

Breaking Down BARRIERS

A MULTI-FAITH GUIDE TO ACCESSIBILITY IN
PLACES OF WORSHIP



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A special thanks to all key informants who provided input for the creation of the Multi-Faith Guide, including representatives from: Buddhist, Catholic, First Nations, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant and Sikh communities.

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champions of accessibility of different faiths.

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INTRODUCTION

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed in 2005, with the goal of making Ontario accessible to people with disabilities by 2025. This will be accomplished through the implementation of mandatory accessibility standards in five important areas of everyday living: customer service, employment, transportation, built environment, and information and communications.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 (the Customer Service Standard) is now law. By January 1, 2012, all private businesses and organizations (including places of worship and non-profits) with one or more employees that provide goods, services and/or programs to the public or third parties will have to comply with the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.

The Customer Service Standard outlines a broad approach for businesses and organizations on providing goods, services and programs to people with disabilities within the framework of accessible customer service. It is an important piece of legislation that endorses the long-standing efforts of faith-based champions of accessibility for people with disabilities.

As a committed stakeholder in both the disability and faith communities, Reena worked with community partners to create a resource guide on implementing the Customer Service Standard within places of worship. This was accomplished through a three-phase project.

In the initial phase, champions of faith-centered accessibility were interviewed for suggestions on implementing the requirements of the Customer Service Standard. The draft guide was then piloted within places of worship and their feedback was used to create a user-friendly version of the resource guide.

In the final phase, consultations on developing a Multi-Faith Guide were held with champions of accessibility from Buddhist, Catholic, First Nations, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant and Sikh communities. Their feedback was instrumental in developing this resource guide entitled, **Breaking Down Barriers: A Multi-Faith Guide to Accessibility in Places of Worship.**

Electronic versions of the Multi-Faith Guide can be downloaded at:
www.reena.org

We welcome requests to post the Guide on other websites. Please contact aspodek@reena.org

USING THE GUIDE

This guide outlines a suggested step-by-step process for implementing the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.

Step 1 | Set up an Accessibility Committee or designate an Accessibility Officer.

While not mandated under the requirements of the Customer Service Standard, champions of faith-centered accessibility suggest that an Accessibility Committee or Officer is essential to the successful implementation and monitoring of the requirements within a place of worship's organizational structure.

The Accessibility Committee/Officer Guide for Places of Worship outlines the roles of the Accessibility Committee or Officer in the implementation process of the legislation, with suggestions for creating an accessibility committee.

Step 2 | Implement the requirements of the Customer Service Standard.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Guide for Places of Worship outlines suggestions for the successful implementation of the requirements of the legislation.

Please note: all items in **red** are requirements of the Customer Service Standard. The bulleted items are suggestions for fulfilling the requirements in places of worship.

Step 3 | Network with other places of worship.

Building Capacity: Networking on Accessibility in Places of Worship identifies the importance of networking with other places of worship, sharing successes, and dealing with the challenges throughout the implementation process.

THE ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE / OFFICER

GUIDE FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

Please Note:

Establishing an Accessibility Committee, or designating an Accessibility Officer is not a requirement of the Customer Service Standard. The roles and functions of the Accessibility Committee/Officer outlined in this guide are best practices for the implementation of the legislation, based on recommendations of champions of faith-centered accessibility.

Some of the suggestions go above and beyond the requirements of the legislation.

THE ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE / OFFICER

An Accessibility Committee is a group of committed congregants who coordinate and oversee accessibility initiatives for people with disabilities within their place of worship. This committee can be a formal sub-committee to the Board/Leadership, or it can be an informal collaboration. The committee designates a chair, who is responsible for coordinating committee meetings and functions. Membership should include a diverse range of interests and knowledge, including: congregants with disabilities and family members, congregants professionally or personally interested in accessibility, Faith Leaders, and members of the professional/maintenance staff and Board/Leadership.

If a place of worship does not have an Accessibility Committee, it should appoint an Accessibility Officer. The Officer could be a designated congregant or a staff member, and is responsible for overseeing the place of worship's accessibility-related functions. This person should be a champion of accessibility and have sufficient time to devote to this role.

