



The HC Companies™
Leader in Horticultural Containers

ACCESSIBILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY AND INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS REGULATION POLICY

1.0 GENERAL

1.1 STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT:

HC Companies is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity.

We are 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, 2005.

1.2 SCOPE:

This Policy shall apply to every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of HC Companies whether the person does so as an employee, volunteer, student or otherwise.

1.3 DEFINITIONS:

Accessible means customer service is provided in a manner that is capable of being easily understood or appreciated; easy to get at; capable of being reached, or entered; obtainable.

Assistive Device means any device or mechanism that assists a person with a disability in accessing, and benefiting from the services provided. Assistive devices may include, but are not limited to; American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, wheelchair, walker, cane, assistive listening device, visual alarms, or assistive software programs.

Disability: For the purposes of this policy 'disability' is defined according to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 as:

(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;

Guide Dog means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the Blind Persons' Rights Act R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7, s. 1 (1).

Service Animal is an animal that provides assistance for a person with a disability. It may be readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his/her disability; or a person may be asked to provide a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

2.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD POLICY

2.1 PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that our policies, practices and procedures for the provision of its services are consistent with the principles outlined in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and to effectively provide services to people with disabilities.
 - Strive always to provide services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.
 - Ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunity to access and benefit from our services in the same place and in a similar way as others and the removal of any barriers that may impede full accessibility for people with disabilities.
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2.2 POLICY:

COMMUNICATION:

We are committed to communicating with people with disabilities in ways that consider their disability. We are committed to providing accessible decisions, reasons for decision, correspondence, and documents about our mandate, processes and procedures. When communicating with a person with a disability, HC Companies will communicate in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES:

HC Companies recognizes that some individuals with disabilities use assistive devices to access our services. Our facility will permit these individuals to use their assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our services, as necessary.

SERVICE ANIMALS:

HC Companies recognizes that some individuals with disabilities may require the use of guide dogs or other service animals, to access services. Persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal will be permitted to enter the parts of our premises that are common areas and to keep the animal with them, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.

If the animal is legally excluded from some parts of the premises, HC Companies will provide alternative measures to enable the person to obtain, use or benefit from our services.

If a service animal is not readily identifiable, the customer may be asked to provide a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that it is a service animal.

SUPPORT PERSONS:

HC Companies further recognizes that some individuals with disabilities rely on support persons for assistance while accessing services. A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter the organizations' premises together with the support person and will not be prevented from having access to the support person while on our premises.

When there is a fee associated with a support person attending an event or service provided by HC Companies, the fee, if any will be communicated in advance.

NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTION:

HC Companies will provide customers 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 normally be posted on the premises, on the outgoing telephone message or on the website, as appropriate in the circumstances.

STAFF TRAINING:

HC Companies will provide training to applicable staff about the provision of services to persons with disabilities and all those who are involved in the development and approval of customer service policies, practices and procedures.

Applicable staff will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way 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.

Training will include the following:

- 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.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing the organization's services.
- HC Companies' policies, practices and procedures relating to the customer service standard.

Human Resources will keep records of the training provided including the dates on which the training is provided and the number of persons trained.

FEEDBACK PROCESS:

The ultimate goal of HC Companies is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving persons with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way HC Companies provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made by email, verbally, or in writing.

3.0 INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS REGULATION

3.1 ACCESSIBLE EMERGENCY INFORMATION:

HC Companies is committed to providing the customers and clients with publicly available emergency information in an accessible way upon request. We will also provide employees with disabilities with individualized emergency response information when necessary.

3.2 TRAINING:

HC Companies will provide training to employees and other staff members on Ontario's accessibility laws and on the Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities.

Training will be provided in a way that best suits the duties of employees, and other staff members. Training will include:

- Training of all staff will take place in December of 2016.
- Training will be customized to the type of work and contacts employees have.
- Additional reference material will be available to staff following the training.

3.3 KIOSKS:

HC Companies will take the following steps to ensure employees consider the needs of people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

No kiosks are currently used and none are currently foreseen, however, when and if kiosks are considered accessibility features will be considered in the purchase.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS:

HC Companies is committed to meeting the communication needs of people with disabilities. We will consult with people with disabilities to determine their information and communication needs.

- We will endeavor to make all publicly available communications accessible.
- Where needed, we will provide alternative formats and communication supports upon request.
- Staff will monitor our website changes and will forecast the need for a website that meets the WCAG 2.0 Level AA guidelines on or before January 1, 2021

3.4 EMPLOYMENT:

HC Companies is committed to fair and accessible employment practices.

We will take the following steps to notify the public and staff that, when requested, HC Companies will accommodate people with disabilities during the recruitment and assessment processes and when people are hired.

- Our job advertisements will include a statement about the availability of accessibility accommodations upon request.
- When arranging an interview, accommodations will be offered and made available upon request.
- When presenting a job offer, we will again include a statement about the availability of accessibility accommodations upon request.

HC Companies has both an individual accommodation plan and return-to-work policy for employees that have been absent due to a disability.

The accessibility needs of employees with disabilities are considered when using performance management processes.

3.5 DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES

HC Companies will meet the Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces when building or making major modifications to public spaces. Public spaces include:

- Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks, ramps, stairs, curb ramps.
- Accessible off-street parking.
- Service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas.

HC Companies will put the following procedures in place to prevent service disruptions to its accessible parts of its public spaces.

- In the event of a service disruption, we will notify the public of the service disruption and alternatives available.

4.0 FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on this accessibility plan, please contact:

Customer Service inquiries 1 (800) 452-9070 or email customerservicedept@hc-companies.com

Human resource inquiries 1 (800) 736-4865

Accessible formats of this document are available free upon request.