

Customer Service Accessibility Policy

Introduction

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (“AODA”) became law in 2005, and is intended to establish a process to develop, implement, achieve and enforce mandatory accessibility standards in Ontario, with the goal of increasing access to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by January 1, 2025 for individuals with disabilities. Under the AODA, the Ontario government will create mandatory standards in 5 key areas, including:

1. Customer Service
2. Information and Communications
3. Employment
4. Transportation
5. Built Environment

The “Customer Service” area of regulation is addressed in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07), and deals with the customer service aspects of offering goods or services to customers who have various disabilities; it was passed in 2008, and the public sector had to comply with this regulation by **January 1, 2010**. Private sector organizations must comply with the Customer Service Standard by **January 1, 2012**. In doing so, they must implement a Policy such as this one.

Objectives

SmartSimple Software Inc. (“SmartSimple”) is committed to providing accessible customer service to persons with disabilities. The purpose of this Policy is to establish how SmartSimple will provide access to goods or services to the public and other third parties that do business with SmartSimple (“Customers”) with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity, and that is in compliance with Ontario Regulation 429/07 (the “Customer Service Standard”) under the AODA.

Policy Statement

SmartSimple recognizes the importance of:

- Providing access to goods and services for individuals with disabilitiesⁱ
- Openly communicating and responding to the needs of Customers with disabilities in order to provide them with excellent customer service; and
- Complying with the mandatory Customer Service Standard addressed under the AODA.

Application

This policy applies to all SmartSimple employees, agents, contractors, and other individuals engaged in business on behalf of SmartSimple, including but not limited to senior management, managers, supervisors, full-time employees, part-time employees, off-site employees, in-store employees, telephone support employees, website support staff, students, apprentices, interns and volunteers (**“Employees, Agents and Contractors”**).

Communication

Employees, Agents and Contractors will communicate with Customers with disabilities in a manner that takes into account their disabilities. Employees, Agents and Contractors will consider how a Customer’s disability may affect the way he or she expresses, receives or processes communications and, where possible, they will ask the Customer how to best communicate with him or her. Customers are encouraged to identify any barriersⁱⁱ to communication that they are experiencing to assist SmartSimple in meeting this commitment.

Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities who use assistive devices are encouraged to use their devices as necessary in order to use or benefit from the services provided by SmartSimple. Assistive devices that may be used by individuals with disabilities will be welcome on SmartSimple premises open to the public or to other third parties, including but not limited to canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, scooters, oxygen tanks, screen readers, listening devices, speech amplification devices, magnification devices, note-taking devices, and communication boards. SmartSimple will take steps to ensure that Employees, Agents and Contractors are trained as to be familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by Customers.

Service Animals

SmartSimple welcomes guide dogsⁱⁱⁱ or other animals that serve^{iv} individuals with disabilities in those areas of SmartSimple’s premises that are open to Customers and will permit the Customer to keep the service animal with him or her, except for those animals that are otherwise excluded by law from the premises. In the event that a service animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises, SmartSimple will provide the applicable Customer with an alternative method of obtaining, using or benefitting from its goods or services.

Support Persons^v

SmartSimple welcomes persons who support individuals with disabilities to accompany them onto SmartSimple's premises open to the public or other third parties. SmartSimple will ensure that Customers who so require have access to their support persons while on the premises. Such support persons need not be paid, professional support workers. They may be volunteers, family members or friends who provide support to the Customer. SmartSimple will seek the consent of the Customer before confidential information is discussed in front of the support person. In some instances, support persons may be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement and/or a Non-Disclosure Agreement. SmartSimple will require a support person to accompany a Customer when on the premises when it determines that such an arrangement is necessary to protect his or her health and safety or that of others on the premises.

Temporary Unavailability of Access to Goods or Services for Customers with Disabilities

In the event that a facility, service or system offered by SmartSimple to Customers with disabilities^{vi} is expected in advance to become temporarily unavailable, in whole or in part, SmartSimple will provide advance notice of the disruption on its telephone message, website, at the entrance to its premises and by the service or facility, at a reasonable time in advance of the disruption and during the disruption. If the disruption is unexpected, the notices in the forms outlined above will be provided as soon as the anticipated disruption becomes known to SmartSimple. The notices will:

- Explain the reason for and anticipated length of the disruption^{vii}; and
- Provide a description of and indicate the location of an alternative facility or service that is accessible to individuals with disabilities, if available.

Employee, Agent and Contractor Training

All Employees, Agents and Contractors who interact with Customers on SmartSimple's behalf or who are involved in developing SmartSimple's policies, practice and procedures on the provision of goods and services will, by January 1, 2012:

- Be provided with an overview of the AODA, including its purpose, and the Customer Service Standard as well as SmartSimple's plan for providing accessible customer service;
- Be trained how to interact, communicate and assist people with various disabilities, and in particular, people with assistive devices, and those who require the assistance of a guide dog, service animal or support person;
- Be made aware of the policies and procedures created by SmartSimple in accordance with the Customer Service Standard; and
- Be trained how to help a person with a disability who is having difficulty accessing SmartSimple's goods or services.

This training will also be provided on an ongoing basis as soon as practicable:

- To new Employees, Agents and Contractors as part of their initial orientation;
- To Employees, Agents and Contractors who, after January 1, 2012, are assigned duties that include interaction with Customers on SmartSimple's behalf or who are involved in developing SmartSimple's policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods and services; and
- Whenever SmartSimple's policies change with respect to customer service accessibility for individuals with disabilities, to all Employees, Agents and Contractors who interact with Customers on SmartSimple's behalf or who are involved in developing SmartSimple's policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services.

SmartSimple will keep a log of all the training it will provide, documenting who was trained, on what and when.

Customer Access to This Policy and Related Documents

A notice advising Customers how they can request a copy of this Policy, all related documents and all documents required by the Customer Service Standard will be posted on the SmartSimple website and at the entrance to its premises. SmartSimple will strive to provide Customers with disabilities who request a copy of this Policy with a format that takes into account their disability.

Feedback Process

SmartSimple invites feedback on the way that it provides goods or services to individuals with disabilities. Those who wish to provide such feedback are encouraged to do so:

- In person;
- By telephone;
- In writing;
- By delivering an electronic text by email or on a diskette; or
- Otherwise.

All feedback will be directed to Mike Reid. Any feedback that is in the nature of a complaint will be addressed promptly. The provider of the feedback will be provided with a response in the format requested (or the most appropriate format, which takes into account his or her disability, where no request was made).

The details of this Feedback Process will be posted on the SmartSimple's website and in a notice that will be posted at the entrance to SmartSimple's premises.

ⁱ Disability” is defined in the AODA as

- (a) 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, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- (b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) A learning disability, or a dysfunction in more than one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) A mental disorder, or
- (e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

ⁱⁱ “Barrier” means anything that prevents a person with 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 or a practice.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Customer Service Standard defines a “guide dog” as a guide dog defined in Section 1 of the *Blind Persons’ Rights Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter B.7, (S.III)*. A guide dog is defined as a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations.

^{iv} The Customer Service Standard provides that an animal is a “service animal” (a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his/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 (S. 4(9)).

^v Support person is defined in the Customer Service Standard as “in relation to a person with a disability, a support person is someone who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods and services (S. 4(8)).

^{vi} For example, a ramp, escalator, elevator, accessible washroom, amplification system, note-taking or TTY (Telephone Teletype) services.

^{vii} For example, repair or scheduled maintenance for an anticipated duration of two days.