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**Policy:** Accessibility Policy

**Department:** C.A.O.

**Effective Date:** January 1, 2017

**Revision Date(s):**

**Review Date:**

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Accessibility Policy is to address the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and applicable Standards and Regulations introduced under the legislation.

## 2. Policy Statement

The Corporation of the County of Bruce is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

The County of Bruce recognizes the diverse needs of all our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide goods, services, programs and facilities that are accessible to all. Bruce County is committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner, and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all persons who deal with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the County, whether the person does so as an employee, member of Council, agent, volunteer, student placement, or otherwise and all persons who participate in developing the County's policies governing the provision of goods, services or facilities to members of the public or other third parties.

## 4. Definitions

**Accessible Formats:** may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.

**Assistive Device:** are used to replace, compensate or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. They include a broad range of items including mobility such as; prosthetics, wheelchairs, canes, walkers, medical such as; ventilators, respiratory equipment and sensory such as; communication aids, reading and writing devices and hearing aids.

**Disability:** as defined in Section 10 of the Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990 c. H.19.

- a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limited the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, 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 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.

**Communication Supports:** may include, but not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications.

**Service Animals:** as defined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if it is readily apparent as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or if the person provides a letter from a regulated health professional which consist of doctors, nurses, psychologists, audiologists, chiropractors and optometrists confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

**Support Person:** as defined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 shall mean any person, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member or friend who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities.

## **5. General Standards**

The County of Bruce is a designated public sector organization under the AODA and is committed to meeting the accessibility needs of people with disabilities.

### **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

The County of Bruce has established an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) with a majority of members of the Committee whom are persons with disabilities. The AAC shall advise Council about the requirements and implementation of the AODA accessibility standards, preparation of accessibility reports, including access for persons with disabilities to a building or premises, and other matters for which Council may seek advice.

### **Accessibility Plan**

Bruce County will establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan in accordance with the AODA. The multi-year accessibility plan will outline the County's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements of the standards developed under the AODA. The multi-year accessibility plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every five years in consultation with persons with disabilities and the Bruce County Accessibility Advisory Committee. The plan will be posted on the County's website and shall be made available in an accessible format and with communication supports, upon request.

### **Procuring or Acquiring Goods, Services or Facilities**

Bruce County staff will take into account the accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities, including self-service kiosks.

When not practicable to incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, staff shall provide an explanation, upon request.

### **Training**

The County is committed to ensuring training is provided on the requirements of the accessibility standards to all employees, persons who participate in the development of County policies, and all other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the County.

The County shall keep records of the training, including the date on which training is provided and the names of individuals trained.

Training will also be provided in respect to changes in the Accessibility Policy on an ongoing basis.

Accessibility Training will include the following elements:

- a) How to provide goods, services or facilities in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- b) How to interact and communicate with persons in a manner that takes into account their disabilities;
- c) The process for people to provide feedback to the County about its provision of goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities;
- d) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person to access goods, services or facilities;
- e) A review of the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005;
- f) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the County's goods, services or facilities.

### **Feedback Process**

Feedback from the public is welcomed as it may identify areas that require change and encourage continuous service improvement.

Feedback can be provided to the County on the delivery of goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities:

- a) By mail addressed to: Clerk  
30 Park Street, Walkerton ON N0G 2V0
- b) By telephone: 519-881-1291
- c) In person at: Bruce County Administration Centre, 30 Park Street,  
Walkerton ON N0G 2V0
- d) Or by email at: [dvanwyck@brucecounty.on.ca](mailto:dvanwyck@brucecounty.on.ca)

The Feedback form, attached to this Policy as Appendix "A" is available on the County's website.

## Responding to Feedback:

- All feedback on accessible customer service, regardless of how it is received, should be directed initially to the Clerk or designate for the feedback to be reviewed and identified as a complaint, suggestion or compliment;
- The Clerk or designate will maintain a record outlining the details, follow-up and actions to be taken
- If the feedback form indicates that the customer wishes to be contacted, the Clerk or designate will acknowledge receipt of the feedback within 5 business days;
- Where possible, complaints will be acknowledged and addressed immediately;
- The Clerk or designate will forward feedback to appropriate Director;
- The Director will determine appropriate action;
- The Director/Manager will review barriers identified in feedback and determine if it is feasible to remedy the barrier;
- The Director or Manager will advise the Clerk or designate of the decision and reasons for it;
- The Clerk or designate will advise the person who submitted the feedback of the decision and reasons for it within 30 business days.