ROLES OF THE ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE / OFFICER

- 1 | Drafts policies, practices and procedures on providing programs, goods and services to people with disabilities and presents them to the Board/Leadership for approval.
- 2 | Reviews policies, practices and procedures annually for consistency with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
- 3 | Assesses the congregation's need for specific assistive devices and negotiates with the Board/Leadership for provision of those devices.
- 4 | Conducts regular checks to ensure assistive devices are in good working order.
- 5 | Instructs ushers and other front-line volunteers on the use of assistive devices provided by the place of worship.
- 6 | Vets communications/publications to ensure they are accessible and provides information in alternative formats (e.g. large print) when necessary.
- 7 | Coordinates congregational announcements about the temporary disruption of services or facilities used by participants with disabilities.
- 8 | Coordinates accessibility training for all applicable staff and volunteers.
- 9 | Establishes a process for people to provide feedback on accessibility and formalizes the process for responding to feedback, including taking action on any complaints.
- 10 | Drafts documents required under the legislation for review by the Board/Leadership and makes those documents available to the congregation (if your place of worship has 20 or more employees).

ESTABLISHING AN ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

1 | The decision to establish an Accessibility Committee may come from the Faith Leader, the Executive Director, a Board/Leadership member, or any interested member of the congregation. Ensure that there is a commitment from the Faith Leadership and Board/Leadership to support the implementation of the requirements of the legislation.

2 | Recruit people to join the committee. Membership should include congregants with disabilities or family members, congregants professionally or personally interested in accessibility, Faith Leaders, and members of the professional/maintenance staff and Board/Leadership.

3 | Designate a committee chair. The committee's chair may be selected by the Faith Leader, the Executive Director, the Board/Leadership, or by consensus of the Committee.

The committee should then:

4 | Conduct an environmental scan of the place of worship's programs, goods and services. Consider all types of barriers: attitudinal, physical, systemic, informational, and technological.

5 | Determine the needs of the congregation based on the environmental scan. Taking into account the resources and staff available, select 3-5 goals for the first annual "Accessibility Plan". In preparation for compliance with the



Customer Service Standard, focus this first annual plan on customer service-related accessibility. The other gaps identified should be addressed in subsequent annual plans.

6 | Establish Mission and Vision Statements. Publicize these statements in weekly/monthly bulletins or other congregational publications. The committee's Mission/Vision statements should become part of the place of worship's organizational Mission/Vision statements.

7 | Establish Terms of Reference to determine roles, responsibilities, process and direction for the committee. They should include:

- Purpose of the committee
- Roles of committee members
- Decision-making procedures
- Reporting relationships
- Authority and accountability
- Resources
- Membership composition
- Meeting schedule

8 | Evaluate the goals and objectives annually and set new goals for the coming year.

ROLES OF THE ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE CHAIR

The Chair coordinates and oversees all of the functions of the Accessibility Committee and is the liaison with the Board/Leadership. It is the responsibility of the Chair to provide direction in setting the strategy and policies for the committee and ensure that the committee fulfils its responsibilities.

Other responsibilities of the Chair include:

- Planning the annual schedule of meetings
- Setting agendas and chairing committee meetings
- Reporting to the Board/Leadership as a standing item on their monthly meeting agenda (either through a verbal or written report)
- Ensuring that decisions made at meetings are implemented
- Preparing a strengths and needs assessment based on the committee's annual review of policies, practices and procedures
- Leading the process of appraising the annual accessibility goals

ROLES OF ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee members are the congregation's champions of accessibility for people with disabilities and provide assistance to the Chair by:

- Giving strategic direction on the implementation and monitoring of the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
- Using personal/professional knowledge, expertise or experience to help the committee reach sound decisions
- Supporting the effective and efficient administration of accessibility initiatives
- Helping to set overall policy, define goals, set targets and evaluate performance
- Supporting staff, Board/Leadership members and volunteers in accessibility training
- Declaring any conflict of interest while carrying out duties
- Being collectively responsible for the actions of the committee
- Abiding by the place of worship's policies and procedures
- Attending meetings, and reading reports and minutes in advance of meetings
- Keeping up-to-date on issues related to accessibility and inclusion

SAMPLES OF GOALS, TIPS AND STATEMENTS

Sample Goals

- Ensure that every person is treated with respect and dignity
- Enhance awareness of individual differences
- Remove attitudinal barriers that prevent accessible customer service for people with disabilities
- Post adequate accessibility signage

Sample Outreach Tips

- Write newsletter articles about accessibility
- Use the International Symbol of Accessibility on publications
- Place welcoming language in weekly/monthly bulletins
- Offer large-print bulletins
- Give sermons and text studies on disability awareness
- Involve people with disabilities in leadership positions

Sample Mission Statements

“To welcome and accommodate people with disabilities and their families, in our place of worship and in our faith community.”

