

NVCA'S Accessible Standards for Customer Service & Use of Assistive Devices

The purpose is to address the accessibility requirements of Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) is committed to providing quality customer service to our clients and will strive to facilitate accessibility for all.

Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that:

- Persons with disabilities are provided equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from NVCA goods and services
- Goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities
- Goods and services provided to persons with disabilities are integrated with the provision to others unless an alternative measure is necessary to allow a person with a disability to benefit; the alternative measure may be temporary or permanent
- Communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes the person's disability into account
- Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access NVCA goods and services unless superseded by other legislation (see list of legislation under References and Related documents section of this document, which provides a non-exhaustive list of such legislation)

All NVCA staff and volunteers will receive training regarding customer service and assistive devices. Volunteers who are not in contact with customers (i.e., tree planting) are not required to receive customer service training.

This policy applies to all employees, including volunteers, and all facilities of the NVCA.

Definitions:

Assistive Devices means a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e., canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).

Disability: As per the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, "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 coordination, 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").

Employee/Volunteer/Otherwise means every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the NVCA. This includes Members of the Board of Directors, Contractors, fee for service providers, etc.

Persons with Disabilities are individuals who are afflicted with a disability as defined under the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

Service Animal means any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

Support Person means any person, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend, who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

Procedures

Every employee, volunteer or otherwise working on behalf of the NVCA is responsible to ensure excellence in serving all customers, including people with disabilities while accessing our goods or services, and will carry out functions and responsibilities in the below areas.

Training

Every employee or volunteer with direct customer service contact, and otherwise will receive training/information on customer service and the use of assistive devices for people with disabilities.

Training will include, at the least, the following:

- 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
- Who is responsible for accessibility devices available to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing NVCA goods and services

Communication and Format of Documents

Should the NVCA be required to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, we will give the person the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Material printed in-house and publications produced on behalf of the NVCA will contain a note indicating, "Alternate formats are available upon request" with relevant contact information.

Every effort will be made to accommodate a document conversion request by a person with a disability into an accessible format. Requesters will be advised of an estimated time required to complete the conversion process depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, and quality of source documents. Conversion shall be processed in-house wherever possible, and the cost recovery will be the responsibility of the NVCA.

Employees/Volunteers/Otherwise Will:

Will forward all requests for document conversion, to the Director, Corporate Services. If it is determined that the format requested is not feasible, then other alternative methods of providing the information will be explored that will meet the needs of the requestor; e.g., audio CD or explaining the information verbally, etc.

Assistive Devices

We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services.

Examples of Assistive Devices:

The following are examples of assistive devices and their uses:

For vision loss:

Digital audio player – enables people to listen to books, directions, art shows, etc.

Magnifier – makes print and images larger and easier to read

Portable global positioning systems (GPS) – helps orient people to get to specific destinations

White cane – helps people find their way around obstacles

For people who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf, hard of hearing:

FM transmitter system or other amplification devices – boosts sound closest to the listener while reducing background noise

Hearing aid – makes sound louder and clearer

Teletypewriter (TTY) – helps people who are unable to speak or hear to communicate by phone. The person types their messages on the TTY keyboard and messages are sent using telephone lines to someone who has a TTY, or to an operator (Bell Relay Service) who passes the message to someone who doesn't have a TTY.

For physical disabilities

Mobility device; e.g., a wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches – helps people who have difficulty walking

Personal oxygen tank – helps people breathe

For learning disabled

Electronic notebook or laptop computer – used to take notes and to communicate

- Personal data managers – stores, organizes and retrieves personal information
- Mini pocket recorders – records information for future playback

For intellectual/developmental disabilities

Communication boards (e.g., a Bliss board) – used to pass on a message by pointing to symbols, words or pictures

Speech generating devices – used to pass on a message using a device that "speaks" when a symbol, word or picture is pressed.

Employees/Volunteers/Otherwise Will:

Employees/Volunteers/Otherwise will report to their supervisor and Directors of Corporate Services if a person with a disability is unable to access our services through the use of their own personal assistive device. If access to our services is a land/property issues, the Director of Land Operations & Stewardship Services will be advised.

Supervisors, Directors of Corporate Services and Lands, Education & Stewardship Services, will ensure the following measures:

- Determine if service is inaccessible, based upon individual requirements.

- Assess service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual.
- Notify person with disability of alternative service and how they can access the service, temporarily or on a permanent basis.

Use of Support Persons and Service Animals

Support Person

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person in all NVCA owned and operated public facilities. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his/her support person while on our premises.

The NVCA reserves the right to request the person with a disability be accompanied by a support person in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or others on the premises.

At facilities where admission is charged, the NVCA will waive admission fees for support persons who accompany a person with a disability. Customers will be informed of this by a notice that will be posted at all NVCA facilities and pay stations, and on the NVCA website.

Service Animals

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties.

Feedback/Complaint Process

It is the goal of the NVCA to meet customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way we are providing goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by contacting the Director, Corporate Services at admin@nvca.on.ca, by calling 705-424-1479 ext. 228, by mail to the Director, Corporate Services, NVCA, 8195 9th Line, Utopia, Ontario, L0M 1N0. Upon receipt the feedback/complaint will be investigated with appropriate personnel and a written response will be provided within thirty (30) days. A hard copy of this policy is available upon request via mail, e-mail to admin@nvca.on.ca, or calling 705-424-1479 ext. 221. The Policy document will be provided in a format which takes into account the person's disability. A copy is also available on our web site at nvca.on.ca.

