

Customer Service Policy for the Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

Approved by: Academic Coordinating Committee

Authorizer: VP Student Affairs

Reference Code: SA5V2

Effective Date: January 2, 2012

INTRODUCTION:

In accordance with the regulations outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Conestoga has a responsibility and legal obligation to provide information, services and education in an equitable and accessible manner.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Conestoga College is committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment and supportive of academic achievement and the dignity, self-esteem and fair treatment of everyone taking part in its activities. The college seeks to create a climate of mutual respect that reinforces opportunity and allows for each person to contribute fully to the development and wellbeing of the community.

“The college recognizes its responsibility to ensure that every person in its community is protected from unlawful discrimination and harassment in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code”. (Conestoga College, *Protection of Human Rights Policy and Procedure*, January 2007).

To this end, the College affirms the rights of all persons, including those with disabilities, to have equal access in employment, education, accommodation or business dealings with the College. In keeping with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 made under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, the College further affirms its commitment to promoting the following principles in all of its policies and interactions with persons with disabilities:

- **Dignity:** Goods and services are provided in a manner that is respectful to persons with a disability and does not diminish the person’s importance.
- **Independence:** Accommodating a person’s disability means respecting their right to do for themselves and to choose the way they wish to receive goods and services.

- **Integration:** Persons with disabilities can access all goods and services. This may require alternative formats and flexible approaches. It means inclusiveness and full participation. This is a fundamental human right.
- **Equal Opportunity:** Service is provided to persons with disabilities in a way that their opportunity to access goods and services is equal to that given to others.

SCOPE:

This policy and procedure applies to all employees and students, Board of Governors members, members of committees, societies or associations established or recognized by the college, residence staff, contractors, providers of service or research, volunteers, visitors or the general public, and applicants for admission or employment.

DEFINITIONS:

Accessible means obtainable, usable, readable, audible, visible, understandable, clear, able to be entered and exited, flexible, etc. To be accessible to all people, a variety of accessibility plans are necessary. Ensuring inclusive practices will ensure that all goods and services can be accessed by a larger audience.

Alternative Formats refers to alternate ways to provide goods and services. Some alternate formats can be used by everyone, while others are designed to address the needs of a specific user. This may be through forms of communication such as speech or writing, or methods such as in person or over the phone. Other examples are large print, electronic text (Word or html), Braille, sign language interpretation, communication devices, media caption, etc.

Assistive Devices are equipment that people with disabilities utilize to assist in their daily lives at home, work, school, etc. Such devices could be a walker, scooter, cane, magnification or specialized learning software, communication board, etc.

Assistive Technology is equipment or software such as screen reading, audio recording and voice recognition which people with disabilities use to obtain information and communicate with others. Professors may be asked to supply file formats that are compatible with particular types of assistive technology.

Disability: Under the AODA, the definition of “disability” is the same as the definition in the Ontario Human Rights code:

- (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.

POLICY ELABORATION:

Responsibilities

Members of the College community who interact with the public will:

- complete the AODA training provided in various formats by Conestoga College
- incorporate these customer service standards into the delivering of goods and services to the students, clients, staff and visitors with disabilities.

The Human Resource Department /Manager of Professional Development will:

- resource and/or develop AODA training content
- develop and implement AODA training plan
- develop and monitor tracking system to ensure organizational compliance

Administrators:

- will complete AODA training
- work with Human Resources to ensure employees, volunteers and contractors in their departments have completed AODA training as planned
- ensure compliance with standards within their departments

Properly Discharged Supervision/Evaluation

The College recognizes its obligation to ensure that this policy and the procedures are enforced. Managers and others in authority will be made aware of their responsibilities under this Policy.

Feedback Process

Conestoga College is committed to providing fair and equal access to facilities, services and educational programs for everyone, including persons with disabilities. A feedback questionnaire is available for individuals to provide feedback to the College related to their ability in accessing our services. The questionnaire for feedback can be accessed online at [Accessibility web pages on Conestoga's website](#)

Feedback can also be shared in writing or in alternate format, upon request. All feedback should be directed to the Office of the VP Student Affairs/designate who will track and monitor progress and ensure the client has received a timely response.

Assistive Devices

Conestoga is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from goods and services. Appropriate staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by persons with disabilities while accessing goods or services. Conestoga is committed to purchasing technology as required to ensure accessibility in accordance with the AODA and all associated regulations.

