Meeting the requirements of the standards: Customer Service

Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services –
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/customerService/index.aspx

We're working to make Ontario more accessible to people with disabilities and to everyone who lives and visits here.

As of January 1, 2010, Ontario's hospitals, schools, municipalities and other public sector organizations are now required to comply with the requirements.

Businesses in Ontario with at least one employee must offer accessible customer service by January 1, 2012.

The customer service standard is simply about:
- Understanding that customers with disabilities may have different needs, and
- Finding the best way to help them access your goods and services.

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This document is a compilation of information taken from the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services website. Readers are encouraged to consult the sources listed at the top of each section.

- Social Planning Council of Kitchener Waterloo, May 2011

Customer service: Who has to comply

Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services –
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/customerService/whoHasToComply.aspx

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service applies to all people, businesses and organizations that:
- provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other businesses or organizations
- have one or more employees in Ontario

This includes public, non-profit and private sector organizations.

Non-profit and private organizations that need to comply with the standard include, for example:
- places of worship, such as churches, synagogues, mosques and temples
- stores and shops
- restaurants
- Theatres.

Public sector organizations, regardless of the number of employees, need to comply with the standard. These include:
- provincial ministries
- the Legislative Assembly
- municipalities
- universities
- colleges
- hospitals
- school boards
- public transportation organizations
- designated provincial boards, commissions, authorities and agencies

Customer service: What you have to do to comply

Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services –
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/customerService/whatYouHaveToComply.aspx

Providing accessible customer service is easier than you might think.
The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service requires that you:

1. Develop customer service policies and procedures for serving people with disabilities.

   Example: A coffee shop might have a policy, which states that wait staff should read the bill to a customer who is blind or has low-vision. A florist shop might have small notepad and pen available by the cash register for customers who are Deaf to write notes.

2. Make sure that your policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

3. Have a policy on allowing people to use their own assistive devices (e.g., cane, wheelchair, oxygen tank, etc.) to access your goods and services.

   Your policy might be very general or may need to be more specific based on your organization's business.

   Example: Some people with low vision use magnification devices called monoculars to see large screens or other things at a distance. At a movie theatre that prohibits recording devices, a staff person might assume the monocular is a recording device and restrict a person from using one. A policy could address this.

4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

   Example: A hospital provides sign language interpreters to Deaf patients who use American Sign Language (ASL) or langue des signes québécoise (LSQ). When a Deaf patient is admitted who does not understand ASL or LSQ, the hospital learns from her that she is comfortable communicating back and forth in writing or by typing. The hospital is therefore taking into account the patient's disability and preferred method of communicating.

5. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in areas of your business that are open to the public.

6. Permit people with disabilities who rely on a support person to bring that person with them while accessing your goods or services.

   Example: A person with a disability goes to meet with her financial advisor along with her support person. Before discussing confidential information in front of the support person, the advisor simply seeks the consent of the person with a disability.

7. Where admission fees are charged, post information about what your policy is regarding what fee, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

   Example: A dinner theatre posts a notice on its website and at its ticket window stating that support persons will not be charged if they are not consuming food during the show. The notice states that support persons will be charged half of the usual price if they wish to eat the meal provided.

8. If you offer facilities or services for people with disabilities (such as an elevator or accessible washroom), let people know when they are out of order.

   Example: A shopping mall has scheduled maintenance on one of its elevators, and it will be unavailable for two days. The mall posted the planned disruption on its website a week in advance and posted a sign by the elevator the day before the disruption. These notices explain the reason for the disruption, its expected length and where an alternative elevator is available in another area of the mall.

9. Train your staff, volunteers and contractors to serve customers with disabilities.

10. Let customers with disabilities provide feedback on how you met their needs and establish a process to respond and take action on any complaints.

If you have 20 or more employees, you must also:

1. Complete an online report on your compliance by the reporting deadline.
2. Document in writing all of your policies and procedures on how you provide accessible customer service.
3. Notify customers that all of the documents required by the standard are available upon request.
4. When providing documents required under the standard, make sure the information is in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Customer service: When you have to comply

Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services –
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/customerService/whenYouHaveToComply.aspx

The deadlines for compliance are staggered. This is to give businesses and other organizations time to implement the requirements of the standard.