“To guide our place of worship in supporting meaningful inclusion for all its members.”

“To accommodate people with disabilities so that all members of the community can feel part of our congregation.”

“To provide the opportunity for full inclusion and participation of all people, regardless of physical, cognitive, emotional or behavioral ability in all areas of religious and communal life.”

Sample Vision Statements

“The Accessibility Committee will pursue its mission by 1 | Supporting people with disabilities in the congregation. 2 | Educating lay leaders, volunteers, staff and congregants. 3 | Facilitating change by working with the Board/Leadership and staff and the community at large.”

“A place of worship where all members share a sense of dignity and respect within the framework of inclusion for all congregational activities.”

“The members and leadership of xxxx are committed to include people with disabilities as full and active participants in this Accessible Congregation where people with disabilities are valued as individuals. We remove barriers and attitudes that exclude people with disabilities from full and active participation. All people are encouraged to practise their faith and use their gifts in worship, service, study, and leadership.”

SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Date Created/Revised: xxxxxx

Chair: Appointed or rotated by committee members annually/bi-annually

Staff support: Chair or Program Director

Reporting Relationship:

The Chair reports to the Board/Leadership at their monthly meetings. The Chair will present an annual accessibility evaluation on the implementation of the accessibility policy and practices to the Board/Leadership.

Purpose:

- 1 | To ensure that our place of worship is a welcoming environment for people with disabilities.
- 2 | To develop and evaluate policies, practices and procedures on providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities.
- 3 | To encourage our members to become more inclusive of people with disabilities.
- 4 | To share information, network and offer mutual support to other places of worship and faith communities who are working towards becoming more accessible to people with disabilities.
- 5 | To train and/or provide training for staff, volunteers, ushers and Board/Leadership members.

Authority:

Unless otherwise stated by the Executive Director or the Board/Leadership, the committee has no direct authority for the allocation of financial or human resources.

Meeting Schedule:

The committee will meet at least six times annually, with meetings scheduled by the Chair as needed. The agenda for each meeting will be set in collaboration with the Chair and staff/member input.

SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Composition:

Membership will include: two or more staff members; Board/Leadership members; congregants with disabilities or their family members; and those who may have an interest or expertise in accessibility or inclusion.

Other Resources:

The committee may pursue additional human and financial resources to implement its projects as needed in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer, and with approval of the Executive Director or other appropriate staff or lay leadership.

Specific Areas of Responsibility:

- 1 | To identify the barriers within our place of worship that prevent people with disabilities from participating in religious and communal life.
- 2 | To broaden diverse participation within our place of worship.
- 3 | To raise awareness of the issues facing people with disabilities.
- 4 | To proactively recruit volunteers to the committee, so that it reflects the diverse needs of people with disabilities.
- 5 | To establish policies on providing accessible programs, goods and services to congregants with disabilities that are in compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- 6 | To monitor our programs, goods and services to ensure that practices and procedures are consistent with governing policies.
- 7 | To coordinate accessibility training and training materials for all relevant staff and volunteers.
- 8 | To utilize training resource materials to support compliance with the legislation.
- 9 | To ensure assistive devices that we provide are in good working order and that requests for assistive devices are met, as per approval from the Board/Leadership.
- 10 | To establish procedures for receiving feedback on our accessibility, document these procedures, and make them available to the congregation.
- 11 | To establish procedures for responding to feedback and taking action on complaints about our accessibility, document these procedures, and make them available to the congregation.

**THE ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE,
ONTARIO REGULATION 429/07, CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD**

GUIDE FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

Please Note:

All items in **red** are requirements of the Customer Service Standard. The bulleted items are suggested best practices for fulfilling the requirements in places of worship, based on the input of champions of faith-centered accessibility.

Some of the suggestions go above and beyond the requirements of the legislation.

POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing programs, goods and services to participants with disabilities.