Billing and Student Records

Conestoga is committed to providing accessible invoices and student records to customers in alternative formats in a timely manner upon request.

Captioned Media & E-Text Policy

Conestoga is committed to ensuring that media resources purchased and used are captioned or captionable and that text books used for instructional purposes are made available in an e-text format, upon request. Conestoga is committed to ensuring that instructional, information,

marketing and promotional audiovisual materials are produced with captions on the master tape to ensure all subsequent copies will be captioned.

Communication

In order for the College to communicate with persons with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability; all employees shall be trained in how to interact with people with various types of disabilities. Alternative methods of communication are provided as quickly as possible when requested. Telephone services are provided clearly and in plain language. Printed material will be produced in plain language and in an accessible format, keeping in mind accessibility for screen readers.

Disability Services

Conestoga is committed to providing appropriate supports and accommodations to students with disabilities to ensure that they may access their post-secondary education in a way that ensures equal access for every student, while respecting the boundaries of academic integrity. Students may register with Disability Services by providing appropriate documentation at the initial intake interview. Documentation criteria and registration procedures are posted on the Disability Services website. Conestoga has dedicated programs, initiatives, departments, staff and services to ensure students can learn, grow and thrive at the college.

E-Information

Conestoga is committed to the development, purchase, and distribution of electronic and web-based products which are fully accessible. Conestoga is committed to providing equal access to electronic information including but not limited to, course related web sites, distance learning, instructional and productivity software.

Notice of Disruption of Service

Conestoga ensures service areas will provide customers with appropriate notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services if available. Information shall be posted on the website as well as at the site of the disruption.

Telephone

Conestoga is committed to providing accessible telephone service to our customers. We train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly. Select staff will be trained in TTY (TextNet online TTY) systems. We offer to communicate with customers by email or TTY, if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available. Conestoga shall delegate a lead contact for TTY.

Training

Conestoga College will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training will be provided to all employee groups of the College, volunteers, part time, sessional and contract employees. This training will be provided as a condition of employment to all new staff and on an ongoing basis for staff to ensure all staff stays current with any policy or procedural changes as it relates to the AODA Customer Service Standard.

The training will include:

- 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 premises that may assist with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing goods and services at Conestoga College in any area or department.

In addition to Customer Service Standard training, educators at the College will participate in accessibility awareness training related to accessible program or course delivery and instruction (for example: Universal Instructional Design):

- as a part of new faculty orientation;
- through in-person workshops and on-line resources offered to faculty throughout the year.

Service Animals

Conestoga is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. Conestoga staff and volunteers are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

There may be rare circumstances where, for reasons of health and safety of another person, allowing a person with a disability to enter a premises accompanied by a service animal needs to be considered. Examples of such situations include but are not limited to: a) a shop where chemicals and/or equipment present hazards to other persons and/or to the service animal; and b) where a person is allergic to animals and adversely affected if they are in close proximity to a service animal. If deemed necessary, a risk assessment will be conducted by the relevant academic or administrative manager, in consultation with Health and Safety. This assessment will identify: a) the risks inherent with the service animal being in the area of concern; and b) alternate measures available to enable the person with a disability to access this service.

If it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, Security may ask the person with the service animal to provide verification of the animal's duty. The use and safety of the service animal is the responsibility of the person with a disability.

Support Persons

Conestoga 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 will be allowed to enter public areas of the college to which they would normally have access to 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 the premises.

MODIFICATIONS TO THIS OR OTHER POLICIES

Conestoga is committed to developing customer service policies which respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Conestoga develops and updates policies, procedures and practices in such a manner as to respect and promote the dignity and

independence of people with disabilities, as well as integration and equality of opportunity. All policies of the College are available in alternative formats upon request.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS POLICY

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. The public can access copies of accessibility related documents via the website or in print upon request. If anyone has questions about the policy, or if the purpose of the policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by or referred to, the AODA Coordinator of the College. This document is available in alternative format upon request.

REFERENCES:

- Ontario Human Rights Code (2009)
- Conestoga College, Protection of Human Rights Policy and Procedure (2007)
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)
- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (2007)
- Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (2007)
- Integrated Accessibility Standards (2011)
- Disruption of Service Policy (2012)
- Disruption of Service Procedure (2012)
- Alternate Format Policy (2012)

REVISION LOG:

Revision Date and Summary of Changes

Sept. 12 2012, Policy and Procedure Committee - Approved

Sept. 13 2012, Academic Coordinating Committee - Approved