

OSSTF/FEESO

ACCESSIBILITY AND AODA

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD



At OSSTF/FEESO
we believe that
our spaces should
be accessible and
inclusive.

Alternate formats are available upon request.



Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants
des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario

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OSSTF/FEESO represents over 60,000 education workers who are employees of school boards, universities and other educational institutions in Ontario. OSSTF/FEESO has a provincial office in Toronto and hosts provincial and regional events in many venues. The vast majority of our Districts have a local office to provide services to members. Districts and Bargaining Units also host events in other venues.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005

In 2005, *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, was enacted mandating accessibility standards. The goal of AODA is to make Ontario fully accessible by 2025. There are five accessibility standards:

- Customer Service
- Transportation
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Design of Public Spaces

The Customer Service Standard came into effect under the AODA in January 2012. It mandates organizations to address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities when accessing goods and services. This standard requires that OSSTF/FEESO:

- develop policies, procedures, and practices dealing with customer service
- provide training to OSSTF/FEESO staff and members who deal with OSSTF/FEESO members
- document policies and training

As part of our commitment to providing quality services, goods and opportunities to our members and others, OSSTF/FEESO will strive to ensure that its policies, statements, procedures and practices pertaining to providing goods and services to persons with disabilities are consistent with the following guiding principles:

- goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- goods and services will be provided to persons with disabilities in an integrated manner unless an alternative measure is necessary to access the goods or services; and
- persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to others to access goods and services and equal opportunities may require additional accommodations.

Frequently Asked Questions:

OSSTF/FEESO Statement of Commitment

OSSTF/FEESO is committed to fostering an accessible and inclusive environment that includes equal access and meaningful participation for persons with disabilities. Our commitment to accessibility involves identifying, preventing, and removing barriers to participation while challenging ableism and meeting the accessibility requirements established under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*.

Tips for Accommodating Persons with Disabilities:

- Communication should be centered in respecting the dignity of the person requiring assistance or services.
- If you are not sure what to do – ask “How may I assist you?”
- Service animals are working animals, and should not be treated like pets.
- Assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs or walkers) should only be touched or moved with consent of the owner. Consider the devices an extension of a person’s body.
- Making assumptions about someone’s capabilities can be harmful. Involve them in the process.
- Consider clear communications in multiple formats (verbal, print, electronic, editable).
- Be open to new solutions or different ways of doing things. Small changes can be very effective in helping everyone involved, not just the person requesting an accommodation.
- Language matters! Use inclusive language.
- When providing accommodations, it is crucial to remember that not all disabilities are visible, and that persons with disabilities have varying needs.

Q. I am allergic to dogs and another member has a service dog. What do I do?

A. Service animals provide support for persons to complete activities of daily living or life-saving interventions. Speak to your Health and Safety Officer or the event coordinator to ask about ventilation and also about seating so that exposure to the service animal is limited.

Q. Who has to be trained in AODA by OSSTF/FEESO?

A. Anyone dealing with OSSTF/FEESO members on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO. This includes: Bargaining Unit Executives, Workplace Representatives, Branch Representatives, Provincial Committee members, and District Office Staff.

Q. Do we have to add ramps or elevators to our office right now to comply?

A. Under the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standard, organizations must make new and redeveloped spaces accessible. This includes having ramps, lifts or elevators whenever there are stairs. If your office is not being redeveloped currently, you should prioritize to accommodate persons as necessary.

Q. When planning an event, how can I accommodate a person with a wheelchair or scooter?

A. Examine the venue prior to an event to ensure an accessible location that has barrier-free pathways and accessible bathrooms. Check entrances and doorways as well as tables and seating for accessibility. Don’t forget to ask the person about their specific needs.

Q. If our meeting is not held on OSSTF/FEESO premises, whose compliance guide do we use?

A. The organization that owns the building must have their own compliance guide and we must abide by their procedures.

OSSTF/FEESO AODA Customer Service Standard Compliance Statements

OSSTF/FEESO has developed compliance statements which address the following requirements of the AODA Customer Service Standards:

- The Use of Assistive Devices
- Communication
- The Use of Service Animals
- The Use of Support Persons
- Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities
- Training
- Feedback
- Agents and Others Providing Goods and Services on Behalf of OSSTF/FEESO
- Availability of the Required Documents

Compliance Statements Application

The OSSTF/FEESO Compliance Statements apply to every person who deals with OSSTF/FEESO members or the public on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO whether they do so as elected and appointed officials, employees, volunteers, agents or otherwise; and, every person who participates in developing OSSTF/FEESO policies, statements, procedures and practices that deal with providing goods and services to members or the public.