- Establish an Accessibility Committee or designate an Accessibility Officer based on the guidelines suggested in **The Accessibility Committee/Officer Guide for Places of Worship**.
- Assign the Accessibility Committee/Officer to draft accessibility policies in consultation with **Appendix A: Accessibility Policy Template**.
- Present the draft policies to the Board/Leadership for approval.

Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity.

- Designate the Accessibility Committee/Officer to review policies, practices and procedures annually to ensure they are consistent with the following interpretation of the above principles:
 - **Dignity** - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
 - **Independence** - when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
 - **Integration** - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other participants (unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access programs, goods and services).
 - **Equal opportunity** - service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access programs, goods and services equal to that given to others.

POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Set a policy on allowing participants to use their own personal assistive devices to access your programs, goods and services and about any other measures you offer to enable them to access your programs, goods and services.

Your policy should specify that in your place of worship:

- Participants are permitted to use their own personal assistive devices to access ritual practice and other programs, goods and services.
- You will make every effort to provide assistive devices deemed necessary for accessing your programs, goods and services by the Accessibility Committee/Officer.
- Upon a participant's request to the Accessibility Committee/Officer, you will make every effort to provide the requested assistive devices and/or services and cover relevant financial expenses (when funds are available).
- Ushers, greeters and other front-line volunteers/staff will be trained on how to use the assistive devices available on your premises and be familiarized with the various assistive devices that may be used by participants with disabilities while accessing your programs, good or services.
- The Accessibility Committee/Officer will be responsible for ensuring that:
 - Assistive devices that you provide are in good working order
 - Front-line volunteers/staff are trained on how to operate these devices
 - Requests for assistive devices are met, as per approval from the Board/Leadership

TRAINING

Provide training on how to serve participants with disabilities for: staff, volunteers, contractors, those involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures, and anyone else who interacts with participants on your behalf.



- Designate the Accessibility Committee / Officer to:
 - Determine which staff and volunteers must be trained under the legislation - refer to section eight of The Compliance Manual available at:
http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?unit=cust-serv-reg&doc=workbook&lang=en&page=8#h1_8
 - Coordinate training in a format that is appropriate to the staff and volunteers being trained and that meets legislated requirements outlined in The Compliance Manual.
 - Create a policy outlining your commitment to training all applicable staff and volunteers. Include a summary of the contents of the training and details of when the training will be provided (only applicable to places of worship with 20 or more employees).

For Ushers, Greeters and Other Front-Line Volunteers / Staff

- Designate an accessibility trainer or an Accessibility Committee member who knows the legislation to lead an interactive training session prior to periods of peak attendance.
 - Consider collaborating with other places of worship
 - Provide user-friendly reference documents for trainees
- Alternatively, prior to periods of peak attendance, require front-line volunteers to complete Serve-Ability, a training e-module available at:
<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/serve-ability/splash.html>

For Administrative Staff and Lay Leaders

- Designate an accessibility trainer or an Accessibility Committee member who knows the legislation to deliver an orientation session on accessibility to the Board/Leadership and new members as required.
- Alternatively, require administrative staff and laypersons to complete the “policy makers” section of the Serve-Ability e-module available at:
<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/serve-ability/splash.html>

For Faith Leaders / Clergy

- Include Faith Leaders/Clergy at the Board/Leadership’s accessibility orientation meeting.
- Alternatively, require all Faith Leaders/Clergy to complete both the general and “policy makers” sections of the Serve-Ability e-module available at:
<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/serve-ability/splash.html>

If your place of worship has 20 or more employees refer to Section 10 of The Compliance Manual for documentation requirements.

Available at:

<http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?page=10&unit=cust-serv-reg&doc=workbook&lang=en>

(Note: Training to be completed before January 1, 2012)

FEEDBACK PROCESS

Establish a process for receiving feedback on how you provide service to participants with disabilities and how you will respond to feedback and take action on any complaints. Make information about your feedback process readily available to your congregation and the public.



- Determine how your place of worship will receive feedback on accessibility from participants.

Consider:

- Having a large-print and noticeable link on the home page of your website directing congregants to a section where they can submit feedback.
- Placing a suggestion drop box labelled “accessibility feedback” that is visible, accessible and regularly monitored in your main foyer or other easy-to-access location.
- Sending out an annual online survey about your place of worship’s accessibility via the congregation’s e-mail distribution list, or by mail.
- Notifying the congregation in weekly/monthly bulletins of a phone number or e-mail address where participants can provide feedback directly to the Accessibility Committee/Officer.
- Including a section on membership forms for feedback on accessibility.
- Broadcasting an announcement on a culturally relevant radio or television show, or social networking site, with contact information on where to submit feedback on the accessibility of your place of worship.