## Documentation

Documentation that describes this Policy and each of its requirements shall be maintained on the County's website [brucecounty.on.ca](http://brucecounty.on.ca) and provided to individuals, upon request, with the appropriate format or communication support.

## 6. Customer Service Standard

### Assistive Devices

A person with a disability may provide their own assistive device for the purpose of obtaining, using and benefiting from the County's goods, services or facilities. Exceptions may occur in situations where the County has determined 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, and others, the County may offer a person with a disability other reasonable measures of assistance in obtaining, using and benefiting from the County's goods, services or facilities, where the County has such other measures available.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to ensure his/her assistive device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

## **Notice of Temporary Disruptions**

Temporary disruptions in County services or facilities may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the County's control or knowledge.

The County will make reasonable efforts to provide notice of the disruption to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, which may be available.

If the disruption is anticipated, the County will provide a reasonable amount of advance notice of the disruption. The County will provide notice by any method that may be reasonable under the circumstances, as soon as possible, including but not limited to: County's website ([brucecounty.on.ca](http://brucecounty.on.ca)) or site specific postings, etc.

## **Support Persons**

Persons with disabilities may enter premises owned or operated by the County with a support person and have access to the support person while on the premises.

The County may require a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person while on County premises in situations where it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

A support person, when assisting a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods, services or facilities, will be permitted to attend at no charge where an admission fee is applicable.

## **Service Animals**

Persons with a disability may enter premises owned and operated by the County accompanied by a service animal and keep the animal with them if the public has access to such premises and the animal is not otherwise excluded by law. If the service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the County will make every reasonable effort to provide other means of assistance in order for the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods, services or facilities.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the County may ask the person with a disability for a letter from a qualified regulated health professional which consist of doctors, nurses, psychologists, audiologists, chiropractors and optometrists, or a certificate of training or a valid identification card.

It is the responsibility of the person with the disability to be in care and control of the service animal, at all times.

## **7. Information and Communications Standards**

### **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports**

Upon request, the County of Bruce will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats or communication supports for persons with disabilities.

These accessible formats and communication supports will be provided in a timely manner and in a way that takes into account the individual needs of a person with a disability. The County of Bruce will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. Such accessible documents and communication supports will be provided at a cost no greater than the regular costs charged to others.

### **Emergency Procedures, Plans or Public Safety Information**

The County of Bruce will, upon request, provide emergency procedures, plans and public safety information in an accessible format or with communication support, as soon as practicable.

### **Public Libraries**

Bruce County Libraries shall provide access to or arrange for the provision of access to accessible materials where they exist. Bruce County Libraries shall make information about the availability of accessible materials publicly available and may provide the information in an accessible format or with appropriate communication supports, upon request.

### **Websites and Web Content**

The County will ensure the official county website and web content conforms to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Except where meeting this requirement is not practicable, this conformity applies to websites, web content and web-based applications that are controlled directly or through a contractual relationship that allows for the modification of the product and to web content.

## **8. Employment Standards**

### **Recruitment, Assessment and Selection**

The County of Bruce is committed to equal consideration of candidates during the recruitment, assessment and selection process. Job applicants, including the public and current County employees, will be notified of the availability of accommodations for persons with disabilities in its application process.

Individuals selected to participate in assessment or selection processes, such as an interview or testing, will be notified of the availability of accommodations, upon request, during such an assessment or selection process. In cases where accommodations due to disability are requested, the County of Bruce will consult with the individual and provide or arrange for suitable accommodations in a manner that takes into account the applicant's disability needs. Accommodations will be provided with respect to the materials or processes used in recruitment.