Equity Statement

OSSTF/FEESO is a democratic union that recognizes the importance of encouraging and supporting involvement by all members, while recognizing that some members have historically been marginalized. For the Federation to be at its best, all members must see themselves reflected in its goals, structures, and practices. OSSTF/FEESO will strive to identify and eliminate barriers to participation through programs, procedures, bylaws, and policies supported by specified resources and education.

OSSTF/FEESO supports equity, diversity, and social justice within the union, the workplace, and in broader society. Not all discrimination is deliberate or visible. Inadvertent, hidden and systemic discrimination must be identified and addressed. Discrimination and harassment must not be ignored when we see it. Overt discrimination and harassment within the Federation must be challenged and rectified. The marginalization of certain groups must be specifically recognized.

For OSSTF/FEESO, these groups include, but are not necessarily limited to, women, people of colour, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, intersexed, questioning, two-spirited, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, people with disabilities, francophones, and those whose participation is impeded because of economic circumstances or family status. Equal opportunity to participate in the Federation does not mean treating all members the same. Within a democratic framework, promoting the engagement of members of equity-seeking groups is a valid and necessary approach to reaching equal outcomes.

OSSTF/FEESO will be guided in its efforts to eliminate barriers by valid research, regular review, and consultation with the membership. Federation programs and policies designed to eliminate barriers must not only do so, they must be widely seen to do so.

Guiding Principles for the Provision of Goods and Services

As part of our commitment to providing quality services, goods and opportunities to our members and others, OSSTF/FEESO will strive to ensure that its policies, statements, procedures and practices pertaining to providing goods and services to persons with disabilities are consistent with the following guiding principles:

- goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- goods and services will be provided to persons with disabilities in an integrated manner unless an alternative measure is necessary to access the goods or services; and
- persons with disabilities will be given an opportunity equal to others to access goods and services and equal opportunities may require additional accommodations.

The Use of Assistive Devices

OSSTF/FEESO is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities can use their own personal assistive devices to access goods and services provided by OSSTF/FEESO. If for any reason OSSTF/FEESO is unable to accommodate the use of personal assistive devices, alternate accommodations will be provided in consultation with the person.

Communication

OSSTF/FEESO recognizes the importance of language and is committed to using inclusive language as well as inclusive and accessible communication practices. Communication should be centered in respecting the dignity of the persons requiring assistance or services.

The Use of Service Animals

OSSTF/FEESO welcomes the use of service animals accompanying persons with disabilities when accessing goods and services on premises that it owns or operates, unless the service animal is excluded by law.

If the service animal is excluded by law, OSSTF/FEESO will ensure that alternate measures are provided so that the person can access the goods and services.

The Use of Support Persons

OSSTF/FEESO welcomes persons with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person when accessing goods and services on property it owns or operates. At no time will persons with disabilities be prevented from having access to their support person.

There may be times when OSSTF/FEESO requires that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, if accompaniment is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person or others on the premises.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

OSSTF/FEESO welcomes persons with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person when accessing goods and services on property it owns or operates. At no time will persons with disabilities be prevented from having access to their support person.

There may be times when OSSTF/FEESO requires that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person, if accompaniment is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person or others on the premises.

Training

OSSTF/FEESO will ensure that the following persons receive training required by the AODA:

- all persons who deal with members or other members of the public on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO, whether they do so as elected or appointed officials, employees, volunteers, agents, or otherwise; and,
- all persons who participate in developing OSSTF/FEESO policies, procedures and practices dealing with the provision of goods and services to members or other members of the public.

The content of training must include:

- the purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*;
- the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*;
- how to accommodate persons with various types of disabilities;
- information about the assistive devices made available by OSSTF/FEESO that may help persons with disabilities access its goods and services;
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing goods and services; and,
- instruction on OSSTF/FEESO compliance statements, procedures and practices pertaining to the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.

Timeline for Training

Training should be provided as soon as practicable after elected or appointed officials, employees, volunteers and other persons are assigned their applicable duties. Training will also occur on an on-going basis as changes are made to the compliance statements, procedures and practices dealing with the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities.

Keeping Records of Training

OSSTF/FEESO local offices will be responsible for keeping records of the training required by these compliance statements, including the number of persons trained and the dates on which training occurred. The names of persons trained will be recorded for training administrative purposes subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

Feedback

OSSTF/FEESO welcomes feedback regarding the manner in which goods and services are provided to persons with disabilities. Feedback may be made in-person, by telephone, electronically or in writing.

