

Training Resource: (Edited)

Unit 1: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is a law in Ontario that allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them.

AODA Section 1.

Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by:

- a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and
- b) providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and various sectors of the economy in the development of accessibility standards.

The standards require the people or organizations identified in the standard to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. Barriers keep people with disabilities from fully participating in activities that most of us take for granted. The customer service standard is the first standard to come into effect under the AODA.

The Government of Ontario is working with different standards development committees to develop other standards in the areas of transportation, information and communications, the built environment and employment. These committees include people with disabilities or their representatives, business owners, government representatives and members of the public.

The standards development committees propose standards for government consideration and the government may adopt them by regulation. Once adopted by regulation, the standards will impose requirements to make these areas more accessible to people with disabilities. They may apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario.

Who are people with disabilities?

When we think of disabilities, we tend to think of people who use wheelchairs and who have physical disabilities that are visible and obvious. But disabilities can also be invisible. We cannot always tell who has a disability. The AODA uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

AODA Section 2.

In this Act, “disability” means,

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

What are barriers?

When you think about accessibility, it is important to be aware of both visible and invisible barriers. A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability.

Attitude is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome because it's hard to change the way people think or behave. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or invisible disabilities – for example, assuming someone with a speech problem has intellectual limitations and speaking to them in a manner that would be used with a child; or forming ideas about the person because of stereotypes or a lack of understanding. Some people may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering help, or they ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether. Remember, attitude is a major barrier that's within our power to change.

Architectural or structural barriers may result from design elements of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout.

Information and communication barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. For example, a person who is Deaf cannot communicate via standard telephone. Things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that isn't clear or easy to understand can all cause difficulty.

Technology, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers if they are not set up or designed with accessibility in mind.

Systemic barriers can result from an organization's policies, practices and procedures if they restrict people with disabilities, often unintentionally – for example, a clothing store with a "no refund" policy and no way for someone in a scooter to enter the change room.

Self-test: Unit 1

Which of the following statements about the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is **false**?

- a) Accessibility standards can apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario.
- b) The customer service standard is the only standard being developed under the AODA.
- c) The government of Ontario is working with different standards development committees to develop other standards.
- d) The goal of the AODA is to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025.

Answer:

b) is the correct answer:

Other accessibility standards will cover transportation, information and communications, the built environment and employment.

Unit 2: The Customer Service Standard

Ontario's accessible customer service standard is now the law. It came into force on January 1, 2008. People, businesses and other organizations that provide goods or services to the public or to other businesses or organizations in Ontario ("providers") have legal obligations under the standard. The standard is aimed at making their customer service operations accessible to people with disabilities.

The customer service standard is the first of five standards that will help lead the way to an accessible Ontario by 2025.

Who has to comply with the customer service standard?

The standard applies to all people or organizations, both public and private, that:

- Provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other businesses or organizations, and
- Have one or more employees in Ontario.

Providers in the following sectors are affected:

- Private
- Non-profit, and
- Public, including provincial and municipal governments, universities, colleges, hospitals, school boards and public transportation organizations.

What do all providers have to do to comply?

The following is a summary of requirements.

Providers must:

- Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
- Make reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
- Have a policy dealing with people's use of their own assistive devices to access goods or services or any other measures the organization offers to enable an individual access the goods or services.
- Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability.
- Let people with disabilities bring their service animals onto the parts of the premises open to the public or other third parties, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.
- Let people with disabilities be accompanied by their support persons while on the parts of the provider's premises open to the public or other third parties.
- If a provider charges admission, let people know ahead of time what, if any, admission will be charged for a support person.
- Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
- Train anyone who interacts with the public or other third parties on the provider's behalf on topics outlined in the customer service standard.

- Train anyone who is involved in developing the provider's customer service policies, practices and procedures on topics outlined in the customer service standard.
- Establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way the organization provides goods or services to people with disabilities, including the actions to be taken if a complaint is received, and make information about the process readily available to the public.

What additional requirements apply to some providers?

Designated public sector organizations and other providers with 20 or more employees must:

- Document in writing all their policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities
- Let customers know that the documents are available upon request
- Upon request, provide the documented information to a person with a disability in a format that takes into account their disability.

Self-test: Unit 2

Under the customer service standard, providers of goods and services must meet specific requirements. Which of the following is **not** a requirement?

- Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
- Have a policy dealing with people's use of their own assistive devices to access goods or services, or the availability, if any, of other measures which would enable them to do so.
- Train only managers and executives.
- Accept feedback and have a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way in which the organization provides goods or services to people with disabilities, including what action will be taken if a complaint is received.

Answer:

c) is the correct answer:

Providers must train their staff who deal with the public or other third parties about the provision of goods or services to people with disabilities. Training must also be provided to all people involved in developing policies, practices and procedures about providing goods or services to the public or other third parties (e.g., business clients).