When making offers of employment, the County of Bruce will notify the successful applicant of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

### **Informing Employees of Supports**

The County of Bruce will inform employees of its policies, and any updates to such policies, used to support employees with disabilities. The County will provide this information to new employees as soon as practicable after commencing employment. This includes policies on providing job accommodations that take into account the employee's accessibility needs due to disability.

### **Accessible Formats and Communication Supports for Employees**

The County of Bruce shall, when requested by an employee with a disability, consult with the employee to provide or arrange for the provision of accessible formats and communication supports for information that is required in order to perform the job, as well as information that is generally available to employees in the workplace. The County of Bruce shall consult with the employee making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support.

### **Workplace Emergency Response Information**

The County of Bruce is committed to ensuring the safety of its employees. Individualized workplace emergency response information shall be provided to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary and the employer is aware of the employee's need. This information shall be provided as soon as practicable after the County becomes aware of the need for accommodation.

When an employee requires assistance in an emergency, the County of Bruce shall, with the employee's consent, provide such information to the person designated by the County to provide assistance.

The County of Bruce shall review the individualized workplace emergency response information when the employee moves to a different location in the organization, when the employee's overall accommodation needs and plans are reviewed, and when the County reviews the general emergency policies.

## **Documented Individual Accommodation Plans**

The County of Bruce shall develop a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. The individual accommodation plan shall include:

- If requested, any information regarding accessible formats and communication supports provided to the employee;
- If required, individualized workplace emergency response information; and
- Any other accommodations that are to be provided

## **Return to Work Process**

The County of Bruce shall maintain its documented return to work process for employees with a disability and who require disability-related accommodation in order to return to work.

The County's return to work process shall outline the steps the County will take to facilitate the return to work and will include documented individual accommodation plans as part of the process.

The return to work process does not replace or override any other return to work process created by or under any other statute (i.e. the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997).

## **Performance Management, Career Development and Advance and Redeployment**

The County of Bruce shall take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities and any individual accommodation plans when providing any performance management, career development and advancement. When redeploying employees (reassigning employees to other departments or jobs within the County of Bruce as an alternative to layoff when a particular job or department has been eliminated), the County shall also take into account the employees accessibility needs due to disability and any individual accommodation plan.

## **9. Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment)**

The County shall comply with the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment) when undertaking new construction and redevelopment of public spaces in the following areas:

- Recreational trails and beach access routes
- Outdoor public use eating areas
- Outdoor play spaces
- Exterior paths of travel

- Accessible parking
- Obtaining services
- Maintenance of accessible elements



## Appendix "A"

### Customer Feedback Form

The County of Bruce is committed to providing you, our customer, with excellent service and to show how much we value, and appreciate you, by meeting and exceeding your expectations. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions about the service you received today. If you require an alternative format in order to provide your feedback, please let us know.

Please take a few moments to share your experience with us today.

1. Date of your visit: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Approximate time of your visit: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Department/Facility visited: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Were you satisfied with our customer service today?                      Yes    No

If no, please explain:

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5. Did you have any problem(s) with accessing our services, goods or facilities?

Yes    No

If Yes, please explain:

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6. What, in your opinion, can we do to resolve this problem(s)?

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7. Is this problem a common occurrence, and if so, in your opinion, what can we do to remedy the problem(s)?

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8. May we contact you for additional information? Yes    No

If yes, please provide your phone number and/or email:

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

In order for us to resolve this problem effectively and to help us better serve you and others in the future, please complete the following information:

Do you currently have a disability?    Yes    No    If yes, please explain:

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I agree to allow the Corporation of the County of Bruce to use the information collected on this form:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send completed form to County of Bruce, 30 Park Street, PO Box 70, Walkerton, Ontario N0G 2V0 or via email to [dvanwyck@brucecounty.on.ca](mailto:dvanwyck@brucecounty.on.ca)

Personal information on this form is being collected under the authority of Ontario Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, and will be used for the purpose of collecting feedback, and used in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Clerk, County of Bruce, 30 Park Street, Walkerton, Ontario N0G 2V0, Phone 519-881-1291 or email: [dvanwyck@brucecounty.on.ca](mailto:dvanwyck@brucecounty.on.ca)