

Georgian College AODA Customer Service Policy Statement: Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

DRAFT (subject to changes, and College Council final review until May 31, 2010)

1. Purpose and Scope

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is Provincial Legislation with the purpose of developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for persons with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

Ontario Regulation 429/07 entitled "Accessibility Standards for Customer Service" came into force on January 1, 2008. This regulation establishes accessibility standards specific to customer service for public sector organizations and other persons or organizations that provide goods and services to members of the public or other third parties.

This policy is in accordance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Ontario Regulation 429/07 and addresses the following:

- The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities
- The use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities
- The use of service animals by persons with disabilities
- The use of support persons by persons with disabilities
- Notice of temporary disruptions in services and facilities
- Staff training
- Customer feedback regarding the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities
- Notice of availability and format of documents and meetings

This Policy applies to all members of the College community. The Georgian community includes employees and students at Georgian College and the University Partnership Centre, members of Georgian's Board of Governors, members of standing and ad hoc committees established by these institutions, members of societies and associations which have a direct relationship to or are under the authority of these institutions, contractors, service providers, researchers and visitors, including invitees, guests or persons who have no ongoing connection to the institution but are on campus.

2. Policy Statement

It is the policy of Georgian College that its working, living and learning environments will be maintained free from discrimination and harassment as prohibited by the Ontario Human Rights Code (1962), and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (1995) (AODA).

It is the policy of Georgian College that every employee, student and customer has a right to equitable treatment with respect to employment, services, goods, facilities, accommodation and membership in vocational associations without discrimination in accordance with the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code (1962).

Georgian College is committed to providing accessible service for its customers. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that is based upon the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity to all of its customers. The provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities will be integrated wherever possible. Persons with disabilities will benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

3. Definitions (from Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005)

Disability: Shall mean,

- 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 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;

Accessible shall mean capable of being entered or reached, approachable; easy to get at; capable of being influenced, obtainable; able to be understood or appreciated.

Assistive Device shall mean a device 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.

Dignity shall mean respecting and treating every person including persons with a disability as valued and as deserving of effective and full service as any other customer.

Independence shall mean freedom from control or influence of others, freedom to make your own choices.

Guide Dog shall mean a dog trained as a guide for a person who is blind and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations.

Goods and Services shall mean goods and services provided by Georgian College.

Service Animals shall mean animals that are used as a service animal for a person with a disability.

Support Person shall mean an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services.

4. Providing Goods and Service to Persons with Disabilities

Georgian College is committed to excellence in serving all customers including persons with disabilities and will carry out its functions and responsibilities to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

- a) Georgian's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- b) The provision of Georgian's goods and services to persons with disabilities is integrated with those provided to persons who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from Georgian's goods or services;
- c) Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain use or benefit from Georgian's goods and services, and
- d) To ensure the best possible customer service, Georgian encourages open two-way communication and expects persons with disabilities to communicate their need for accommodation or assistance if it is not readily apparent how that need can be met.

4.1 Communication

Georgian College is committed to communicating with persons with disabilities in ways that take into consideration their disability. To ensure this,

- a) Georgian staff will be trained in how to interact and communicate with customers with disabilities guided by the principles of dignity, independence and equality;
- b) Customers with disabilities will be offered alternative communication formats that will meet the needs of the customer as promptly as feasible;
- c) Documents will be provided to customers in an alternative format that will meet the needs of the customer in a timely fashion, and
- d) If telephone communication is not suitable for customer's needs, alternative forms of communication will be offered as required.

4.2 Use of Service Animals, Assistive Devices, and Support Persons

Georgian College will ensure that the access, use and benefit of goods or services are not compromised for persons with disabilities who require assistive devices, or who are accompanied by a service animal, guide dog or support person.

4.2.1 Service Animals

Service animals, such as, but not limited to Guide dogs, Hearing dogs, Seizure Response dogs, and other certified service animals shall be permitted entry to all Georgian College's facilities and meeting rooms that are open to the public.

Service animals are not permitted:

Where food preparation is being undertaken
or, as otherwise disallowed by law.

In the rare case where a service animal is to be denied access to a facility or meeting room, other accommodations may be afforded, such as:

alternate meeting format, e.g. teleconference where technology permits;
delivery of goods or service at an alternate time or location;
other assistive measures available to deliver a good or service to ensure equality of outcome.

Students who require service animals and who are enrolled in programs where food preparation is an academic requirement will be referred to the Centre for Access to determine accommodation requirements.

4.2.2 Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities shall be permitted to obtain, use or benefit from goods or services through the use of their own assistive devices. Exceptions may occur in situations where the College has determined that the assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of a person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises. In these situations, if a person with a disability is hindered from accessing goods or services, Georgian College will accommodate the customer by providing an alternative where possible.

It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure that his or her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Georgian College will ensure that staff are trained as required to use assistive devices available on our premises, including, but not limited to computers and software such as Kurzweil, Dragon, Zoomtext, electronic recorders and other devices that may become available. When additional expertise is required, staff in the Centre for Access will assist.

4.2.3 Support Persons

Georgian College is committed to welcoming customers with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter Georgian'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 the Georgian College premises.

