

TOWNSHIP OF SOUTHGATE

Policy No. 99

R-Zone – Respect and Responsibility Policy

Council Approval: October 15, 2025



1. Policy Statement

The Township of Southgate is committed to maintaining safe, inclusive and respectful spaces across Township facilities, programs and events. The R-Zone Policy establishes a clear framework to guide interactions between Township employees, Council, volunteers and members of the public. It also provides a guideline on how to address inappropriate behaviour in all Township spaces.

Through this policy, the Township of Southgate shows its commitment to high quality service delivery, public safety and respectful relationships.

2. Purpose

The Township of Southgate prides itself in fostering a culture of unity and community. As the Township continues to grow and diversify, it is essential to ensure and protect the rights of all individuals and ensure respectful interactions.

This policy:

- **Promotes Respect** by emphasizing individual responsibility for one's actions and mutual respect in all interactions.
- **Protects Safety** by outlining inappropriate behaviours and providing staff with procedures to address incidents promptly and consistently.
- **Supports Accountability** by defining clear roles and responsibilities for public, staff and management.
- **Ensures Consistency** by aligning with other Township policies and relevant legislation, including the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Ontario Human Rights Code.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that:

- Employees can perform their duties with confidence and security.
- Members of the public engage in positive and respectful interactions with Township employees, volunteers and elected officials.
- Township facilities and events remain safe and welcoming for all participants.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Township employees and individuals who interact with Township employees, including but not limited to contractors and consultants, elected officials, volunteers, and those appointed to Council's Committees and/or Boards.
- Conduct of members of the public while attending or participating in Township facilities, programs, or events.
- Communications in any format including in-person, verbal, written, electronic, or online interactions.
- All facilities, properties, and spaces under the authority of the Township of Southgate, including recreational centers, libraries, administrative offices, Council Chambers, public works facilities, fire hall, and transfer stations.
- Offsite interactions with any person employed by or acting in any official capacity on behalf of the Township.

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4. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- a. **CAO** means the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the Township of Southgate, or their designate.
- b. **Council Member** means an elected member of the Council of the Township of Southgate.
- c. **Inappropriate Behaviour** means any action that, due to its nature or frequency, has an unreasonable or disproportionate impact on the Township, staff, elected officials, other members of the public, services, resources or public safety. Actions include, but are not limited to:
 - i. **Verbal Conduct**
 - threats, profanity, or use of rude or abusive language
 - attempts to provoke, incite anger or intimidate others
 - verbal harassment or discriminatory remarks
 - ii. **Physical Conduct**
 - aggressive or intimidating physical interactions
 - throwing objects deliberately or in a threatening manner
 - physical assault including striking of another person
 - iii. **Illegal Activity**
 - illegal consumption of alcohol or drugs
 - theft or attempted theft
 - possession of weapons
 - vandalism or destruction of property
 - iv. **Breaches of Township Policies or By-Laws**
 - actions that contravene Township permits, policies, or by-laws
 - behaviour that reasonably gives rise to concerns for public safety
 - v. **Unreasonable Demands, and Persistence**
 - insisting on outcomes that are impossible or inappropriate given the circumstances
 - demanding services beyond the scope or capacity of the Township
 - refusing to accept that the Township cannot take a particular action or provide a specific service
 - persistently contacting the Township regarding a matter that has already been reviewed and resolved
 - making excessive phone calls, emails, visits, or other communications after being asked to stop
 - contacting multiple staff members in an attempt to obtain a different response
 - frequently disputing decisions despite valid explanations being provided

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vi. **Uncooperative Behaviour**

- withholding information or misrepresenting facts
- refusing to cooperate with the complaint investigations while seeking resolution
- making frivolous, vexatious, or unjustified complaints about staff
- placing excessive demands on staff time and resources through repeated correspondence or combined requests and accusations

d. Manager means any senior management official of the Township of Southgate, excluding members of the Council.

