



## OFFICIAL POLICY

Section: Part 1

Subject: **Accessible Customer Service**

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### **PURPOSE**

In 2005, the government of Ontario passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (the "AODA")*. It is the goal of the Ontario government to make Ontario accessible by 2025. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations ("IASR") under the AODA require that Safari Niagara establish, implement, maintain and document an Accessible Customer Service Policy which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities and to meet its requirements under the IASR.

In accordance with the IASR, Safari Niagara will:

1. Post this Policy on our website ([www.safariniagara.com](http://www.safariniagara.com))
2. Provide notice of Temporary Disruptions
3. Provide training for all employees of Safari Niagara prior to their first shift.
4. Maintain the current Feedback Process

Safari Niagara will have at all Health and Safety Information Stations a copy of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

### **POLICY**

Safari Niagara is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to individuals with disabilities under any other law.

Safari Niagara is committed to complying with both the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA and is committed to excellence in serving our valued customers including those with disabilities.

This policy is consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality or opportunity for those individuals with disabilities.

### **ASSISTIVE DEVICES**

An assistive device is a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help with daily living.

Most assistive devices are "personal assistive devices," such as a wheelchair or walker, white cane, hearing aid, oxygen tank or communication board. They belong to the person using them and are part of their personal space.

### **Tips for serving a customer with a personal assistive device:**

1. Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.
2. Don't move assistive devices or equipment (such as canes or walkers) out of the person's reach.

Individuals with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our facility. 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 person with a disability is able to access the facility.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Employees of Safari Niagara will communicate with individuals with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability.

We communicate with people many times every day, either face to face, on the phone or in writing. When communicating with someone with disability, it is important to remember to treat each person as an individual. Also, treat people with respect and consideration and in the way that you would want to be treated.

Some general tips for successful communication:

1. Use a normal tone of voice—do not raise your voice unless asked to
2. Be polite and patient—do not rush the conversation
3. Speak directly to the person rather than the person with them
4. Ask the person what will help with communication—there are different ways to communicate
5. Don't pretend to understand—let the person know you are having difficulty; try asking yes or no questions
6. Be flexible—reword rather than repeat anything that is not understood
7. Only refer to the person's disability if necessary or relevant
8. Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but respect the person's wishes if they don't accept your offer
9. Avoid saying anything that implies the person with disability is superhuman, courageous or special
10. Relax—everyone makes mistakes; apologize if you believe you have embarrassed someone.

### **SERVICE ANIMALS**

Safari Niagara welcomes individuals with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

When Safari Niagara staff cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, staff will ask an individual to provide documentation from a regulated health

professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

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.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

1. College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
2. College of Chiropractors of Ontario
3. College of Nurses of Ontario
4. College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
5. College of Optometrists of Ontario
6. College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
7. College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
8. College of Psychologists of Ontario
9. College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

Due to the unique aspects of operations and the sensitivity of some of the animals to perceived predators, designated areas such as interactive animal demonstrations, the children's petting zoo, service and non-public areas may be prohibited to service dogs for valid reasons.

Accredited trained service animals (guide animals for the visually impaired and specially trained animals for the physically disabled, hearing impaired, autistic, etc.), accompanied by their respective owners, will be permitted under specified conditions in most areas of a zoo.

Safari Niagara will carefully consider the health and welfare of their animal collection and the enjoyment of other visitors in the establishment of areas that may be accessed by service animals.

Safari Niagara asks that all service animals be vaccinated against rabies, canine distemper, leptospirosis, parvovirus, and canine adenoviruses (CAV-2) within the past year. Service animals will also be free of internal and external parasites. Proof of vaccinations from the animals' veterinarian must accompany the animal and be satisfactory *prior* to admittance into the park.

It will be the responsibility of the Admissions Staff to ensure the guide animal has met all criteria before access is allowed into the park. Admissions Staff will also notify Animal Care in the event a service animal is in the park. The use of radio with a "Code Friend" will be called to notify all staff of its presence.

It will be determined by attending Animal Care Staff whether the service animal is causing undue stress on animals in certain areas of the park. Should there be a

problem the Animal Care Manager or Senior Animal Care Employee will be notified immediately and a decision will then be made whether or not to remove the service animal from the area.

## **SUPPORT PERSONS**

An individual with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them while visiting Safari Niagara. The regular gate fee will be charged to both the support person and the individual(s) with a disability for admission to Safari Niagara. Unless the individual has an Access 2 card.

The Access 2 card is for people of all ages and types of permanent disabilities who require the assistance of a support person at hundreds of participating entertainments, cultural and recreational venues across Canada. Safari Niagara is a participant in this program.

A support person is an adult who accompanies a person with a permanent disability to assist with services that are not provided by the employees at the participating venue, such as assistance with eating, administering medication, communication and use of the facilities.

How the Access 2 card works:

1. The Access 2 cardholder (the individual with a permanent disability) presents the Access 2 card when they arrive at the gates of Safari Niagara.
2. The Access 2 cardholder pays regular admission
3. The Access 2 cardholder receives 1 Free Admission for their support person.

In certain cases, Safari Niagara might require an individual with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for the health or safety reason of:

1. The person with the disability
2. Others on the premises

Before making a decision, Safari Niagara will:

1. Consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs
2. Consider health or safety reason based on available evidence
3. Determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the persons or others on the premises.

If Safari Niagara determines that the support person is required, we will waive the admission fee for the support person.

## **NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTION**

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services at Safari Niagara for customers with disabilities, Safari Niagara 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.

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

1. By calling Safari Niagara
2. The notice will be posted both at Admissions and Guest Services
3. Staff within Admissions and Guest Services will inform the disabled guest prior to entry into the park.

**TRAINING** Safari Niagara provides accessible customer service training to all employees, volunteers and co-op students prior to the start of their first shift.

Training will include:

1. Purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the customer service standard.
2. Safari Niagara's policies related to the customer service standard
3. How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
4. How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
5. What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Safari Niagara's facilities.

## **FEEDBACK**

**PROCESS** Safari Niagara welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns.

Customers can provide feedback at the time of their visit to the Guest Services, by phone or filling out the attached Accessibility Access Customer Comment Form P1-AD-19A found both on our website at [www.safariniagara.com](http://www.safariniagara.com) and at Guest Service. Customers may also email to [info@safariniagara.com](mailto:info@safariniagara.com). When emailing forms please indicate in the subject line "Accessibility Comment".

All feedback inquiries will be reviewed and answered in an appropriate amount of time in the same way the inquiry was received. Those inquiries requiring more than 5 days will be issued the following response again by the same way the inquiry was received. (By phone, fax or email)

"We appreciate your concerns; your inquiry is still being assessed; a Safari Niagara representative will be in touch within the next 10 business days. "

## **NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS**

Safari Niagara will notify the public that documents related to accessible customer service are available both on our website and at Guest Services. Notifications will be posted at Guest Services.

Safari Niagara will provide this document in an accessible format or with communication support, upon request. Safari Niagara will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. Safari Niagara will provide the accessible format in a timely manner and at no additional cost.

*Modifications to this or other policies that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.*