

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Policy Statement:

The City of Hamilton's Mayor, Councillors and staff will communicate with persons who have disabilities in ways that are respectful and take into account the person's disability.

Definitions:

Communication is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information.

Communication must take place in a manner that takes into account the individual's disability. This means that you must consider how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications.

Responsibility:

It is the responsibility of all management, staff, Council, volunteers, agents and/or contractors and consultants, working on behalf of the City of Hamilton, to follow and carry out the procedures outlined below.

All management, staff, Council and volunteers will be made aware of and trained to better understand the purpose and intent of this policy and to implement the procedures effectively.

All staff that work with or contracts agents, contractors and/or consultants to work on behalf of the City of Hamilton will ensure that they are made aware of the purpose and intent of this policy and its procedures.

Procedures:

1. The City of Hamilton staff departments will ensure that inclusive methods of communications will be made available to persons who have disabilities and ensure that they are adapted, where possible, to take into account a person's disability.
2. Department staff will notify the public regarding the different kinds of inclusive communication methods available to them when using and or accessing goods, services and programs and staff will provide the procedures to the public on how to use these methods.

3. Department staff will be knowledgeable about the variety of communication methods available and must know how to provide them in various ways or know who in the organization has the skill to perform certain functions, or know where to access such services.
4. Finding a suitable communication method may require staff to explore options depending upon the situation or circumstances. For example, someone who is unable to speak or has difficulty speaking may use gestures, pen and paper or typing back and forth, when the information being exchanged is simple or straightforward. Other people with speech disabilities may use electronic communication systems and though it might be difficult to understand the synthetic voice, taking the time to listen carefully or to observe a visual display of the information, will often allow effective communication.
5. Staff that provide goods, services, programs and opportunities to the public, will be trained on how to communicate with persons with different kinds or types of disabilities. (See [Training Policy](#)).
6. Whenever possible, staff will plan ahead when providing goods, services, programs and opportunities to ensure that technical devices, which assist communication, are fully operational and appropriate for the needs of the individuals or group with disabilities.
7. When unavoidable, staff will direct persons with disabilities to alternate locations, where it is convenient to the person requiring service, so that they have access to appropriate communication methods, or arrange a time when a communication device or assistance can be made available.

Guidelines for Public Meetings and Open Houses:

1. Consideration will be given to the [Accessible Meeting Checklist](#) when scheduling, organizing and setting up public meetings, information centres and open houses.
2. Where possible, in accordance with the procedures, accessibility supports such as Real Time Captioners, American Sign Language Interpreters, Interveners, etc. will be made available on request. Note that these services will have to be scheduled or booked at least 5 working days or more, in advance.

3. Staff departments must ensure that certain assistive devices are provided at scheduled public meetings, information centres and open houses. Other types of assistive devices may be available on request with advance notice.
4. These assistive devices may include but not limited to: infrared hearing systems, FM systems, infrared amplification devices, pen and paper, electronic copies of presentations, text to talk versions of reports or materials, large print documents (where practicable) and magnification devices.
5. Documents will be made available, on request, in Braille, large print ([Clear and Large Print Guidelines](#)) and in electronic format. These requests could take from 24 hours to 10 or more working days to provide materials. Staff will advise the individual of the approximate length of time before their request is filled. Where possible, a limited number of large print copies will be made available.
6. Advertisements and notices of public meetings, information centres, open houses, including the provision of programs or services, will indicate the level of accessibility of the venue and/or where the accessible locations are and any accessibility supports being provided.

Staff will also provide a contact name and telephone number for persons with disabilities or their designate to call to make arrangements for accessibility support in advance of the public meetings, information centre or open houses ([Standard Accessibility Clause](#)).

Billing:

Where reasonably possible, the City of Hamilton will enquire whether billing information, tax bills, invoices, etc. are required in an alternate format for persons receiving goods and services. This enquiry can be done in a variety of ways such as inserts in tax bills and correspondence or on the City of Hamilton's website. Examples of alternate formats include but not limited to, hard copies, large print, e-mails, Braille, CD and audio format.

Record Keeping:

Where reasonably possible, the City of Hamilton staff, with the written consent of the person with a disability who may be a regular participant or service user, will indicate and record their specific communication needs for future reference, if deemed necessary and appropriate.