e. Member of the Public means any individual who interacts with the Township of Southgate and includes but is not limited to: residents, visitors, applicants for permits or licenses, contractors, service providers, and clients.

f. Staff means any employee of the Township of Southgate, including Supervisors, Managers, and the CAO.

g. Supervisor means any employee with authority over other staff or municipal property.

h. Township means the Corporation of the Township of Southgate.

i. Township Event means any event sponsored, organized, hosted, or delivered by the Township.

j. Trespass Notice means a formal letter issued by the Township of Southgate informing an individual that they are banned from Township properties, events spaces etc. and outlining the terms and duration of the ban.

k. Workplace means any land, premises, location at, upon, in or near which a Township staff works.

5. Responsibilities

The purpose of this policy is to foster respectful and cooperative relationships between the Township and members of the public. Achieving this objective requires clear responsibilities at all levels.

a. Members of the Public are responsible for:

- Complying with the principles contained in this policy; summarized in respect for oneself, respect for others and responsibility for one's action.
- Conducting themselves in a manner that ensures that Township spaces, programs and services remain safe, inclusive and accessible.

b. Staff are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy in all interactions with the public.
- Demonstrating professionalism and respect in all communications and conduct.
- Reporting any contraventions to this policy through the procedures outlined in this policy.

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c. Supervisors are responsible for:

- Contacting Human Resources when incidents occur that involve inappropriate behaviour and are in contravention to this policy.
- Train and educate staff on this policy and ensure staff follow the policy.

d. Senior Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring appropriate procedures are initiated when required.
- Exercising authority to expel individuals from Township property or events where necessary, in accordance with this policy.

e. The Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for:

- Taking action when a person's conduct meets the criteria of unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour under this policy.
- Reviewing the complaint and/or investigation with the senior manager involved and/or Human Resources to provide approval of no trespass orders.

f. The Human Resources Manager is responsible for:

- Maintaining record of all incident reports, including
 - A copy of the initial report;
 - The name and address of each individual classified as exhibiting inappropriate behaviour;
 - The outcome of the case;
 - Details of restrictions imposed, if any;
 - The duration of such restriction.
- Initiating an investigation, if/when appropriate.
- Sharing the information with appropriate departments to ensure staff are aware of restrictions that have been imposed on individuals.

6. Incident Procedure

a. When Staff are Subject to Inappropriate Behaviour in Person:

- Report inappropriate behaviour to a senior member of staff (Supervisor/ Manager or their delegate) present.
- Without compromising safety, advise the individual(s) to stop the activity immediately, utilizing the de-escalation techniques where appropriate (Schedule B).
- If the behaviour continues, inform the individual(s) that the police will be contacted.
- If refusal persists, do not engage in confrontation. Call the police and relocate to a safe area with others if necessary.
- Complete RZone Incident Report (Schedule A), to be submitted to the Human Resource Manager.

b. When Staff are Subject to Inappropriate Written or Verbal Communication:

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- Report the incident to the Supervisor/ Manager or designate as soon as possible, and within 24 hours.
 - Direct the individual to stop the behaviour, using de-escalation techniques where appropriate.
 - If the individual persists, terminate communication and do not respond to further attempts; this may include hanging up the phone on someone.
 - Complete an RZone Incident Report (Schedule A), to be submitted to the Human Resource Manager.

c. When Staff Receive a Report of an Incident They Did Not Witness:

- Report the alleged behaviour to the Supervisor/ Manager or designate within 24 hours.
- Complete an RZone Incident Report (Schedule A), to be submitted to the Human Resource Manager.

d. Public Reporting

- Members of the public are encouraged to report acts of inappropriate behaviour to a Township Staff member within 24 hours of the incident.
- Staff will then complete an RZone Incident Report (Schedule A) and submit to the Human Resources Manager.

The Township's primary concern is the safety of staff and members of the public. If staff or members of the public feel personally threatened at any time, they are to contact the police immediately. Staff or members of the public are not expected to place themselves at risk when responding to incidents.

