

Policy on Accessible Customer Service

SUBJECT: Accessible Customer Service and Customer Care		POLICY NUMBER: Amended 1.3.3.1 Customer Care
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2012	REPLACES ISSUE OF: 1.3.3.1–September 7, 2005	
APPROVED BY: Durham Region Non-Profit Housing, Board of Directors – November 2011		

1.3.3.1 Customer Care

- a) All employees are expected to treat tenants and other customers with courtesy and respect at all times.
- b) From time to time the Corporation will have to deal with difficult customers. In such circumstances employees shall maintain high standards of professionalism and fairness. Rudeness to our customers is not acceptable in any circumstances.
- c) Employees should be aware of and work to any service standards applicable to their area of responsibility.
- d) Employees' general actions, behaviour and demeanor while at work should be such as to present the Corporation as a professional and effective organization. Employees should avoid any action that might imply a sloppy or uncaring attitude.

1.3.3.1.1 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

1.0 Purpose:

Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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*.

Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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/customers 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.

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, 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

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. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,
 - (a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for the reasons relating to his or her disability; or
 - (b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the 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. Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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 Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation, unless there is a defined risk associated with that use.
- b) Should a person with a disability be unable to access Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation services through the use of their own personal assistive device, Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation will assess service delivery and potential service options to meet the needs of the individual.
- c) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation staff, third party contractors and others who provide service to tenants/customers will be familiar with the assistive devices and other accessibility supports at Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation that will increase the accessibility of our services to people with disabilities.

3.2 Service Animals

- a) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation acknowledges the vital relationship and dependency which exists between a person with disabilities and their service animal. Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of the premises that are open to the public and other third parties. This includes tenants, staff, and visitors to our premises.
- b) Public areas of our premises include common areas such as lobby, laundry facilities, recreational facilities, building office, common eating areas, meeting rooms, etc. Service animals are not permitted where food preparation is being undertaken and utility rooms; or as otherwise disallowed by law.
- c) The tenant/customer when accompanied by a service animal will be allowed to enter the premises with the animal and keep the animal with him or her at all times, unless the animal is excluded by law from the premises.
- d) The tenant/customer is responsible for the care, supervision and control of their service animal while on the premises.

3.3 Support Persons

- a) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. People

with disabilities have the right to have access to their support person while accessing goods and services of Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation.

- b) If confidential information is going to be discussed, the person with the disability should be asked if they prefer their support person to remain present. If the support person is present when confidential information is to be disclosed, signed consent must be received from the person with the disability. A signed confidentiality agreement should also be obtained from the support person.
- c) If Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation charges an admission fee in connection with a support person's presence at an event or function or for a service, Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation shall post a notice, providing information in advance about the amount, if any, that is payable by the support person accompanying a person with a disability.
- d) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation may request that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, in the event that it is considered necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises. This will only occur after consultation with the person with a disability and when it is the only means to allow the person with a disability to access Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation goods or services. The following criteria shall be used in consulting with the tenant/customer:
 - i) When the risk is greater than the risk associated with other tenants/customers;
 - ii) When there is a clear and significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or others;
 - iii) When the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means;
 - iv) When the assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the nature and severity of the potential harm, the duration of the risk, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur and how imminent the potential risk is;
 - v) When the assessment of risk is based on the person's actual characteristics, not on perceived risk that is based on generalizations, misconceptions or fears about a disability.

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), Durham Region Non-Profit Housing will notify the public 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, next to the elevator on the main floor), by email, and the Durham Region Non

Profit Housing Corporation website www.durham-housing.com, 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) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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 Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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 filled out online on our website www.durham-housing.com, downloaded in accessible formats from the website, or a copy of the form can be picked up in our building 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, Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation will follow-up with the individual in the format in which the feedback was received, within two 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 Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation, 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) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation shall ensure that employees and volunteers who deal with the public on behalf of Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation, and those who are involved in Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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 Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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 Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation.

- d) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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 Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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 Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation goods or services;
 - v) The Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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) Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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*, Durham Region Non Profit Housing Corporation 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.