The Accessibility Committee / Officer should:

- Conduct an annual “needs and strengths” accessibility assessment based on information from various feedback channels.
- Take reasonable steps to address solutions to complaints/negative feedback on an ongoing basis.
- Create a policy outlining the procedures for responding to feedback from congregants.
- Involve the person who has voiced a complaint or concern in considering a solution.
- Prepare a document outlining the entire feedback process including information on:
 - Where, and in what ways, participants can provide feedback
 - What information participants should include in their complaint
 - Who is responsible for receiving feedback
 - What actions the Accessibility Committee/Officer will take when a complaint is received
 - Whether or not participants who submit feedback can expect an answer
 - The period of time expected for a response
- Post the document on your place of worship’s website, distribute hard copies, and e-mail electronic copies.

If your place of worship has 20 or more employees refer to Section 10 of The Compliance Manual for documentation requirements.

Available at:

<http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?page=10&unit=cust-serv-reg&doc=workbook&lang=en>

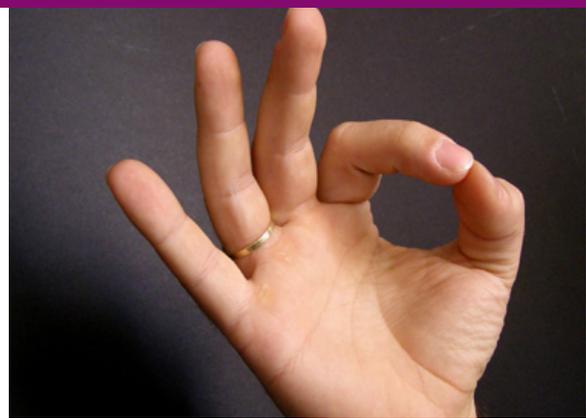
For sample feedback templates refer to Appendixes C & D

COMMUNICATION

Communicate with a participant with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

Direct Communication:

- Train all staff and volunteers who interact with participants on behalf of your place of worship on how to communicate with people with disabilities.
- Avoid overly wordy and complicated language in congregational sermons and other educational discussions. Speakers should customize language to meet the needs of the audience.
- Use visuals when conducting sermons and other educational discussions (e.g. diagrams, charts, full transcripts, summaries, live captioning, etc...).
- Communicate directly with a participant, not their support person.
- Use a participant's assistive device to communicate with them only when given permission by them or their support person.
- Equip ushers with notepads and pens, picture boards or other appropriate communication aids.
- Provide visuals when announcing page numbers during text-based ritual practices.



- Display a visual of the entire sequence of the text-based ritual practice at the front of the sanctuary/ prayer hall and provide visual cues at each step of the progression.

Indirect Communication:

- Provide bulletins / newsletters / publications in alternative formats (e.g. large-print, plain-language, electronic version encoded for compatibility with screen-reading software, etc...).
- Ensure your website is encoded for compatibility with screen-reading software and has a large font option.
- Use a web accessibility checker (such as <http://achecker.ca/checker/index.php>) to make sure your website is accessible.
- Consider broadcasting weekly congregational announcements on a culturally relevant radio or television show familiar to members of your community/congregation.

SERVICE ANIMALS



Let participants with disabilities bring their service animal onto any part of your premises open to the public or third parties, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by another law.

- Develop policies on the inclusion of participants accompanied by service animals into your place of worship's programs and services.
- Carefully consider the requirements of the legislation in formulating these policies.
- Educate the congregation about the different types and functions of service animals.
- Provide opportunities for participants to introduce/talk about their service animal to the congregation.

If service animals are excluded by another law use other measures to provide services to applicable participants.

If your place of worship has 20 or more employees refer to Section 10 of The Compliance Manual for documentation requirements.

Available at:

<http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?page=10&unit=cust-serv-reg&doc=workbook&lang=en>

SUPPORT PERSONS

Let participants with disabilities bring their support person with them when accessing programs, goods or services on your premises.