Unit 3: How to interact and communicate with customers who have disabilities

General tips on providing service to customers with disabilities

- If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "May I help you?" Your customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to his or her support person or companion.

- Avoid stereotypes and make no assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities the person has. Some disabilities are not visible and customers are not required to give you information about any disabilities they may have.
- Take the time to get to know your customer's needs and focus on meeting those needs just as you would with any other customer.
- Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond. A good start is to listen carefully.
- Make an effort to learn about appropriate language and terminology to use when referring to people with disabilities. For more information, see [Appendix B](#).
- If you cannot understand what your customer is saying, politely ask them to repeat themselves.
- Don't touch or speak to service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission.
- Consider offering interactive devices (such as self-serve checkouts, direct payment devices) that can be used by people with various types of disabilities or offering alternate services.
- Consider including people with disabilities in the testing or evaluation of your communication services.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have vision loss

Vision loss reduces a person's ability to see clearly. Few people with vision loss are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some people can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.

Vision loss can restrict your customers' abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some of these customers may use a guide dog or white cane, but others may not. Sometimes it may be difficult to tell if a person has vision loss.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Braille
- Large print
- Magnification devices
- White cane
- Guide dog
- Support person such as a sighted guide.

There is more information on assistive devices, service animals and support persons in Units [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- Don't assume the individual can't see you.
- Don't touch your customer without asking permission.

- Offer your elbow to guide the person. If he or she accepts, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so. Lead – don't pull. See [Appendix C](#) for tips on guiding a customer who has vision loss.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient your customer to the environment around him or her.
- Don't touch or speak to service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show him or her to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- If you need to leave your customer, let him or her know you are leaving and will be back.
- Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to him or her, even if he/she is accompanied by a companion.
- There is generally no need to raise your voice because the person does not necessarily have hearing loss. Say your name even if you know the person well as many voices sound similar.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, e.g., two steps behind you, a metre to your left, etc. Don't use "over there" or point in the direction.
- If you're uncertain about how to provide directions, ask the person how to do so.
- Do not be afraid or embarrassed to use words such as "see", "read" and "look." People with vision loss also use these words.
- When providing printed information, offer to read or summarize it.
- Offer to describe information. For example, verbally itemize the bill or explain what the specials are or what is on the menu.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing

People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

- People who are profoundly deaf may identify themselves as culturally Deaf or oral deaf. In Deaf culture, indicated by a capital "D," the term is used to describe a person who has severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing.
- Oral deaf is a term describing a person who was born deaf or became deaf before learning to speak, but is taught to speak and may not typically use American Sign Language.
- The term "deafened" describes a person who has lost their hearing slowly or suddenly in adulthood. The person may use speech with visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speechreading or sign language.
- The term "hard of hearing" describes a person who uses their residual hearing (hearing that remains) and speech to communicate. The person may supplement communication by speechreading, hearing aids, sign language and/or communication devices.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Hearing aid

- Paper and pen
- Personal amplification device (e.g., Pocket Talker)
- Phone amplifier
- Relay Service
- Teletypewriter (TTY)
- Hearing ear dog
- Support person such as a sign language interpreter.

There is more information on assistive devices, service animals and support persons in Units [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. Generally, the best way is by a gentle touch on the shoulder or with a gentle wave of your hand.
- Ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Move to a well-lit area, if available, where your customer can see your face.
- Don't put your hands in front of your face when speaking. Some people read lips.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example, using a pen and paper.
- Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate. American Sign Language may be your customer's first language. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.
- Look at and speak directly to your customer. Address your customer, not the interpreter or support person.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Confirm that your customer understands you.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area, if possible, so the person can hear or concentrate better.
- Don't assume that the customer knows sign language or reads lips.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who are deafblind

A person who is deafblind can neither see nor hear to some degree. This results in difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional who helps with communicating.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Braille
- Large print
- Print on paper (using black felt marker on non-glossy white paper or using portable white and black boards)
- Communication boards
- Hearing aid with built-in FM system

- Magnification equipment such as monocular or magnifier
- Teletypewriter (TTY)
- White cane
- Service animal
- Support person, such as an intervenor.

There is more information on assistive devices, service animals and support persons in Units [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deafblind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with him or her or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with him or her.
- Identify yourself to the intervenor when you approach your customer who is deafblind, but then speak directly to your customer as you normally would, not to the intervenor.
- Don't touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Don't suddenly touch a person who is deafblind or touch them without permission.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have physical disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Elevator
- Mobility device (i.e., wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches)
- Support person.

There is more information on assistive devices and support persons in Units [4](#), [5](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- Speak naturally and directly to your customer, not to his or her companion or support person.
- If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone in a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so that you can make eye contact.
- Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
- Respect your customer's personal space. Do not lean over him or her or on his or her

assistive device.

