

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA)

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

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INTENT:

This policy is intended to meet the requirements of *Accessibility Standards for Customers Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties.

At **HALLMARK CANADA**, we strive to provide goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. We are committed to ensuring that customers, internal and external stakeholders, and third parties with disabilities receive the same quality of service as all other customers.

SCOPE:

- a) This policy applies to all employees that deal with customers, members of the public or other third parties on behalf of **HALLMARK CANADA**, including when the provision of goods and services occurs off the premises of **HALLMARK CANADA**.
- b) This policy shall also apply to contingent workers (agency contractors, third party, etc.) who work in Ontario or others who provide service in Ontario regardless of where they are located, as well as volunteers and third parties who interact with the public on behalf of **HALLMARK CANADA** in Ontario.
- c) The section of this policy that addresses the use of guide dogs and service animals only applies to the provision of goods and services that take place at premises owned and operated by **HALLMARK CANADA**.

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY:

HALLMARK CANADA supports the full inclusion of persons with disabilities as set out in *the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Ontario Human Rights Code, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001* and *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005*.

HALLMARK CANADA will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, programs and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- 1) Dignity
- 2) Independence
- 3) Integration (except when alternate measures are necessary to meet the needs of persons with disabilities); and
- 4) Equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from its goods and services.

1) Dignity

The principle of respecting the dignity of a person with a disability means treating them as customers and clients who are as valued and as deserving of high quality and timely service as any other customers. Persons with disabilities are not treated as an afterthought or forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

2) Independence

In some instances, independence means freedom from control or influence of others – freedom to make one's choices. In other situations, it may mean the freedom to do things in one's own way. People who may move or speak more slowly or differently must not be denied an opportunity to receive customer service because of this. Staff must allow persons with disabilities to take the time they need, without rushing them or taking over a task for them if someone prefers to do it themselves in their own way.

3) Integration

The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated to allow persons with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services in the same or similar way as other customers.

4) Equal Opportunity

In the case of services, equal opportunity means that persons with disabilities have the same opportunity as others to obtain, use and benefit from the way goods or services are provided.

In accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07, this policy addresses the following:

- A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities
- B. The Use of Assistive Devices
- C. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs
- D. The Use of Support Persons
- E. Notice of Service Disruptions
- F. Customer Feedback
- G. Training
- H. Notice of Availability and Format of Required Documents

A. The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

When communicating with a person with a disability, **HALLMARK CANADA** will do so in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability. In addition, **HALLMARK CANADA** will make every reasonable effort to:

- Ensure that all customers receive the same value and quality of customer service experience;
- Allow customers with disabilities to do things in their own ways, at their own pace when accessing goods and services as long as this does not present a safety risk;
- Use alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same services, in the same place and in a similar manner;
- Take into account individual needs when providing goods and services; and
- Communicate in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

B. The Use of Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use their own assistive devices when accessing goods or services provided by **HALLMARK CANADA**.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the access of goods and services. For example, if an aisle isn't wide enough for a customer to maneuver their wheelchair, a sales associate would assist by asking if help is required and by bringing the goods to the customer so they are accessible for viewing.

C. The Use of Guide Dogs, Service Animals and Service Dogs

A customer with a disability that is accompanied by a guide dog, service animal or service dog will be allowed access to premises that are open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. "No Pet" policies do not apply to guide dogs, service animals and/or service dogs.

Exclusion Guidelines:

If a guide dog, service animal or service dog is excluded by law, Hallmark Canada will offer alternative methods to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services (for example, securing the animal in a safe location and offering the guidance of an employee).

If there is a conflict that arises concerning a service animal on site (e.g., with another staff member who is allergic or fearful about an animal), managers will work with the parties to find an acceptable solution. The best solution will be one that respects each individual's right to a safe, secure and accessible environment.

Recognizing a Guide Dog, Service Dog and/or Service Animal:

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is being used by the customer for reasons relating to his or her disability, Hallmark Canada may request verification from the customer. Verification may include:

- A letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;

D. The Use of Support Persons

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter **HALLMARK CANADA**'s premises open to the public or other third parties 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.

In situations where confidential information might be discussed, consent will be obtained from the customer, prior to any conversation taking place in the presence of the support person.

When support persons are required (e.g., sign language interpreters, real-time captioners, attendants) for **HALLMARK CANADA** sponsored meetings, consultations or events, **HALLMARK CANADA** will arrange to pay support persons directly for their time.

E. Notice of Service Disruptions

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of **HALLMARK CANADA**. In the event of a planned temporary disruption to facilities or services that customers with disabilities rely on to access or use **HALLMARK CANADA**'s goods or services, **HALLMARK CANADA** will provide advance notice of the disruption. Where the temporary disruption is unplanned, advance notice may not be possible but notice will be provided when **HALLMARK CANADA** becomes aware of the disruption.

In the event that a notification needs to be posted, the following information will be included:

- Goods or services that are disrupted or unavailable
- Reason for the disruption
- Anticipated duration
- A description of alternative services or options, if available

When disruptions occur, **HALLMARK CANADA** will provide notice by:

- Posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the **HALLMARK CANADA** website;
- Contacting customers with appointments;
- Verbally notifying customers when they are making an appointment; or
- By any other method that may be reasonable under the circumstances.

F. Feedback Process

HALLMARK CANADA shall provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on the way in which **HALLMARK CANADA** provides goods and services to customers with disabilities. An accessible process for customers to provide feedback or complaints is in place and will be posted on the Hallmark Canada AODA website. Feedback may also be provided by a person with a disability verbally to the service provider or by contacting the **HALLMARK CANADA** AODA Officer via phone, mail, email or fax. Feedback will be used to improve customer service where applicable.

The AODA Officer will acknowledge receipt of the feedback within 5 business days and will provide a further response outlining the actions taken within 10 business days. The responses will be given to the person who provided the feedback in the format requested by the customer or in the most appropriate format where no request was made by the person providing feedback.

G. Training

Training will be provided to:

- a) All employees, volunteers, agents and/or contractors who deal with the public or other third parties that act on behalf of **HALLMARK CANADA** and,
- b) Those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Training Provisions:

As reflected in *Ontario Regulation 429/07*, regardless of the format, training will cover the following:

- A review of the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.
- A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*.
- Instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who:
 - May or may not use assistive devices
 - May or may not require the assistance of a guide dog, service dog or other services animal; or
 - May or may not require the use of a support person (including the handling of admission fees).
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our services.
- **HALLMARK CANADA's** policies, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of customer service to customers with disabilities.

Training Schedule:

To create awareness and to ensure compliance, AODA training is mandatory and will be provided for all applicable employees. Managers and Senior Leaders are responsible for ensuring that all employees receive the AODA training.

All new employees are required to complete AODA training within 45 days of hire.

Record of Training:

HALLMARK CANADA will keep a record of training that includes the dates training was provided and the names of the employees who attended the training.

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS:

All documents required under the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07* will be made available upon request to the **HALLMARK CANADA** AODA Officer. Documents are also available in alternative formats. To make a request, the customer is asked to contact the AODA Officer via an in person meeting, phone, mail, email or fax.

The AODA policy is posted on the Employee Bulletin Board in the Hallmark Canada office and is also available for download on the Hallmark Canada intranet site under Human Resources > Policies.

Any questions about this AODA policy, the feedback process or availability of documents can be directed to:

Mike Soehner, **HALLMARK CANADA** AODA Officer

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