

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was created with the goal of developing standards that would improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the Province. The customer service regulation is the first standard developed under the AODA. United Services Group is committed to providing accessible and equitable customer service to each and every one of our diverse and valued customers.

## **PURPOSE**

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of Ontario Regulation 429/07 under AODA. It applies to the provision of goods or services to the public, not the goods themselves. This policy aims to:

- Ensure that persons with disabilities are given equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from United's services.
- Ensure that people with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access United's services.
- Ensure that communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

## **SCOPE**

This policy governs the provision services by United to persons with disabilities in Ontario which includes the provision of services by United employees, volunteers, contractors and by agents or representatives who provide goods or services on behalf of United.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Disability (as defined by the AODA)**

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness,
- 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.

## Support Person

- in relation to a person with a disability, a support person means another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to services.

## Service Animal

- an animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to his or her disability. Assistive Device - a technical aid, communication device, or medical aid modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

## Barrier

- anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability (physical barrier, architectural barrier, information or communications barrier, attitudinal barrier, technological barrier, a policy or a practice).

## ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices as required in accessing services provided by United on United-owned and operated premises, unless otherwise prohibited by law.

## SUPPORT PERSONS & SERVICE ANIMALS

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person or service animal.

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter United's premises 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 our premises.

People with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal will be allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public. It is the responsibility of the person using the service animal to keep that animal with them and in control at all times.

This applies to services provided by United at Ontario premises owned or operated by United.

## **SERVICE DISRUPTIONS**

In the event of a planned service disruption to Ontario facilities and services that are relied upon by people with disabilities to access United's services, notice of the disruption shall be provided in advance.

- Notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, the anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities and services that may be available.
- Notice may be given by posting the information in a conspicuous place on the premises, posted on United's website or by such other method as is reasonable under the circumstances. In the event of an unexpected disruption, notice will be provided as soon as possible.

## **AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS**

UNITED will provide information on the Accessible Customer Service Standard that relates to the Ontario business upon request. The documentation provided will be made available in a format that takes into account the person's disability. United will make reasonable efforts to respond to requests for documents in alternate formats in a timely manner.

## **TRAINING**

UNITED will ensure that all persons to whom this policy applies receive training as required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. In addition, training will be provided to all new United employees to whom this policy applies as part of their orientation training and on a continuing basis as required. The amount and format of training will depend on the person's interaction with United's customers and the public.

Training will include at a minimum:

- A review of the purposes of the AODA, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- How to communicate with people with a disability, who use an assistive device, service animal or support person.
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing our services.
- United's customer service policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of services to people with disabilities. United will keep records of the training provided.

## **FEEDBACK PROCESS**

The ultimate goal of United is to meet and surpass customer service expectations while servicing customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcomed and appreciated. Feedback regarding the way United provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or on the website. All feedback should be directed to Human Resources, with website feedback being forwarded to Human Resources automatically.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **Customer Service Accessibility Procedures**

The Accessible Customer Service Policy will be reviewed and/or amended when additional accessibility related regulations are enacted by the Government of Ontario, or as require.