

CORPORATE POLICY



Policy Title: **Standards of Customer Service for Waterloo**
Policy Category: **Administrative Policy**
Policy No.: A-041
Department: Corporate Services
Approval Date: September 23, 2024
Revision Date: N/A
Author: Leslie Hepditch
Related Documents/Legislation: Employee Social Media Policy
Disconnecting from Work
Policy Accessibility Policy
Respectful Behaviour Policy
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Key Word(s): customer service, response times, email, voicemail

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Corporation of the City of Waterloo (the “City”) is committed to the guiding principle of operational excellence, striving to provide exceptional service that meets the needs of all customers, employees and volunteers of the City. Customer Service Standards are intended to ensure that every customer is served respectfully, timely and consistently across all divisions and intake channels.

PURPOSE:

To establish customer service standards for the City of Waterloo that reflect and ensure an equitable, fair, and consistent standard of practice that reflect the City's commitment to service excellence and core organizational values related to customer service.

DEFINITIONS:

After Hours: The time when a division does not have regularly scheduled staff for the intake of customer service requests / inquiries.

Mandatory Policy, *Municipal Act*: No
Policy Administration Team, Review Date April 25, 2024
Corporate Management Team, Review Date July 3, 2024

Auto Attendant: An automated voice menu on some telephone lines. Callers can navigate specified services by receiving directions to press a button that corresponds to a particular service, person or department.

City: The Corporation of the City of Waterloo.

Customer: Any individual, business, property owner, or visitor seeking a service from the City of Waterloo.

Digital Communication Tools: Digital platforms and tools to request information related to City of Waterloo services and programs. Includes online forms from the City's website, communication on Engage Waterloo, and communication on social media channels (such as but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.).

Intake Channels: Methods that customers can use to interact with the City of Waterloo. Includes but is not limited to in-person, phone, email, and digital communication tools.

Inappropriate Behaviours: Any behaviours that obstruct or hinder the ability of others to use and/or enjoy City facilities/lands, or participate in City services, programs or events, or compromise the safety and health of others, including staff, are unacceptable and prohibited.

One Business Day: The 24-hour period after a request/inquiry is made during Regular Hours of the division, taking into consideration weekends and holidays, and force majeure.

Regular Hours: The time when a division has regularly scheduled staff for the intake of customer service requests. Regular hours differ by division, and in some cases, service. Please see Attachment 1 for the standard Regular Hours by department.

Response: When staff acknowledges the receipt of a customer request/inquiry. This may include responding to the request, or as required acknowledging the request and providing a suitable timeframe for response.

Staff or Employees: City of Waterloo full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees, volunteers, students and contractors delivering service on behalf of the City.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all forms of customer service provided by City Employees to each other and external customers. Includes customer service through intake channels.

POLICY COMMUNICATION:

The Chief Administrative Officer (or designate) will communicate the procedures and standards provided in this policy to staff within 90 calendar days of implementation and as the Chief Administrative Officer (or designate) deems appropriate thereafter. Copies of this policy will be made available through the City's website and intranet. Employees hired after the implementation of this policy will receive a copy of the policy as part of the City's new hire orientation process.

POLICY:**1.0 Customer Service Standards****1.1 Telephone / Mobile Device Standards**

Staff will return all Customer calls within a maximum of two (2) business days, to acknowledge receipt of the inquiry or in direct response to the inquiry.

- Whenever possible, phones should be answered promptly.
- Voicemail boxes shall be checked daily to prioritize the urgency of requests.

Staff will assess the Customer's need(s) to eliminate unnecessary transferred calls.

- All staff will aim to resolve Customer requests by involving as few transferred calls as possible. Staff will use existing tools and resources to direct Customers to the correct location/person as soon as possible.
- As needed, staff will use tools and resources available that assist with interpretation and communication.

If Employees do not have regular access to their landline or office phone (due to desk sharing, working from home, etc.), inbound calls to these lines should be forwarded to an alternative phone where the employee can be reached.

All Employees will maintain a personal outgoing voicemail message and update it when they are scheduled to be away for more than one (1) business day. All voicemail messages should include a name and alternate contact.

In divisions where auto attendants are used, supervisors shall ensure that the auto attendant messaging is accurate and up to date.

