Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy

Purpose

The Ottawa Fringe strives at all times to provide services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Ottawa Fringe is committed to giving disabled people the same opportunity to access its services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as other clients and visitors. This policy has been developed to address the Accessible Customer Service Standard of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (the "AODA") and applies in conjunction with and should be read together with other policies that affect the provision of services to Ottawa Fringe's clients and visitors.

Scope

The policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers, and other applicable third parties.

Commitment

The Ottawa Fringe is committed to accessibility. We believe that everyone has a right to enjoy theatre. The festival organizers are committed to giving a platform to diverse voices and bodies on our stages. The Ottawa Fringe shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles laid out in the AODA.

Providing goods, services or facilities to disabled people

The Ottawa Fringe is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

The Ottawa Fringe understands that obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to disabled people under any other law.

The Ottawa Fringe is committed to complying with both the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA.

The Ottawa Fringe is committed to excellence in serving all customers including disabled people.

Our accessible customer service policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Assistive devices

Disabled people may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our goods, services or facilities. An assistive device is an aid that supports a disabled person in moving or accessing a space such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or hearing aids).

In cases where the assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern or may not be permitted for other reasons, other measures will be used to ensure the disabled person can access our goods, services or facilities.

We will ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with various assistive devices we have on-site or that we provide that may be used by disabled customers while accessing our goods, services or facilities.

Each year and when we onboard new staff, staff are trained to understand what assistive devices are, and how to support the use of assistive listening devices, sensory backpacks and alternative communication systems. They will also familiarize themselves with assisting people who use a wheelchair, walker, scooter, cane etc.

Communication

We will communicate with disabled people in ways that take into account their disability. This may include the following:

Such as if a patron is Deaf we would use ASL or paper and pen to communicate with them. If they are a Blind person we would be more attentive to not gesture at items

but instead describe what is available. If someone is a wheelchair user we would offer wayfinding instructions that included the elevators and not the stairs.

We will work with the disabled person to determine what method of communication works best for them.

Service animals

We welcome disabled people and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on our premises and venues. A service animal is any animal that is trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a disabled person. A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

Support persons

A disabled person who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises. If a disabled person requires a support person they can identify this to the box office and a complimentary ticket will be issued for the support person.

We will notify customers of this by posting a notice in the following location(s):

- Online (on our website's access page)
- In-person (at our box office)

Notice of temporary disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for disabled customers Ottawa Fringe will notify customers promptly. This clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Services/Facilities include:

- Elevators in Arts Court and The Ottawa Art Gallery
- Sensory Friendly Equipment
- Assistive Listening and/or Audio Description Equipment
- ASL services

The notice will be made publicly available in the following ways:

- Online (on our website)
- On social media platforms

- In-person- posted at the box office, entrance of the building (if applicable), or out-of-service device (if applicable).

Training

The Ottawa Fringe will provide accessible customer service training to:

- all employees and volunteers
- anyone involved in developing our policies
- anyone who provides goods, services or facilities to customers on our behalf.

Staff will be trained on accessible customer service within 1 month after being hired.

Training will include:

- purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- Ottawa Fringe's policies related to the customer service standard
- how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- how to interact with disabled people who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- how to use the equipment or devices available on-site or otherwise that may help with providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities. These include:
    - Sensory Backpacks
    - Assistive listening devices and audio description equipment
    - Communication tools for Deaf, HoH or neurodiverse individuals
- what to do if a disabled person is having difficulty in accessing Ottawa Fringe's goods, services or facilities

Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service policies.

Feedback process

The Ottawa Fringe welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns.

Customers can provide feedback in the following ways:

- By email to Emma Ferrante, Front of House Manager, foh
- foh@ottawafringe.com
- By phone at 613-232-6162
- In person at 2 Daly Ave

Customers who wish to provide feedback on the way Ottawa Fringe provides goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities can provide feedback in the following way(s):

- By email to the Executive Director Alain Richer, alain@ottawafringe.com or Drea, Access Coordinator, drea@ottawafringe.com.
- By phone 613-232-6162
- By google form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeHjXg9Fa3f3yWGd0ZWK14pIoNAk-psRXCLx-fVkGkdcC_O5A/viewform

All feedback, including complaints, will be handled in the following manner:

All feedback will be handled internally and with confidentiality (if requested) by Alain, Drea or Emma depending on the request.

Customers can expect to hear back in 3 business days, if a response is required.

Ottawa Fringe will make sure our feedback process is accessible to disabled people by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

Notice of availability of documents

Ottawa Fringe will notify the public that documents related to accessible customer service, are available upon request by posting a notice in the following location(s)/way(s):

The Ottawa Fringe will provide this document in an accessible format or with communication support, on request. We will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. We will provide the accessible format in a timely manner and at no additional cost.

Requests for accommodation

The Ottawa Fringe will provide a timely response within 72 hours to an accommodation request. If the Ottawa Fringe is unable to support the request it will be explained clearly why it is not possible and will offer alternatives or offer a time to discuss with the person further to support the request in the future.

Modifications to this or other policies

Any policies of Ottawa Fringe that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for disabled people will be modified or removed.