

Policy: Accessible Customer Service Standards	Procedure Number: 10.2
Subject: Communicating with People Disabilities Procedure	Effective Date: January 1, 2010
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Page: 1 of 2	

Communicating with People with Disabilities Procedure

Purpose:

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) for the Township of Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield will provide customer service to everyone in accordance with the four basic principles from the Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy: Dignity, Independence, Integration and Equal Opportunity.

Procedures/Practice:

The following steps shall be taken into consideration when providing accessible customer service.

1. Ask the person with the disability how you can help. Listen to the answer and act accordingly.
2. When speaking with someone in the office or on the phone, speak clearly and precisely. Do not mumble or speak too fast.
3. Offer a variety of methods of communication. This may include:
 - paper and a pen to write notes
 - copies of documents in large print
 - a private office to discuss issues away from other people
 - availability of staff of either gender depending on who the person may be more comfortable with.
4. If the person with a disability has an interpreter or support person with them, do not speak to the interpreter or support person, speak directly to the person with the disability.
5. All CSRs should have a clear understanding of the nature and scope of the accessible services the Township offers.

6. Ask before you help anyone and do not touch equipment or service animals without permission first.
7. Always face the person you are talking to and keep your hands or other objects away from your mouth so that a person can read your lips.
8. Do not assume what a person can or cannot do, always ask how you can help.
9. Understand that communication may take some time – be patient.
10. Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.
11. If you cannot understand what is being said, do not pretend to understand, ask the person to repeat themselves.
12. Provide one piece of information at a time.
13. Give the person your full attention. Do not interrupt or finish their sentences.
14. Verify your understanding of the situation or request.
15. Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.
16. Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations.
17. If you are unable to communicate clearly with a person with a disability, ask a co-worker for help. Another person may interpret the situation differently and be able to help the customer.
18. If you are experiencing communication issues and have run out of options to help, inform the customer that you are unable to currently help them, but ask if you can reschedule a meeting and perhaps make arrangements to have an interpreter available or any other equipment to aid the flow of communication.