7. Follow-up Process

Once an RZone Incident Report has been submitted to Human Resources:

- a. Within three (3) business days of forms being submitted, the Human Resources Manager, in consultation with the Manager and/or CAO as appropriate, shall start an investigation of the incident, as appropriate, to determine the merit of the claim. The investigation may or may not include interviews with individuals affected.
- b. If the Complaint is substantiated, the Remedial or Correction Actions, will be taken as appropriate and written notice to the complainant may be supplied by regular mail, in person or email and shall state only that action has been taken and any further instances should be reported immediately.
- c. If the Complaint is not substantiated, the complainant and the individual whom the complaint was against, will be notified that the complaint has been filed and no further action will be taken.
- d. All copies of complaints and notices will be kept on file as per the Township's record retention policies and procedures.

8. Remedial or Corrective Actions

- a. The Township will respond to inappropriate behaviour in a manner proportionate to the harm caused or potential risk posed. Wherever possible, a graduated approach will be applied, beginning with warnings and progressing to

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suspensions or prohibitions, while prioritizing public safety, inclusiveness, and freedom from harassment.

- b. Individuals who engage in any inappropriate behaviour, as defined in this policy, may, depending on the severity, be removed immediately from the premises.
- c. Progressive steps include:
 - i. **Verbal Warning** - In events where Staff or a Supervisor is able to de-escalate an incident and the member(s) of the public is compliant, Staff and/or the Supervisor will verbally warn and remind the individual(s) responsible for the inappropriate behaviour to not engage further in inappropriate behaviour and an incident report may be retained.
 - ii. **Written Warning** - If further incidents of this nature reoccur or if the incident is a serious single occurrence, individuals responsible for inappropriate behaviour will receive a written warning within seven (7) days of the completion of any investigation. This notice may be delivered in person, by mail, or electronically, and a record will be retained by the Township.
 - iii. **No Trespass Order** - Decisions to restrict access to Township services, programs, or facilities are significant and will be made only after ensuring:
 - The complaint has been addressed in accordance with this policy, Township procedures and relevant legislation; and
 - Staff have made all reasonable efforts to address and resolve the matter with the individual.
 - The CAO has reviewed and approved the restriction.
- d. Remedial or Corrective Action Enforcement Guidelines have been established (Schedule C) to outline standardized consequences for substantiated acts of inappropriate behaviour and may be used to guide the decision making for action to be taken. It is understood that the guidelines do not include all types of behaviour or severity, and they may be adjusted to reflect the actual actions of the individual.
- e. In addition to any other measures taken, where any damage to municipal property has occurred, the individual(s) responsible will be required to reimburse the municipality for all costs associated with any repairs, an administration fee, as well as any lost revenues that may be incurred.

9. Appeal Process

- If an individual wishes to appeal any action or decision taken by the Township in relation to this Policy, they may present their case in writing to the Council to be discussed in a closed session meeting of Council in accordance with Section 239(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended.
- Appeals must be submitted within 14 days of issuance of the written notice.
- The decision of Council shall be deemed final.

10. Related Legislation and Policy

- a. Occupational Health and Safety Act R.S.O 1990, c. O. 1
- b. Occupiers' Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.2
- c. Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, C. H.19

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- d. Southgate Policy #33A Occupational Health and Safety Policy & Manual
 - e. Southgate Policy #33B Workplace Respect Violence and Harassment Policy

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at minimum every three (3) years and updated if required.

12. Schedules

- a. RZone Incident Report Form
- b. De-escalation Techniques
- c. Remedial or Corrective Action Enforcement Guidelines
- d. Sample Warning Letter
- e. Sample Trespass Letter

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Schedule A - RZone Incident Report Form

Individual Reporting Details

Name: _____ Department: _____

Position: _____ Date Incident Occurred: _____

Incident Information

Date: _____ Time: _____

Incident Location: _____

Incident Information: _____

Participant(s) Involved

a) Complainant Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Email: _____

b) Respondent Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Email: _____

Category *Please check all that apply

☐ Verbal Assault

☐ Use of Drugs or Alcohol

☐ Vandalism

☐ Possession of Weapon

☐ Physical Assault or Harm

☐ Theft of Property

☐ Threats

☐ Harassment or Bullying

☐ Other, explain below

Other: _____

Describe in detail what happened: _____

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Who else was made aware of the incident?

