [s. 4(4) (6) & (7)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does your organization post a notice at a conspicuous place on your premises, on your website, or by another reasonable method, of any temporary disruption in facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access your organization’s goods or services, including the reason, duration and any alternatives available? [s. 5(1) (2) & (3)]	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

<p>8. Has your organization established and documented a process to receive and respond to feedback on how its goods or services are provided to people with disabilities, including actions that your organization will take when a complaint is received? [s. 7(1), (3) & (4)]</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>9. Does your organization make information about its feedback process readily available to the public, including how feedback may be provided (e.g. in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, on diskette or otherwise)? [s. 7(1) & (2)]</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>10. Does your organization ensure that the following people receive training about providing your goods or services to people with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ every person who deals with the public or other third parties on behalf of your organization, and ▪ every person who participates in developing your organization's policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services? [s. 6(1)] 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>11. Does this training include your organization's current policies, practices and procedures required under the Customer Service Standard and all the topics listed in section 6(2) of the standard? [s. 6(2) & (4)]</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>12. Does your organization have a written training policy that includes a summary of the contents of the training (per question 11 above) and details of when the training is to be provided, and does your organization keep records of the dates that training was provided and how many people were trained? [s. 6(5) & (6)]</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>13. Does your organization post a notice at a conspicuous place on your premises, on your website, or by another reasonable method, that the documents required by the Customer Service Standard are available upon request, and do you provide those documents in a format that takes a person's disability into account? [s. 8(1) & (2) & 9(1)]</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>