Georgian College holds conferences, events, and workshops sponsored by Georgian or by third parties, that are outside of daily classroom use. For such events, support persons shall be permitted entry to all Georgian facilities and meeting rooms that are open to the public, except: when there are fees applied against participants by a third party and the support person was not pre-registered and/or no vacancy exists. If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to a third party, the support person is permitted to attend the event at their own cost. Cost for services (e.g. food, lodging etc.) will be the responsibility of the support person.

If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to Georgian, the support person is permitted to attend at no cost for admission. Cost for other services (e.g. food, lodging etc.) will be the responsibility of the support person.

If a support person is necessary for the health and safety of a person with disabilities, or for the health and safety of other persons, the College will require the accompaniment of a support person on College premises.

The customer shall determine whether a support person is necessary, however, where an employee believes that a support person should be in attendance to protect the health and safety of the customer or others, the following criteria shall be used in consulting with the customer:

- when there is a significant risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or to others (the mere possibility of risk is insufficient);
- when the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced by other means;
- when the assessment of the risk is based on consideration of the duration of the risk, the nature and severity of the potential harm, the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm; and
- when the assessment of the risk is based on the individual's actual characteristics, not merely on generalizations, misperceptions, ignorance or fears about a disability.

Students are required to provide their own support person(s). Students are expected to inform instructors/facilitators that they will be attending classes with a support person.

4.3 Billing

We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers and will make every effort to provide alternative formats of invoices in a timely manner upon request.

4.4 Notice of Temporary Disruption to Facilities or Services

In the event that a planned temporary service disruption occurs that would limit a person with a disability from gaining access to Georgian facilities, goods or services, Georgian will make the disruption known to customers in the following ways:

- a) The Physical Resources Department will post notice of the service disruption on College premises in the area where the service disruption is located
- b) Messages will be posted on the Georgian College web site at www.georgianc.on.ca
- c) Notices of service disruption will be announced over the College voicemail and email systems

Notices will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, alternate service locations if applicable, and a description of alternative facilities or services if available from the affected service department.

If an unexpected disruption occurs, persons with disabilities will be accommodated by the use of other possible means to deliver the goods and service, such as:

- Georgian may use an alternative place and time to provide the goods or service directly to the person with a disability (for example, change of classroom location or class cancellation); or
- Any other appropriate assistive measures available to deliver goods and services.

5. Staff Training

Georgian College will provide AODA customer service training in to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

AODA customer service training will be provided to all full-time employee groups of the College, part-time, partial-load, sessional and contract employees, and volunteers. This training will be provided as a condition of employment to all new staff and on an ongoing basis for staff to ensure all staff stays current with any policy or procedural changes as it relates to the AODA Customer Service Standard. Training is provided through the Office of Organizational Planning and Development, in conjunction with Human Resources.

Training is available in accessible formats and in multiple formats, including, but not limited to, face to face classroom instruction, online training module, and other formats as requested.

The training will include:

- The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- How to use the assistive devices available on the premises that may assist with the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities, which include, but are not limited to, computers and software such as Kurzweil, Dragon, Zoomtext, electronic recorders and other devices that may become available
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing goods and services at Georgian College in any area or department
- Current policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard

6. Feedback Process

The ultimate goal of Georgian College is to meet the needs of our customers, while paying attention to the unique requirements of our customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcomed and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way Georgian College provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made through the College web site Customer Service Standard feedback form at: www.georgianc.on.ca/accessibility/aoda-feedback.php or in person, by telephone, through email, or by other means as required. Feedback sent through the College web site feedback form will be directed to the Georgian College Equity Consultant.

Feedback in person, by telephone or through email should be directed to:

Equity Consultant
 Georgian College, Human Resources Department
 One Georgian Drive
 Barrie, ON
 L4M 3X9
 Email: accessibility@georgianc.on.ca
 Phone: 705-728-1968 extension 1638

Feedback will be used to improve customer service. In addition, the author of the feedback will be provided with a response in the format in which the feedback was received. The feedback may outline actions deemed appropriate, if any.

7. Format of College Policies

Georgian College develops and updates policies, procedures and practices in such a manner as to respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, as well as integration and equality of opportunity. Georgian College will provide policy and procedure documents produced by the College in an alternative format upon request, within a reasonable amount of time.

Alternative formats will include availability on the College's web-site, large print versions of the document, a text only electronic file which can then be read by a computer or arrangements made for print in Braille.

8. Questions about this Policy

If anyone has questions about the policy, or if the purpose of the policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by or referred to the Chair, AODA Steering Committee for Georgian College. This policy will be posted on Georgian's website, and made available to all of the Georgian community.

9. Other Procedures/Guidelines

Other relevant College procedures include: *Ontario Human Rights Complaints Procedure* (4-134) and the *Sick Leave/Return to Work Procedure* (4-130). These can be found on the College's website www.georgianc.on.ca under Staff - HR Practices and Procedures.

Relevant guidelines include: *Student Handbook: Services for Students with Disabilities*, and *Teaching Students with Disabilities: A Guide for Faculty and Staff*. Both guidelines are available through the Georgian College Centre for Access.