If there are more individuals involved, please attach extra pages.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Town/City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Email: _____

If another individual was made aware of the incident, how were they informed?

☐ In-person ☐ Telephone ☐ Email

☐ Other (explain) _____

Date the individual was informed (day/month/year): _____

Please identify if another individual witnessed the incident

If there are more individuals who witnessed the incident, please attach extra pages.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Town/City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Email: _____

Date File Closed: _____ Position: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____

For Internal Use Only:

Action Taken

☐ Investigation Date: _____ ☐ Verbal Warning Date: _____

☐ Written Warning Date: _____ ☐ Letter of Trespass Date: _____

Appeal: ☐ NO ☐ YES Date: _____

Outcome: _____



Schedule B – De-escalation Techniques

RECOGNIZING AGGRESSION

It is important for employees to be able to recognize signs of aggression. Below is a list of physical and behavioural changes that can indicate if a person is becoming escalated:

PHYSICAL BEHAVIOURAL

Flushed or pale Face Loud voice or yelling/shouting
Seating or perspiring Pointing or jabbing fingers
Clenched jaw or teeth Swearing or verbal abuse
Shaking or trembling Standing too close
Clenched fists Aggressing posture
Rapid breathing Throwing, hitting or kicking things
Fidgeting Pacing and restlessness
Glaring eyes Violent gestures
Rise in pitch of voice/change in tone

DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

If staff starts to notice any of the above behaviour when interacting with a customer, apply these de-escalation techniques.

Active Listening

- If the customer is before you, give direct eye-contact, avoid interrupting the customer and allow the customer to vent.
- Utilize short phrase like “I see” or “I understand” to reassure the customer that they have your undivided attention.
- Repeat and paraphrase what the customer says, to show you were listening and interested.
- Avoid asking the customer to repeat, take notes if necessary.
- Ask open-ended questions for further clarity.

Maintain Composure

- Take a deep breath.
- Use a calm and steady tone. Never argue with customers when they are angry, displeased, or complaining. If you become upset, it will only escalate the situation further
- Use a lower tone of voice, and don’t get defensive if insults or anger are directed at you. Do not take it personal. Remind the customer that you are there to help

Empathize with the customer

- Acknowledge and validate the customer’s feelings without passing judgement or agreeing with their position.
- Use statements like – “I understand this is frustrating for you” or “I am sorry you’re having this issue”.

Use positive Body Language, if applicable

- Non-threatening body language, like uncrossed arms and a relaxed posture.

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Remain aware of your surroundings, if applicable

- Notice if there are others in the room, whether they too could become a threat. Also observe if there are others that could be in harm's way, especially members of our more vulnerable community, such as the disabled, elderly or children.
- Map out objects such as chairs, tables or items on a table.
- Take note of exits and openings and whether you are blocking the customer

Redirect Negative Energy Toward Problem-Solving:

- Guide the conversation from the expression of grievances to collaborative problem-solving. Ask probing questions like "How can we resolve this together?" to shift the focus.

Take a break

- Assess the situation and ask the customer if they would like to take a break. If in person, you may ask "Would you like a drink water?" or You may ask to be excused while you call a supervisor to further assist with providing a solution.
- If it is a telephone call, you may as, "Is it ok if I place you on a brief hold while I do further check?"
- If the customer agrees, this much needed break can assist to de-escalate the situation.

Clarify next steps

- Summarize the next steps and let the customer know what to expect and when
- Do not make promises you cannot keep; if you say you will call – make sure you call back even if you do not have an update.

If these de-escalating techniques do not work, be prepared to either ask the customer to leave the premises, if in person, or advise them that the communication will be terminated if over the phone or by email.