1.2 Email Standards

Staff will provide a response to all emails within two (2) business days, unless otherwise defined for a particular service on the City of Waterloo website. At a

minimum, the response shall acknowledge receipt of the email and outline the expected timing of next steps.

All Employees shall use an out of office email message when they are scheduled to be away for more than one (1) business day. All out of office emails should include a date of return and an alternate contact.

All employees are required to use the City of Waterloo email signature template.

Shared emails (general emails that are shared between multiple staff members) should include:

- An automated response to Customers that acknowledges receipt of their email and advises them on next steps/response times.
- A clear schedule or similar mechanism that outlines the lead and backup employees for responding to shared emails, to ensure no email is missed.

1.3 In-Person Standards

1.3.1 City facilities

Staff interacting with other Employees or Customers shall provide a safe, healthy, respectful and positive environment, as referenced in the Respectful Behaviour Policy.

1.3.2 Customer Service Counters

At customer service counters (e.g., City of Waterloo Service Centre, Recreation Facilities, City Hall), Customers are to be serviced in the order they arrive, except when a Customer has a scheduled appointment.

Where Staff are responsible for responding to Customers through in-person and phone Intake Channels, in-person Customers should be prioritized. Phone calls should then be responded to as soon afterwards as practically possible.

1.3.3 Home Visits/Field Inspections

For any scheduled appointment, Staff completing a home visit or an inspection in the field shall make every effort to inform the Customer if they are going to be late. After the appointment, Staff should ensure that the Customer is aware of the next steps and/or follow-up actions.

1.4 Digital Communication Standards

In accordance with the City's Social Media Policy, all Staff will provide a response to all specified digital service requests, including online form submissions and social media inquiries, within two (2) business days, unless otherwise defined for a particular service on the City of Waterloo website.

Online forms should include an automated response to Customers that acknowledges their form submission and advises them on next steps and anticipated response times. Staff will use a standard automated response wherever possible.

2.0 Customer Requests that Demonstrate Inappropriate Behaviours

The City of Waterloo is committed to treating all Customers with respect and expect that all Customers engaging with Staff will also act with respect. If a Customer acts in a manner that is disrespectful, abusive, intimidating, threatening, or unreasonable, Staff reserve the right to restrict communication with that individual and disengage from communications. Such actions will not be tolerated, and steps will be taken in accordance with the Respectful Behaviour Policy to address the situation as determined appropriate by the City.

3.0 Accessibility Guidelines

All Customer interactions must adhere to the City of Waterloo's Accessibility Policy, to ensure customer service is aligned with AODA requirements.

Staff should support customers who require language support or American Sign Language (ASL) through corporately available interpretation services.

If Customers express accessibility-related concerns about unfair service delivery, Staff are encouraged to identify alternative supports available to support the Customer.

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 All Employees (including supervisors) are responsible for:

- Adhere to these standards in every Customer interaction.
- Respond to Customer requests in a timely, consistent, and accurate manner.
- Serve all Customers with dignity, respect, and integrity.

- Effectively collaborate with other City staff to ensure the best outcome and response for the Customer.
- Advise of their working status as soon as reasonably possible when out of the office or otherwise unavailable (e.g. out of office messages, including email and voicemail).
- Treat Customers respectfully while complying with all City of Waterloo policies, by-laws, and regulations.
- Report to their supervisor if their workload or other factors are preventing them from being able to meet and/or exceed these expectations.
- Collect service data for the purpose of improving response times, efficiencies and overall service delivery.

4.2 Supervisors are responsible for:

- Communicating expectations to Employees about adherence to this policy.
- Ensure customer service guidelines, standards and processes are easily available and accessible to all Employees.
- Ensure customer service is delivered according to AODA accessibility standards and cultural sensitivity is practiced.
- Ensure auto attendant messaging is accurate and up to date.

4.3 Managers are responsible for:

- Providing overall leadership to ensure the effective delivery of this policy.
- Ensure Staff are provided with appropriate training on all aspects of their interaction with Customers including service standards, AODA standards, cultural sensitivity, and others as applicable.
- Measure and improve customer service processes by implementing innovative ideas, applying appropriate technology, training Staff to be helpful and knowledgeable, and encouraging teamwork among Staff. Improvements to response time, efficiencies and overall service delivery will be made through routine analysis of the collected data on an ongoing basis.

COMPLIANCE:

In cases of policy violation, the City may investigate and determine appropriate corrective action.