



Accessibility Procedures

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports Procedure

Policy #2-2018

Definitions

“Accessible Formats”

These may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

“Code Red”

A mass notification system which can deliver geo-targeted, time-sensitive information to any individual opting into the service, using voice, email, SMS, IPAWS, and more.

“Common Accessible Formats”

Some of the most common accessible formats are (but are not limited to):

- i. HTML or electronic text version online that meet the WCAG 2.0 Level A or AA;
- ii. Large Text
- iii. Plain Language versions

“Communication Supports”

These may include, but are not limited to:

- i. Plain language
- ii. Captioning
- iii. Hand writing
- iv. Alternative & augmentative communication supports
- v. Other supports that facilitate effective communication

“Communications”

The interaction between two or more person or entities, or any combination of them, where information is provided and exchanged.

See *Village of South River Guidelines for Communicating with People who have Disabilities* (Appendix A) for more information

“Conversion Ready”

An electronic or digital format that facilitates conversion into an accessible format.

“Electronic Text”

An electronic text means a presentation of information by means of text messaging, email, website, Code Red mass notification.

“Information”

Includes data, facts and knowledge that exist in any format, including text, audio, digital or images, and that convey meaning. The AODA information and communication standard does not apply to the following:

- i. Products and product labels
- ii. Unconvertible information or communications
- iii. Information that the Village does not have control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship.

“Unconvertible”

It is not technically possible to convert the information or communications, or the technology to convert the information or communications is not available.

Application

This procedure applies to Village employees, councillors and volunteers and other people or organizations that provide goods, services or facilities to the public in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Regulation developed under Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 and in support of the Village of South River Accessibility Policy.

This procedure applies to all materials and communications products produced or purchased (e.g. consultant reports) by the Village of South River for release to the public. It does not apply to products and product labels, unconvertible information, or information that the Village does not control directly or indirectly through a contractual relationship.

Procedure Description

Notification

The Village will advise the public of the availability of the current forms of accessible formats and communication supports.

The Village will include:

- i. A link on the Village website to the Accessible Supports Request Form
- ii. Signage at all public service counters advising of the availability, upon request, of accessible formats and Communication supports. At present the Village has only one public service counter which is located at 63 Marie Street, South River, Ontario.

- iii. The line “Accessible formats and communication supports are available, upon request” is to be placed at the bottom of the front page of:
 - All Council and Committee agendas;
 - Large-scale documents for public consultation (such as the Budget Overview or the Official Plan);
 - Anywhere else the Village determines that notification is reasonable.

Processing Requests

Requests for an accessible format or communication support can be received by staff in person, by phone or by electronic formats such as emails or fax. The public is encouraged to use the Accessibility Support Request form where possible. Upon receipt of a request, staff will forward the request to the Clerk Administrator (or designate) where it will be date stamped and a file number given using the following format: Acc + year received + the number in sequential order from the previous file (I.e. ACC2018-01). The original request will be filed in an Accessibility file and a copy will be forwarded to the appropriate staff for response. The request form will be available on the Village of South River’s website.

All Village staff shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities. Accessible formats and communication supports shall be provided:

- i. In a timely manner;
- ii. Taking into account the person’s accessibility needs; and
- iii. At a cost that is no more than the regular cost charged to other persons.

Once the appropriate format or support is determined with the requestor, staff shall provide or arrange for the provision of the accessible formats and/or communication supports for persons with disabilities.

If a staff member determines that information is unconvertible, they shall, in consultation with the clerk administrator, provide the person requesting the information with:

- i. A written explanation as to why the information or communications are unconvertible; and
- ii. A summary of the unconvertible information or communication.

The Clerk Administrator (or designate) will be available, with advance notice, for consultation to help determine if information can be converted or discuss how to provide a communication support.

Time Frame

The timeframe for the conversion process of a document into an accessible format, or the provision of a communication support, can vary depending on the media chosen, the size, complexity, quality of source documents and the number of documents to be converted. The information requested shall be provided in a timely manner depending on the factors previously noted.