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INCIDENT	FIRST OFFENCE	SECOND OFFENCE	CONSEQUENT OFFENCES
• Aggressive or intimidating approaches to another individual; verbal or written • Attempts to goad or incite anger in others • Intimidating others	Verbal Warning	Written Warning	Minimum 1 year ban and review to determine if further consequences are warranted.
• Threats • Harassment	Minimum 3 months ban	Minimum 6 months ban and review to determine if further consequences are warranted.	Minimum 3 years ban and review to determine if further consequences are warranted.
• Throwing of objects in a deliberate or aggressive manner intended or not intended to strike a person. • Physical striking of another individual • Illegal consumption of alcohol or drugs • Possession of weapons	Minimum 6 months ban	Minimum 1 year ban and review to determine if further consequences are warranted.	Minimum 3 years ban and review to determine if further consequences are warranted.
• Vandalism to building or property • Theft of property	Minimum 1 month ban plus restitution or payment for cost of repairs and administration fee.	Minimum 6 months ban plus restitution or payment of cost of repairs and administration fee and review to determine if further consequences are warranted.	Minimum 3 years ban plus restitution or payment of repair costs and administration fee and review to determine if further consequences are warranted.

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Schedule D – Sample Written Warning

Date

Individual's Name

Address

Town/ Postal Code

Delivered by Registered Mail

Re: Inappropriate Behaviour Incident at the Township of Southgate

Dear _____,

The Township of Southgate has implemented an RZone Policy to promote a positive, safe and supportive environment for all members of the public and staff. The "R" in RZone stands for Respect and Responsibility – Respect for yourself; respect for others; and Responsibility for your actions. The RZone enforces zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour and action, violence and vandalism at all Township facilities, properties and Township sponsored events, programs, in written or verbal communications (including email or phone), in Township vehicles, or any other location where the Township staff are present.

This is to advise you that your behaviour on _____ at
(Date)

_____ is in violation of our RZone procedure and in
(Property)

particular, your conduct in _____.
(Description of incident)

Any future incidents of this nature will not be tolerated.

For your reference, a copy of the Township of Southgate RZone policy is enclosed. If you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at email address _____ or telephone (519) 923-2110.

Yours truly,

Senior Manager - Department
Township of Southgate

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Schedule E – Sample Trespass Letter

Date

Individual's Name

Address

Town/ Postal Code

Delivered by Registered Mail

Re: Inappropriate Behaviour Incident at the Township of Southgate

Dear _____,

The Township of Southgate has implemented an RZone Policy to promote a positive, safe and supportive environment for all members of the public and staff. The "R" in RZone stands for Respect and Responsibility – Respect for yourself; respect for others; and Responsibility for your actions. The RZone enforces zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour and action, violence and vandalism at all Township facilities, properties and Township sponsored events, programs, in written or verbal communications (including email or phone), in Township vehicles, or any other location where the Township staff are present.

This letter is to inform you that we have reviewed the incident which you were involved in on _____ at _____

(Date)

(Property)

is in violation of our RZone procedure and in particular, your conduct in _____.

(Description of incident)

Based on our review of the incident, you are hereby given notice pursuant to the Trespass to Property Act, R.S.O. 1990, C.T.21, that we are issuing you a _____ month ban effective _____ from all Township facilities, properties,

(Date)

Township sponsored events, programs, in Township vehicles, or any other location where Township staff are present.

If you do enter onto any of these premises it will be considered trespassing and we will request, you leave the premises. If required, we will involve the Ontario Province Police to enforce the trespass notice.

I have attached a copy of the Township of Southgate Zone Policy for your information. You have 14 days to appeal this suspension in writing to the Township of Southgate. Your appeal will be reviewed, and the decision will be final.

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For your reference, a copy of the Township of Southgate RZone policy is enclosed. If you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at email address _____ or telephone (519) 923-2110.

Yours truly,

CAO

Township of Southgate