Deadline for businesses and organizations who have 20 or more employees
They must:
- comply with the standard by **January 1, 2012**, and
- file their first accessibility report in **2012**.

Deadline for businesses and organizations with fewer than 20 employees
They must:
- comply with the standard by **January 1, 2012**.

Deadline for designated public sector organizations
They had to:
- comply with the standard by **January 1, 2010**, and
- file their first accessibility report by **March 31, 2010**.

Customer service: How to file your accessibility report

Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services –
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/customerService/howToFileAccessReport.aspx

To make sure that businesses and organizations are complying with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, they will have to file regular online accessibility reports.

Businesses and organizations with fewer than 20 employees (except for public sector organizations) do not have to file accessibility reports. They still have to comply with the standard.

In 2012 (exact date still to be determined), online reports will be required from businesses and organizations that:
- provide goods or services to the public or to other third parties, and
- have more than 20 employees.

Designated public sector organizations were required to file online reports by March 31, 2010, regardless of the number of employees.

Organizations will have to file their reports online through the ServiceOntario website called ONe-key.

Alternate formats of the report will be provided upon request when:
- the person filing the report requires an alternate format due to accessibility concerns, or
- the person or organization does not have the technical capacity to file an online report.

What happens if you don't comply

Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services –
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/customerService/ifYouDoNotComply.aspx

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service is the law. Businesses and organizations who are covered by this standard must comply with it.

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario can take enforcement action.

Sections 13 to 28 of the act provide the legal authority for us to develop and implement processes for:
- compliance reporting
- inspections
- orders and monetary penalties
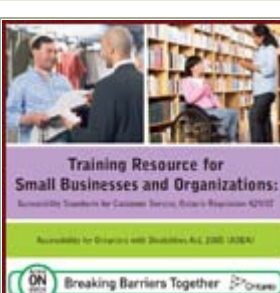- appeals.

Customer service: Tools to help you comply

Source: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services –
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/customerService/toolsToHelpYouComply.aspx

There are many ways to meet the requirements of the standard. What works for one organization may not work for another, depending on the type and size of the organization.

We've developed free tools to help you get started.

These publications are available in HTML and PDF formats. Microsoft Word is available upon request

Title	Description	Format
Understanding the standard		
Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07	Explains the formal meaning of the regulation and provides some examples to help describe its interpretation.	Pdf | Html
Terminology	A list of terms used in the customer service standard and what they mean	Html
Complying with the standard		
Compliance Manual: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07	A "how to" manual that offers compliance assistance information to obligated organizations.	Pdf | Html

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: Summary of Requirements	Highlights in clear language what organizations need to know about the standards to comply.	Pdf | Html
Compliance Manual for Small Businesses and Organizations	A condensed version of the Compliance Manual, this resource offers suggestions on how to meet the requirements of the standard in a plain language format.	Pdf | Html

Search across our three main compliance resources to find all references to any topic.

Training your staff about serving customers with disabilities

Training Resource: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07	This resource will assist organizations to meet the training requirements of the customer service standard.	Pdf | Html
Training Resource for Small Businesses and Organizations: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07	This training resource offers suggestions on how to meet the requirements of the standard in a plain language format.	Pdf | Html
How May I Help You? Welcoming Customers with Disabilities	(developed by the Government of Ontario and the Retail Council of Canada)	Html
Serve-Ability: Transforming Ontario's Customer Service	This e-learning course will improve the quality of your customer service, help you	Html

	better serve customers with different disabilities and help you meet your legal obligations under the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. See our video. [Video transcript](link)	
Reporting your compliance with the standard: Filing your accessibility report		
Accessibility report	Many businesses and organizations will have to file accessibility reports to show that they are complying with the requirements of the standard. These are the questions for the accessibility report on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.	Html
Frequently asked questions about complying with the customer service standard	Additional information about reporting your compliance with the standard.	Html
How to file your organization's Accessibility Report	Follow our step-by-step instructions on how to file your organization's Accessibility Report.	Html
Information for municipalities		
Questions and answers for municipalities	Additional information for municipalities and their obligations under the customer service standard is presented in a question and answer format.	Html