If the document being requested is the subject of a public consultation or has a set timeframe for public comment, the timeframe for document conversion and distribution must be taken into consideration.

Cost of Conversion

When a member of the public requests a Village document in an accessible format or information with a communication support, the department of origin is responsible for the cost of conversion, materials and distribution of information.

Responsibilities

Clerk Administrator is Responsible for:

- i. Collecting information about requests from departments; and
- ii. Monitoring compliance with this procedure on an annual basis.
- iii. Receiving the Request and assigning a File Number
- iv. Distributing the request form to the appropriate department
- v. Overseeing the provision of a summary of the convertible information or communication support to the resident.

Council is Responsible for:

- i. Creating and maintaining service free from discrimination towards persons with disabilities;
- ii. Budgeting for the costs associated with accessible formats and communication supports of materials originating from their departments; and
- iii. Monitoring situations where requests for accessible formats and communication supports have not been provided and determining ways to make the information more convertible in the future.

Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:

- i. Creating and maintaining service free from discrimination toward persons with disabilities;
- ii. Ensuring employees are aware of this procedure and are logging requests that are received by their departments through the online form;
- iii. Tracking costs associated with requests;
- iv. Ensuring employees are providing residents with the requested accessible format and communication support;
- v. Ensuring that staff provide residents with an explanation as to why information or communications are unconvertible; and

Monitoring/Contraventions

Supervisors and managers shall monitor current practices to ensure compliance.

Failure to comply with the *AODA* regulations can result in Provincial administrative penalties.

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in disciplinary action which could lead to suspension or dismissal.

APPENDIX A

Guidelines for Communicating with people who have Disabilities

The following is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Deaf, Oral Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing

People who experience hearing loss may be deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. People experiencing hearing loss may use assistive devices like hearing aids, special telephones, sign language interpreters, various amplifiers or a pen and paper. They may also read lips or prefer to communicate through email, texting or a TTY telephone system.

TTY stands for Teletypewriter, a type of telephone that allows callers to send typed messages to each other across phone lines.

TTY users can directly call other TTY numbers or they can connect with a Relay Service.

Here are suggested ways to best communicate with a person who has hearing loss:

- i. Attract the customer's attention before speaking. For example, try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- ii. Don't shout.
- iii. Make sure you are in a well-lit area where your customer can see your face.
- iv. If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.

Vision Loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or white cane; others may not. Some customers simply need to view written materials like documents, receipts, menus, brochures, instructions or labels in large print, or with the help of a magnifier. Many also use readers that read information to them from an accessible document or an accessible website.

Here are suggested ways to best communicate with a person who has vision loss:

- i. Do not assume the individual can't see you. Few people who are blind have no vision at all.
- ii. Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to him or her.
- iii. Offer your elbow to guide the person. If they accept, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so.
- iv. Identify landmarks or other details to orient your customer to the environment around them.
- v. If you are giving directions or providing any information, be precise and descriptive. For example, if you are approaching a door, stairs or an obstacle, tell the person so.
- vi. Do not leave your customer in the middle of a room. Guide them to a chair or a comfortable location. Do not walk away without saying goodbye, and let them know what to expect next.
- vii. Offer to communicate pertinent information through email or links to websites where they can find more information.

Deafblind

A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear to some degree. Many people are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional who helps with communicating.

Keep these suggestions in mind when you serve a customer who is deafblind:

- i. Speak directly to your customer, not to the intervenor.
- ii. Identify yourself to the intervenor when you approach your customer who is deafblind.
- iii. A customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.

Learning Disabilities

A learning disability refers to a variety of disorders that affect how a person acquires, retains or takes information. People with learning disabilities just learn differently. Learning disabilities affect people from all backgrounds and are not caused by culture, language or a lack of motivation.