Agents and Others Providing Goods and Services on Behalf of OSSTF/FEESO

Agents and others providing goods and services on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO must abide by the Customer Service Standard Compliance Statements and its corresponding Procedures and Practices.

Availability of Required Documents

Documents related to the OSSTF/FEESO AODA Customer Service Standard Compliance will be available on the OSSTF/FEESO website.

Format of the Documents

The document or the information contained in them is available in accessible format or with communication support. To request a copy of the documents in an alternate format, please contact the OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office.

Review and Modification of this Compliance Statements

OSSTF/FEESO is committed to ensuring that the Customer Service Standard Compliance Statements for members and other Customers and its corresponding Procedures and Practices respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Therefore, no changes will be made to the Compliance Statements before considering the effect on persons with disabilities and ensuring consistency with legislation.

Providing Goods and Services to Persons with Disabilities

Application

These procedures and practices deal with the manner in which goods, services and events are provided by or on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO to persons with disabilities.

Accommodating Persons with Disabilities

Persons who require assistance should inform an OSSTF/FEESO representative so that their accommodation requests can be addressed.

OSSTF/FEESO representatives are instructed to ask persons with disabilities what their needs are and how they would like to be assisted. Assumptions about a person's capabilities can be harmful. The person should be involved throughout the process. Interactions dealing with accommodating persons with disabilities will be done with sensitivity and discretion, respecting the dignity and independence of the person at all times.

Considerations for Determining Accommodation

Persons with disabilities may require some form of assistance or modifications in the way services are provided. When determining a suitable means of accommodating someone with a disability consider the effect the accommodation will have on the following:

- The guiding principles of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- The nature of the goods, services or events.
- The ability of others to access goods, services or events in their intended manner.
- The health or safety of the person with the disability and others, and
- Costs.

Advanced Notice for Requests

Advanced notice and the completion of an accommodation form will be required for certain accommodations. For example, due to the scarcity of sign language interpreters and real-time captionists as well as other forms of accommodation, we strongly advise that the OSSTF/FEESO office be notified of requests as soon as possible. Accommodation requests should be directed to the appropriate designate.

Assistive Devices Procedures and Practices

Persons are welcome to use their own personal assistive devices or devices provided by OSSTF/FEESO (where available) when visiting OSSTF/FEESO premises or when accessing goods and services provided by OSSTF/FEESO.

Requirements for the Safe Operation of Assistive Devices

It is the responsibility of the person using their assistive device to ensure that the device is operated in a safe and controlled manner at all times.

Restrictions in the use of Assistive Devices

There may be situations where OSSTF/FEESO has determined that a person's assistive device may pose a risk to the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others on the premises.

In such situations, OSSTF/FEESO will offer alternate accommodations in consultation with the person to assist them in obtaining, using and benefiting from the goods and services being offered by OSSTF/FEESO.

Note that OSSTF/FEESO will not be responsible for loss or damage to property however caused.

The use of Recording Devices

All people will respect the confidential nature of meetings and discussions when using recording devices and agreement may need to be reached with respect to the disposition of any recordings.

Transferring On and Off of Assistive Devices

OSSTF/FEESO representatives are not able to provide physical assistance to members or other members of the public such as assistance transferring on or off assistive devices. Members must be able to transfer on and off of their assistive devices independently or with the assistance of their support person.

The Privacy of Accommodation Requests

Requests for accommodation will be kept confidential and subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA).

Support Person Procedures and Practices

Application

These procedures and practices apply where OSSTF/FEESO provides its goods, services and events on premises it owns or operates and where OSSTF/FEESO members and other members of the public have access.

Support Persons for Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities may require the assistance of a support person to help them access goods, services and events provided by OSSTF/FEESO.

A support person can be a paid personal support worker (PSW), a volunteer, a trained caregiver, a family member, or a friend. Support persons provide assistance such as personal care, communication, mobility, accessibility, daily living needs, medical care and other forms of assistance.

Support Persons

At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on premises OSSTF/FEESO owns or operates.

Health and Safety Requirements and the Need for Support Persons

In some situations, OSSTF/FEESO may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person, only in situations where after consulting with the person with a disability and considering the available evidence, OSSTF/FEESO determines that,

- a) A support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.
- b) There is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and the health or safety of others on the premises.

If no support person is available, the OSSTF/FEESO designate will determine if an acceptable alternative means of providing goods and services is available, or whether services should and can be rescheduled when appropriate arrangements can be made.

The OSSTF/FEESO designate will approach these discussions with sensitivity and discretion.

