

September 26, 2013

SIT Accessible Customer Service Policy

POLICY

- 1.1 SIT is committed to excellence in serving all clients including people with disabilities. SIT strives to provide its services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.
- 1.2 SIT is also committed to making reasonable efforts to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the same opportunity to access our services in the same place and in a similar way as other clients.
- 1.3 Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that:
 - a) The services provided to persons with disabilities are integrated with the provision to others unless an alternative measure is necessary to allow a person with a disability to benefit; the alternative measure may be temporary or permanent;
 - b) Communications with a person with a disability are conducted in a manner that takes the person's disability into account;
 - c) Persons with disabilities may use assistive devices, service animals and support persons as is necessary to access SIT services unless superseded by other legislation.

PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of this Statement of Policy and Procedure is to state SIT's commitment to the prevention and removal of barriers to people with disabilities. This policy and its procedures also address the accessibility requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005* and *Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*.

SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to all SIT locations in Ontario.

RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of the managers to ensure that all employees follow the guidelines set out in this policy.
- 4.2 The Human Resources department is responsible for ensuring that all employees are trained under Accessibility Standards for Customer Service and its policy, practices and procedure.

DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 “**Disability**” means,
 - (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 coordination, 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*.
- 5.2 “**Assistive Devices**” are auxiliary aids such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (e.g., canes, crutches, wheelchairs or hearing aids).
- 5.3 “**Service Animals**” are animals individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.
- 5.4 “**Support Persons**” are any persons, whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend, who accompany a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs, or with access to goods or services.

REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07
Human Rights Code (Ontario)
Accommodation based on Disability Policy.

PROCEDURE

7.1 SIT is committed to excellence in serving all clients including people with disabilities and we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

7.2 Communication

- a) We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.
- b) We will train staff who communicate with clients on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

7.3 Telephone services

- a) We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone service to our clients. We will train staff to communicate with clients over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly.
- b) We will offer to communicate with clients by email, fax, or mail if telephone communication is not suitable to their communication needs or is not available.

7.4 Assistive devices

- a) We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use or benefit from our services. We will ensure that employees are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by clients with disabilities while accessing our services.

7.5 Billing

- a) We are committed to providing accessible invoices to all clients upon request. Invoices will be provided in the following formats when requested: **hard copy, large print, or email.**

- b) We will answer any questions clients may have about the content of the invoice by telephone or email.

7.6 Use of service animals and support persons

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) 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 SIT's 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.

7.7 Notice of temporary disruption

- a) SIT will endeavour to provide clients with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities, such as the elevator. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.
- b) The notice will be placed at all public entrances and service counters on our premises.

7.8 Training for staff

- a) SIT will provide training to all employees, volunteers and others who deal with the public or other third parties on their behalf, and all those who are involved in the development and approvals of customer service policies, practices and procedures.
- b) A record of all training provided will be kept.
- c) Training for new employees will be provided during orientation.
- d) Training will include the following:

The purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 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 accessing SIT's services.

d) Applicable employees will be trained on policies, practices and procedures that affect the way services are provided to people with disabilities. Employees will also be trained on an on-going basis when changes are made to these policies, practices and procedures.

7.9 Feedback process

- a) The ultimate goal of SIT is to meet and surpass client expectations while serving clients with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.
- b) Feedback regarding the way SIT provides services to people with disabilities can be made in a manner convenient to persons with disabilities including but not limited to:
 - In person at 37 Sandiford Road Suit 300, Stouffville, ON L4A 7X5
 - By phone at (905) 640-0808
 - In writing to Strategic Information Technology Ltd. 37 Sandiford Road Suit 300, Stouffville, ON L4A 7X5
 - By email at accessibility@stratinfotech.com
- c) Feedback received will be reviewed and investigated by the Human Resources department. If requested, follow up will be provided.

7.10 Modifications to this or other policies

- a) We are committed to developing 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.
- b) Any policy of SIT that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

7.11 Questions about this policy

- a) This policy exists to achieve service excellence to clients with disabilities. If anyone has a question about the policy, an explanation should be provided by, or referred to the Human Resources department at (905) 640-0808 or by email at accessibility@stratinfotech.com.
- b) A copy of this policy will be provided upon request and in a format that takes into account a person's disability if applicable.