

Accessible Customer Service

1.0 Purpose

Cornerstone is committed to being responsive to the needs of all tenants and customers. We strive to provide quality goods and services that are accessible to all. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines on providing goods and services to people with disabilities that will facilitate accessibility. This policy establishes accessibility standards for customer service in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and in keeping with *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.

Cornerstone will make reasonable efforts to ensure policies, practices and procedures and the delivery of goods and services provided to persons with disabilities and all our tenants are in keeping with the principles of dignity, equity/equality of outcome, independence and integration and we will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability and communication needs.

We will establish an Accessibility Plan, which will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. This plan will be posted on the web site and available in alternate formats upon request.

2.0 Definitions

Assistive Devices

Devices used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations covered by the customer service standard.

Assistive devices include, but are not limited to wheelchairs, reading machines, recording machines, hearing devices, devices for grasping, and a white cane.

Barrier

As defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, barrier means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy, procedure or a practice.

Disability, as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, is:

- 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, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device, a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- 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 Animals ([See Service Animals Policy RS2115.1 for full definition](#))
(Complete definition is provided in the policy for Service Animals)

For the purpose of this policy, a 'service animal' is defined as either:

- (i) A "guide dog," as defined in Section 1 of the *Blind Persons Rights' Act*; or
- (ii) A "service animal" for a person with a disability.

Support Person

For the purpose of this policy, a support person is defined as another person who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help him or her with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

3.0 Policy

3.1 Assistive devices

- a) People with disabilities may choose to use their own personal assistive devices, while accessing goods and services. Cornerstone acknowledges the importance of these devices and will allow people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from the services offered by Cornerstone unless there is a defined risk associated with that use.
- b) Should a person with a disability be unable to access Cornerstone's services through the use of their own personal assistive device, Cornerstone will assess service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual.
- c) Cornerstone staff, third party contractors and others who provide service to tenants/customers will be familiar with the assistive devices and other accessibility supports that Cornerstone may have available to increase the accessibility of our services to people with disabilities.

3.2 Service Animals ([See Service Animals Policy RS2115.1](#))

- a) Cornerstone welcomes people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

3.3 Support Persons ([See Support Persons Policy RS2115.2](#))

- a) A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on Cornerstone's premises.

3.4 Notice of Service Disruptions

- a) If there is a temporary disruption in the availability of services and facilities used by tenants/customers with disabilities (e.g., temporary loss of elevator service), Cornerstone will notify them of the reason for the disruption, the date(s) of disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.
- b) This notice may be provided by a variety of methods, depending on the circumstances, and may include postings in conspicuous places at the affected premises (for example, common areas by the elevator and/or next to the elevator on the main floor), by email as well as by other means that will ensure that the notice reaches those persons potentially affected by the temporary disruption.
- c) If the disruption is anticipated, a reasonable amount of advance notice of the disruption will be provided. If the disruption is unexpected, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

3.5 Feedback

- a) Cornerstone is committed to providing high quality customer service and wants to continue to enhance and improve the accessibility of our customer service to our tenants, applicants for housing, visitors, members of the community who use our facilities, and other members of the public with disabilities.
- b) A process to receive feedback on the provision of goods and services to tenants/customers with disabilities accessing services at Cornerstone has been established. This process enables people to provide feedback either in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, online, on disk or by another method.
- c) A Feedback Form can be downloaded from our website at www.cornerstonewomen.ca or a copy of the form can be picked up in the buildings main office. The feedback form is available in alternate formats when requested.
- d) Responses to feedback received are not mandatory. If a person who submits feedback requests a response and provides contact information, Cornerstone will follow-up with the individual in the format in which the feedback was received, within ten working days. All feedback will be kept in the strictest confidence and will be used to improve customer service.

3.6 Training

- a) All individuals who interact and deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of Cornerstone, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise shall be required to receive training on providing customer service to people with disabilities.
- b) Cornerstone shall ensure that employees and volunteers who deal with the public on behalf of Cornerstone and those who are involved in Cornerstone's policy and program development and/or in directing, monitoring or evaluating policies receive training on accessible customer service.

- c) All third party contractors who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of Cornerstone shall ensure that their employees, agents, subcontractors, etc. receive training in accordance with this policy and the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* and, upon request, shall provide the training records to Cornerstone.
- d) Cornerstone employee/volunteer and third party contractor training will include a review of the purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c11* and the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, the requirements of this policy, and instruction about the following matters:
 - i) How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disability;
 - ii) How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person;
 - iii) How to use equipment or devices available on Cornerstone's premises or otherwise made available by the housing provider that may help with the delivery of goods or services to a person with a disability; and
 - iv) What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing Cornerstone's goods or services;
 - v) The Cornerstone policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.
- e) Customer service training can take various forms including as part of an orientation or as a separate training program. The training can be provided through handouts at an orientation session, in a classroom setting, by video or through other formats.
- f) Cornerstone will provide training to each person as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties. Training will also be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to applicable legislation, and/or organizational policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities.
- g) As required, by *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, Cornerstone will log and maintain records which will record the details of the training provided, as well as the name of the person, location, and date the training was completed.