It should be understood that OSSTF/FEESO representatives are not permitted to provide physical assistance to persons with disabilities. Support persons must be available to provide assistance if necessary.

Dealing with the Confidential Matters

Consent will be required from any person if their confidential matters are addressed in the presence of a support person or where OSSTF/FEESO determines consent necessary. In some situations support persons may be required to sign a confidentiality statement.

Requests for accommodating persons with disabilities will be treated as confidential and subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

Service Animals Procedures and Practices

Application

These procedures and practices apply where OSSTF/FEESO provides goods and services on premises it owns or operates and where OSSTF/FEESO members and other members of the public have access.

The Use of Service Animals by Persons with Disabilities

Service animals perform a number of tasks to support in activities of daily living for persons with disabilities including guiding people who are blind, alerting persons who are hard of hearing or deaf, providing assistance to a person with post traumatic stress disorder, etc.

Identifying Service Animals

An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if,

- the animal can be easily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability. Some service animals can be clearly identified by visual indicators such as a vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- the person provides documentation from a regulated healthcare professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Asking for Service Animal Identification

When asking for service animal identification OSSTF/FEESO representatives will do so with sensitivity and discretion.

Allowing Service Animals onto OSSTF/FEESO Premises

OSSTF/FEESO welcomes the use of service animals accompanying persons with disabilities when accessing goods and services on premises that it owns or operates, unless the service animal is excluded by law.

If the service animal is excluded by law, OSSTF/FEESO will ensure that alternate measures are provided so that the person can access the goods and services.

Areas off Limits to Service Animals

Restricting Service Animals By Law

Ontario Regulation 562 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, states that animals are not permitted where food is prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, sold, offered for sale, or processed. Exceptions are made for service dogs to allow them into areas where food is served, sold and offered for sale. For example, service dogs are allowed in restaurants but other service animals are not.

Municipal By-Laws

Some municipal by-laws restrict the types of animals permitted in their jurisdictions. Persons who use service animals are advised to check with the Town or City Clerk's Department of the town or city they will be visiting to make certain that their service animal is permitted in that municipality. If the service animal is not permitted, members and other members of the public are advised to arrange for another form of support, if necessary.

Other Areas Off-Limits to Service Animals

For health and safety reasons OSSTF/FEESO may identify certain areas as off-limits to service animals or to certain types of service animals. If members or other members of the public have concerns or questions they should contact the OSSTF/FEESO office they intend to visit.

Responsibilities of Persons with Service Animals

Persons with service animals must:

- be in full control of the animal at all times;
- not leave the animal unattended;
- make certain the animal is well behaved and as unobtrusive as possible;
- ensure the animal is not a threat to the health and safety of any person or other animals;
- ensure the animal's immunizations are up-to-date; and,
- wherever possible, should clean up after their service animal.

It should be understood that OSSTF/FEESO representatives are not permitted to handle or care for service animals.

Removal of Service Animals from OSSTF/FEESO

For the safety of everyone service animals will be required to leave OSSTF/FEESO if they display the following:

- Threatening behaviour - including aggressive barking, growling or other aggressive behaviour.
- Damage to persons or property - owners are responsible for damage caused by their service animal.
- Contagious illness - where there is a risk that the illness may spread to others.

Informing Persons to Remove Service Animals

When informing a person that their service animal is not permitted on OSSTF/FEESO premises or must be removed from the premises OSSTF/FEESO representatives will explain the reasons why, discuss alternative forms of accommodation and address the matter with sensitivity and discretion.

Fear and Allergic Reactions to Animals

While common allergic reactions and fear of animals do not constitute as disabilities, OSSTF/FEESO will make reasonable efforts to accommodate persons who have common reactions to service animals.

Although rare, severe and debilitating reactions to animals will be accommodated, by limiting exposure to the animal or by making reasonable efforts to provide goods and services in another manner.

Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

Application

These procedures and practices apply when there is a temporary disruption in the services or facilities usually used by persons with disabilities in order to access OSSTF/FEESO premises or its goods, services and events.

Procedures and Practices for Providing Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services and Facilities

When a temporary disruption occurs in services and facilities usually used by persons with disabilities, OSSTF/FEESO will make reasonable efforts to provide notice. Examples of facilities and services include, but are not limited to, ramps, elevators, automatic doors and accessible washrooms. The exception to providing notice may be during disruptions that occur due to an extensive power outage where certain facilities and services will be unavailable at these times.