- Develop policies on the inclusion of participants accompanied by support persons into your place of worship's programs and services.
- Make efforts to ensure support persons feel welcome.
- Encourage participation of support persons wherever possible.
- Educate the congregation about the different types and functions of support persons.
- Offer an informal lesson to orient support persons with practices and rituals in your place of worship.
- Work with support persons, in relevant situations, to customize behavioural plans for the successful integration of their support recipients into sanctuary/prayer hall ritual practices.
- Announce when programs, goods or services, due to health and safety concerns, might require some participants to be accompanied by a support person.

Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a participant.

- Develop a policy regarding admission fees for support persons.
- Specify the exact fee that participants must pay for their accompanying support person when making announcements about membership dues and fees for applicable programs, goods and services.
- Consider offering relevant admission fees at a reduced price, or free of charge, to support persons of congregants.

If your place of worship has 20 or more employees refer to Section 10 of The Compliance Manual for documentation requirements.

Available at:

<http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?page=10&unit=cust-servreg&doc=workbook&lang=en>

NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTIONS OF SERVICE

Provide notice when facilities or services that participants with disabilities usually use to access your programs, goods or services are temporarily unavailable.

- When notifying participants of temporary disruptions of facilities or services, specify the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services available.
- Ask participants affected by the temporary disruption for suggestions on potential alternative accommodations.
- Apologize for the unfortunate circumstances.
- Decide how and where to provide the notice of temporary disruption. If possible, announce disruptions in different ways, such as: a sign posted in an easy-to-find location, an announcement on the website, or on outgoing voicemail.
- Create a database of congregants who require facilities or services for accessibility (e.g. elevators, assistive devices, ramps, etc...) so that in the event of a disruption they can all be notified.

The Accessibility Committee / Officer should consider:

- Making personal phone calls to participants likely to be affected by the temporary disruption.
- Sending e-mails to participants likely to be affected by the disruption.
- Including a large-print notice in the e-version of your weekly bulletin.
- Posting a large-print notification on the home page of your website.

If your place of worship has 20 or more employees refer to Section 10 of The Compliance Manual for documentation requirements.

Available at:

<http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?page=10&unit=cust-serv-reg&doc=workbook&lang=en>

For sample notices of disruptions of service refer to Appendix B

DOCUMENTATION

For a detailed outline of the documentation requirements refer to Section 10 of The Compliance Manual.

Available at:

<http://209.167.40.96/page.asp?page=10&unit=cust-serv-reg&doc=workbook&lang=en>

- **If your place of worship has 20 or more employees, you must prepare one or more documents that include the following:**

1 | Policies, practices and procedures for providing customer service to participants with disabilities.

facilities usually used by participants with disabilities to access programs, goods or services.

2 | Policies on the use of personal assistive devices and availability of other assistive measures.

5 | A description of the training policy, including a summary of training content and details about when training will be provided.

3 | Policies, practices and procedures regarding service animals and support persons. Include what amount, if any, will be charged for admission of a support person.

6 | A description of the process for receiving and responding to feedback, including what action will be taken on any complaints.

4 | Steps to take when there is a temporary disruption to services or

- **Notify the congregation that these documents are available upon request.**
- **Provide documents required under the Customer Service Standard to participants with disabilities in a format that takes into account their disability.**

APPENDIX A: ACCESSIBILITY POLICY TEMPLATE

This template provides suggestions on providing an accessible environment for people with disabilities. It can be used as is, or adapted to meet the needs of individual places of worship.

This sample policy template contains items that meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standard, and also items that are not specifically required, but are good practices.

Note that the policy may have to be revised as other standards are introduced under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

Accessibility Policy Statement:

Providing Programs, Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

1 | Our mission

The mission of **[insert name of place of worship]** is to **[insert Mission of place of worship]**.

2 | Our commitment

In fulfilling our mission, **[insert name of place of worship]** strives at all times to provide its programs, goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our programs, goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way as other participants.

3 | Providing programs, goods and service to people with disabilities

[Insert name of place of worship] is committed to excellence in serving all participants including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

3.1 | Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. We will provide publications in formats that are accessible for people with disabilities. We will train staff and volunteers on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

APPENDIX A: ACCESSIBILITY POLICY TEMPLATE

3.2 | Telephone services

We are committed to providing accessible telephone services to our participants. We will train office staff to communicate with participants over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly. We will offer to communicate with participants by **[insert other means of communication that apply, e.g. email, TTY, relay services]** if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs, or is not available.

