

Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation (SSMEDC)

Accessible Customer Service Policy

This policy contains items that meet the requirements of the customer service standard, and also items that are not specifically required, but are good practices.

Accessible Customer Service Policy Statement: Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

1. Our mission

The Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation is resolved to identify and remove barriers to full participation for persons with disabilities and to encourage our community partners to share our vision of a fully accessible community. We hereby make a commitment to prevent further barriers from being created in our future planning processes and implementation.

2. Our commitment

In fulfilling our mission, the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other customers.

3. Policy Statement

The Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development is committed to providing quality goods and services that are accessible to all persons that we serve.

4. General Principles

4.1 The Provision of Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

The Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation will use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

SSMEDC's goods and services are provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;

The provision of SSMEDC's goods and services to person with disabilities are 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 the SSMEDC's goods or services and;

Persons with disabilities are given an opportunity equal to that of persons without disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from SSMEDC's goods and services.

4.2. Communication

When communicating with a person with a disability, we will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. When providing documents required by the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service to people with disabilities, we will do so in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

4.3 Telephone services

We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our customers. We will train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.

We will offer to communicate with customers by email, TextNet (software system enabling communication with a deaf, deafened or hard of hearing person using a TTY (teletype communication device), Bell relay services (1 800 855 0511. If telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

4.4 Assistive devices

We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services. We will ensure that our staff is trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our goods or services.

We will ensure that staff knows how to use the assistive devices available on the provider's premises for customers. It is our policy to allow people to use their personal assistive devices to access our services.

4.5 Alternative Service Methods

SSMEDC will provide assistance of staff person to complete transaction customer transactions. Where applicable, service can be provided in another location.

4.6 Billing

We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all of our customers. Invoices will be provided in the following formats upon request: [eg hard copy, large print, email].

We will answer any questions customers may have about the content of the invoice in person, by telephone, TextNet or email.

4.7 Use of service animals and support persons

We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in 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 our 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 our premises.

Fees, admissions, registrations may be charged for support persons where admission is charged. SSMEDC will provide notice in advance about what admission fee will be charged for support persons, if applicable.

4.8 Notice of temporary disruption

On behalf of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie will provide notice to the public when there is a temporary disruption (planned or unexpected) in the facilities or services used by people with disabilities to access our goods or services. 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 placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises.

4.9 Training for staff

Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation will use E-learn training on our network and written materials as training options. Training will consist of online e-learn power point presentation which contains the following mandatory elements:

- The Retail Council of Canada's video "How May I Help You?'
- 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, a service animal or a support person
- Information about the equipment or devices available on the premises that may help with the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty in accessing the SSMEDC's goods and services
- Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation's policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.

Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way goods and services are provided to people with

disabilities. Staff will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

Timeline for Training

Training will be provided as soon as practical upon an individual being assigned the applicable duties as well as on an ongoing basis as changes occur to the policies, procedures and practices governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

Records of Training

Training records will be maintained as part of staff files and will include the date and contents of training.

4.10 Feedback process

The ultimate goal of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation and its divisions (Tourism, Development and Enterprise) provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by email, verbally, in person or by electronic customer feedback forms available on our website. All feedback will be directed to Manager, Corporate Services and will be recorded electronically.

5. Modifications to this or other policies

We are committed to developing customer service 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.

Any policy of the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

6. Questions about this policy

This policy exists to achieve service excellence to customers with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, or if the purpose of the policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided by, or referred supervising staff.