Content of Notices

Notices of service and facility disruptions will include the following information:

1. the reason for the disruption;
2. the expected length of the disruption; and
3. information on alternative means of accessing the goods, services or events, if they exist.

Format and Placement of Notices

Notices of disruptions will be posted clearly and in a format that is reasonable under the circumstances.

- Notices will be placed in conspicuous locations, such as the entrances of buildings experiencing the disruption, or the site of the disruption, or on the website, or by other methods considered reasonable under the circumstances.
- Visual notices will be provided in large clear print using contrasting colours between the text and its background.
- The format and placement of notices will take into consideration the types of disabilities of members or others who use the disrupted service or facility. For example, when printed notices are used, OSSTF/FEESO will plan how to inform persons who are blind of the disruption, if they use the disrupted service or facility.

Responsibilities of OSSTF/FEESO Representatives

When becoming aware of an unexpected disruption in services or facilities OSSTF/FEESO representatives will notify the OSSTF/FEESO designate responsible for the disrupted service or facility so that they can follow the notification procedures.

OSSTF/FEESO Responsibilities

OSSTF/FEESO representatives who are responsible for the service or facility experiencing the disruption, or their designate will:

1. Determine a reasonable amount of advanced notice for planned disruptions, such as elevator maintenance and ramps that are blocked due to construction.
2. Provide notice of unexpected disruptions as soon as reasonably possible.
3. Determine an appropriate format and location for notices that will consider the disabilities of members or others who use the service or facility.
4. Identify alternative means of accessing goods and services affected by the disruption, if alternatives exist.
5. Make certain that notices contain the required content, including the location of alternative services, facilities or technologies and how to acquire them.
6. Remove notices at the end of the service or facility disruption.

Reasonable efforts should be made to provide notice so that persons with disabilities have time to consider alternatives that may be available. For example, due to certain disruptions a member may require additional time to arrange for a support person, or to book transportation services for an alternative meeting date or location.

Feedback Process

Purpose

This feedback process is intended for comments regarding the manner in which goods and services are provided to persons with disabilities.

The Importance of Feedback

Feedback helps to identify where changes might be needed so that OSSTF/FEESO can achieve its commitment to providing accessible goods, services and events to all of its members and other members of the public.

Where to Find Information about the Feedback Process

Information about the feedback process including the Feedback Form are available at www.osstf.on.ca/about-us/osstf-feeso-and-aoda.aspx. Additionally, OSSTF/FEESO representatives can provide information on how to provide feedback.

How to Give Feedback

Feedback may be provided in person, by telephone, electronically or in writing. To improve the ability of OSSTF/FEESO to effectively address the feedback provided, it is recommended that feedback is given in a timely manner.

Making a Complaint at the Local Level or the Provincial Level (Depending upon Who sponsored the Event)

a. Informal Resolution

Complaints about the manner in which services are provided to persons with disabilities, or about the accommodation provided to them should be addressed with the OSSTF/FEESO representative involved in the situation as soon as possible. The complainant and the OSSTF/FEESO representative can work towards a satisfactory resolution. If a resolution cannot be reached the OSSTF/FEESO representative will inform the person of the option of making a formal complaint.

b. Formal Complaint Resolution

At this stage, the person will be directed to the General Secretary who will assign someone to work with them towards a resolution.

Alternatively, they may complete a Feedback Form which will be forwarded to the appropriate Associate General Secretary.

c. OSSTF/FEESO Review of Complaints

After reviewing the formal complaint information the complainant will be contacted about the progress of the complaint.

d. Appeal to the General Secretary

If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, an appeal may be forwarded to the General Secretary or their representative who will work with the parties involved to towards a resolution.

Accessible Formats of Feedback Proceedings

Information pertaining to the feedback process will be provided in an accessible format.

Feedback about Others Providing Goods and Services on Behalf of OSSTF/FEESO

Persons or organizations providing goods or services on behalf of OSSTF/FEESO must follow the Feedback Process and assist OSSTF/FEESO with investigations and provide all relevant information when requested.

Confidentiality

Information pertaining to members or other members of the public, their complaint, and any persons, who may be named in the complaint, will be held in confidence subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

Contact

For questions about the compliance statements or to receive a copy of the compliance statements, or to provide feedback about situations that occurred at the Provincial Office located at 60 Mobile Drive, please contact OSSTF/FEESO at:

www.osstf.on.ca/contact

60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario M4A 2P3

TEL 416.751.8300

TEL 1.800.267.7867

FAX 416.751.3394

Feedback about local functions or events should be directed to the local office. Each person will develop and publicize their feedback and complaint process.