Learning disabilities may become apparent in your customer service interaction when the person has difficulty reading material or taking in and processing the information you are providing.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when serving someone with a learning disability:

- i. Ask customers how you can best help them
- ii. Take some time. People with learning disabilities may take a little longer to process, understand and respond.
- iii. Provide information in a way that works for your customer. For example, keep a pen and paper handy. That way, you can explain, and then review and repeat the information using your notes.
- iv. If you are discussing confidential information, consider giving the notes to your customer or offering to destroy them.
- v. Be prepared to explain any materials you provide for your customers.

Developmental Disabilities

Developmental or intellectual disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do every day physical activities and live independently.

You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way the person acts, asks questions or uses body language. However, they may understand more than you realize.

Here is some guidance when serving a person with Developmental Disabilities:

- i. Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- ii. Use plain language.
- iii. Make sure your customer understands what you've said. You can be direct and ask: "Do you understand this"?
- iv. Provide one piece of information at a time. You can break down the information into simpler concepts, without exaggerating speech or gestures or being patronizing.
- v. You may want to ask if the information needs to be repeated.

Mental health Disabilities

The important thing to remember when communicating with a person who has a mental health disability is to focus on completing the transaction in a calm, patient way and meeting the customer's needs. Mental health issues can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember. Mental health disability is a broad classification for many disorders that can range in severity. Customers may experience anxiety due to phobias or panic disorders. Hallucinations, mood swings and a deep lack of motivation may be signs of a mental health disability. A person may have a clinical depression or bipolar disorder.

The major barrier for a person with a mental health disability is the stigma associated with it and the lack of understanding.

Here are some suggestions:

- i. Be confident and reassuring. As with all customers, listen carefully and focus on meeting the customer's needs.
- ii. If the person appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- iii. If a customer appears to show signs of a mental disability, it may be helpful to keep in mind that the customer's reactions are not connected to you personally, as a service provider. The customer may simply be showing symptoms of mental illness.

Speech or Language Disabilities

Some customers may have problems communicating because of their disability. Cerebral palsy, stuttering, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for the person to pronounce words or may cause slurring or stuttering. A person with this type of disability may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

Here are a few suggestions when serving a person with speech or language disabilities:

- i. Do not assume that just because a person has this disability they also have another.
- ii. Give your customer whatever time they need to get their point across. If appropriate, offer to move to a more comfortable location.
- iii. Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible.
- iv. Do not interrupt or finish your customer's sentences. Give them time to finish.

Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities can result from many different situations, for example: Cerebral palsy, Multiple sclerosis, arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations.

Here are some suggestions when dealing with a person with physical disabilities:

- i. A person with a physical disability may not need assistance to verbally communicate, but may need other types of assistance to be served.
- ii. Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
- iii. They may ask you to assist with reaching items for them or securing paperwork in a bag for them.
- iv. Inform your customer of the accessible features in the immediate environment (accessible washrooms, ramps, elevators)
- v. Respect your customer's personal space. Don't lean over them or on an assistive device.
- vi. Do not move items or equipment, such as canes or walkers, out of the person's reach.
- vii. If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to make sure your customer is ready to be moved and that you describe what you are going to do beforehand.
- viii. Don't leave the individual in an awkward, dangerous or unqualified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

Ways to make Information Accessible

- i. Use plain language. Keep your text clear and as easy to read as possible.

- ii. Provide assistive technologies and communication supports. The following is only a list of what may be available and what could be introduced but does not suggest, in any way, all the listed methods are currently available.
 - a. Accessible documents
 - b. American Sign Language
 - c. Assistive Listening Devices
 - d. Braille
 - e. Captioning
 - f. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)
 - g. Large Print
 - h. Transcription
 - i. Verbal or Written description
 - j. Screen reader Software
 - k. Digital Accessible Information Systems (DAISY)
 - l. Structured Electronic Files
 - m. Tactile Signage

End of Appendix "A"