3.3 | Assistive devices

We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to participate in and benefit from our programs, goods and services. We will ensure that people are permitted to use their own personal assistive devices to access sanctuary/prayer hall ritual practices and other applicable programs, goods and services. We will familiarize ushers and other front-line volunteers/staff with the various assistive devices that may be used by participants with disabilities while accessing our programs, goods or services.

[Insert name of place of worship] will provide assistive devices it deems necessary for accessing programs, goods and services. Ushers and other front-line volunteers/staff will be trained on how to use the assistive devices available on our premises including: **[insert list of assistive devices available on premises]**

Upon a participant's request, we will make every effort to provide the requested assistive device and/or service and to cover relevant financial expenses, upon approval from the Board/Leadership.

3.4 | Accessibility Committee / Officer

We are committed to establishing an Accessibility Committee/designating an Accessibility Officer to oversee all issues related to accessibility in consultation with the Board/Leadership. Committee membership will be comprised of champions of accessibility for people with disabilities, including congregants with disabilities or family members, congregants professionally or personally interested in accessibility, Faith Leaders, and members of the professional/maintenance staff and Board/Leadership.

The Accessibility Committee/Officer will have several roles. The committee/officer will establish policies on providing accessible programs, goods and services to participants with disabilities that are in compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07. The committee/officer will monitor

APPENDIX A: ACCESSIBILITY POLICY TEMPLATE

our programs, goods and services to ensure that practices and procedures are consistent with our governing policies. The committee/officer will coordinate accessibility training and training materials for all relevant staff and volunteers. The committee/officer will ensure that assistive devices provided by the place of worship are in good working order and that requests for assistive devices are met, as per approval from the Board/Leadership. The committee/officer will be responsible for reviewing feedback on accessibility and responding to any complaints or concerns.

4 | Use of service animals and support persons

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties.

We will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with participants are trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

We are committed to welcoming people 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 **[insert name of place of worship]**'s premises with his or her support person.

[Fees will not be charged for support persons] or [insert amount] [will be charged to the support person] accompanying a participant to **[insert applicable service or program]**.

Participants will be informed of these fees by a notice that will be posted in **[insert name of place of worship]**'s premises and **[include any other means by which the place of worship will notify participants of fee]**.

5 | Notice of temporary disruption

[Insert name of place of worship] will provide participants with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be delivered to participants by means of **[list notification procedure]**.

APPENDIX A: ACCESSIBILITY POLICY TEMPLATE

6 | Training for staff and volunteers

[Insert name of place of worship]'s Accessibility Committee/Officer will be responsible for coordinating training for all employees, volunteers and others who deal with participants or other third parties on our behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of accessibility policies, practices and procedures.

Individuals holding the following positions will be trained: **[Insert list of positions that require training]**.

7 | Feedback process

The ultimate goal of **[insert name of place of worship]** is to meet and surpass expectations while serving participants with disabilities. Comments on our programs, goods and services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way **[insert name of place of worship]** provides programs, goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by **[insert the ways feedback can be provided, for example: e-mail, verbally, suggestion box, feedback card, etc.]**. All feedback will be directed to the Accessibility Committee/Officer. Participants can expect to hear back in **[indicate number of days]**. Confidentiality will be respected.

Complaints will be addressed according to the procedures outlined by the Accessibility Committee/Officer. Complaint procedures will be documented by the Accessibility Committee/Officer and made available to the congregation.

8 | Modifications to this or other policies

We are committed to developing accessibility policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to this policy before considering the impact on people with disabilities or their families. Any policy of **[insert name of place of worship]** that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

9 | Questions about this policy

This policy seeks to achieve service excellence to participants with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or its purpose, an explanation or reply will be provided by, **[Name of Committee Chair/ Accessibility Officer]**.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE NOTICES OF DISRUPTIONS OF SERVICE

Sample 1

00/00/2010

Dear Participants,

Our main elevators will be out of service from April 1 to 15 for routine maintenance. Unfortunately, the upper level of our building will not be wheelchair accessible at this time. All programs scheduled during this time will be held on the main level.

We regret any inconvenience this may cause. If you have questions or concerns, please call **[phone number]**.

Thank you.

Accessibility Committee/Officer

Sample 2

00/00/2010

Dear Participants,

Our accessible washroom is out of service due to a broken pipe. A repair person will be on the premises tomorrow to fix it. In the interim, we have made arrangements for participants to use the accessible washroom at 123 Main Street, which is located next door to our premises. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Thank you.

Accessibility Committee/Officer

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE DOCUMENTS FOR OBTAINING FEEDBACK

Sample 1

Participant Feedback Form

Thank you for attending **[name of place of worship]**. We value all of our participants and strive to meet everyone's needs.

Please tell us the date and time you attended **[name of place of worship]**: _____

Did we respond to your needs today? YES NO

Were our programs/goods/service provided to you in an accessible manner?
 YES SOMEWHAT NO *(please explain below)*

Did you have any problems accessing our programs, goods or services?
 YES *(please explain below)* SOMEWHAT *(please explain below)* NO

Please add any other comments you may have: _____

Contact information (optional)*: _____

Thank you.

Accessibility Committee/Officer

*Please note: There may be privacy implications for organizations collecting personal information. Places of worship should seek their own legal advice regarding the privacy implications of collecting personal information in this manner.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE DOCUMENTS FOR OBTAINING FEEDBACK

Sample 2

Record of Participant Feedback

Date feedback received: _____

Name of participant [optional]: _____

Contact information (if appropriate)*: _____

Details: _____

Follow-up: _____

Action to be taken: _____

Accessibility Committee member: _____

Date: _____

*Please note: There may be privacy implications for organizations collecting personal information. Places of worship should seek their own legal advice regarding the privacy implications of collecting personal information in this manner.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE NOTICES OF THE FEEDBACK PROCESS

Sample 1

Dear Valued Participant,

We strive to improve accessibility for our participants with disabilities. We would like to hear your comments, questions and suggestions about the provision of our programs, goods and services to people with disabilities. Please contact the **[Accessibility Officer]** in person, by mail or at **[phone number]** or by email **[e-mail address]** to share your comments.

Thank you.

Accessibility Committee/Officer

Sample 2

Dear Valued Participant,

We strive to improve accessibility for our participants with disabilities. We welcome your feedback. Please call **[phone number]** or email **[e-mail address]** to share your comments, or request a copy of our accessibility policy.

Thank you.

Accessibility Committee/Officer

BUILDING CAPACITY

NETWORKING FOR ACCESSIBILITY IN PLACES OF WORSHIP

NETWORKING FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Why network for accessibility?

Preparing your place of worship for compliance with the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service can be a complex process. While minimal coordination is required for implementing some of the requirements, others (such as training and policies), may require the cooperation of your entire staff and volunteers. Champions of faith-centered accessibility suggest that individuals with personal and/or professional experience related to accessibility can help mitigate many of the organizational challenges involved in the implementation process.

Places of worship contain a wealth of professional and volunteer talent. As you begin the implementation process, you may be surprised by the resourcefulness of individual advocates in your own congregation. However, you may also be met by unexpected challenges or concerns.

Networking with other places of worship going through the implementation process can be an invaluable source of information and support. Networking provides an opportunity to share resources and discuss challenges. It is also an excellent way of connecting with like-minded individuals committed to the shared goal of an inclusive and welcoming community.

What is an Accessibility Network?

- An informal coalition of representatives from the faith community's Accessibility Committees and Accessibility Officers.
- A central body supporting the efforts of places of worship in preparing for compliance.
- A reference point for organizations interested in supporting accessibility in places of worship.
- An information hub, supporting the flow of compliance assistance resources and information to places of worship.

NETWORKING FOR ACCESSIBILITY

How to establish an Accessibility Network

- Inquire about accessibility-related efforts of other places of worship.
- Work jointly with other congregations to identify barriers and recommend strategies for compliance.
- Appoint one or two members of your Accessibility Committee, or the Accessibility Officer, to represent your place of worship at the communal level.

Advantages of an Accessibility Network

- ✓ Provides a forum for places of worship to share accessibility-related experiences.
- ✓ Promotes resource-sharing for places of worship needing assistance with accessibility.
- ✓ Strengthens accessibility-related funding proposals.
- ✓ Improves the dissemination of compliance-assistance resources to the community.
- ✓ Unites the community's champions of accessibility, increasing its "social capital."