- Don't move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of the person's reach.
- Don't touch assistive devices without permission. If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to:
 - Wait for and follow the person's instructions
 - Confirm that your customer is ready to move
 - Describe what you're going to do before you do it
 - Avoid uneven ground and objects
 - Don't leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
- Let your customer know about accessible features in the immediate area (i.e., automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevators, ramps, etc.).

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have mental health disabilities

Mental health disabilities are not as visible as many other types of disabilities. You may not know that your customer has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it.

Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, as well as bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.

A person with a mental health disability may have difficulty with one, several or none of these:

- Inability to think clearly
- Hallucinations (e.g., hearing voices, seeing or feeling things that aren't there)
- Depression or acute mood swings (e.g., from happy to depressed with no apparent reason for the change)
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty remembering
- Apparent lack of motivation.

If someone is experiencing difficulty controlling his or her symptoms, or is in a crisis, you may want to help out. Be calm and professional and ask your customer how you can best help.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Service animal
- Support person.

There is more information on service animals and support persons in Units [6](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be patient.
- Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with your customer to try to meet their needs.

- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have intellectual or developmental disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit the person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs. You may not know that someone has this type of disability unless you are told.

As much as possible, treat your customers with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate that you treat them with respect.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Communication board
- Speech generating device
- Service animal
- Support person.

There is more information on assistive devices, service animals and support persons in Units [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- To confirm if your customer understands what you have said, consider asking the person to repeat the message back to you in his or her own words.
- If you cannot understand what is being said, simply ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Be supportive and patient.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or support person.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have learning disabilities

The term "learning disability" describes a range of information processing disorders that can affect how a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains, understands or uses verbal or non-verbal information.

Examples include dyslexia (problems in reading and related language-based learning); dyscalculia (problems in mathematics); and dysgraphia (problems in writing and fine motor skills).

It is important to know that having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means they learn in a different way.

Learning disabilities can result in different communication difficulties for people. They can be subtle, such as difficulty reading, or more pronounced. They can interfere with your customer's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not know that a person has a learning disability unless you are told.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Alternative technology for writing
- Calculator
- Scanning or reading technology
- Tape recorders, mini pocket recorders.

There is more information on assistive devices and support persons in Units [4](#), [5](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- When you know someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can help.
- Speak naturally, clearly, and directly to your customer.
- Allow extra time if necessary - people may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Remember to communicate in a way that takes into account the customer's disability.
- Be patient and be willing to explain something again, if needed.

Tips on how to interact and communicate with customers who have speech or language impairments

Some people have problems communicating because of their disability. Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult to pronounce words or may cause slurring or stuttering. They also may prevent the person from expressing themselves or prevent them from understanding written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

- Communication board
- Paper and pen
- Speech generating device
- Support person.

There is more information on assistive devices and support persons in Units [4](#), [5](#) and [7](#).

General Tips

- Don't assume that because a person has one disability, they also have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking, it doesn't mean they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well.
- Ask your customer to repeat the information if you don't understand.
- Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" if possible.
- Try to allow enough time to communicate with your customer as they may speak more slowly.
- Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences. Wait for them to finish.

Tips on at-home service and personal delivery to customers with disabilities

- Confirm the details of your arrival time in advance. Don't arrive unexpectedly.
- Be patient. You may need to wait a few moments for your customer to open the door.
- Introduce yourself clearly. Some customers may not be able to read identification cards and may want you to use a password. Check before you visit.
- Keep your customer informed of what you're doing.
- If you need to move some of your customer's possessions, make sure that you leave the house exactly as it was when you arrived. For example, someone with vision loss will expect that their furniture is in the same place and could trip if you've moved the sofa.
- If you cannot complete the job, clearly explain what will happen next. Make another appointment, and leave contact information in case there are problems or questions arise.

Tips on talking to customers with disabilities over the phone

- Speak naturally, clearly and directly.
- Don't worry about how the person's voice sounds. Concentrate on what they are saying.
- Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences. Give your customer time to explain or respond.
- If you don't understand, simply ask again, or repeat or rephrase what you heard and ask if you have understood correctly.
- If a telephone customer is using an interpreter or a Relay Service, speak naturally to the customer, not to the interpreter.
- If you encounter a situation where, after numerous attempts, you and your customer cannot communicate with each other due to the customer's disability, consider making alternate arrangements.

Self-test: Unit 3

Which of the following should you **not** do when serving a customer with a disability?

- a) Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person or companion.
- b) Grab the arm of your customer with vision loss and pull them to the check-out counter.
- c) If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- d) Ask your customer to repeat information if you didn't understand the first time.

Answer:

b) is the correct answer:

Offer your elbow to guide the person. If he or she accepts, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so. Don't take your customer's arm and pull him or her along.

Unit 4: Assistive Devices

What is an assistive device?

An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating or lifting. It helps the person to maintain their independence at home, at work and in the community.

What are some commonly used assistive devices?

There are a variety of assistive devices that some of your customers may use, depending on their disability. Many will be personal assistive devices, meaning they are owned and brought along by the individual, while others may be provided by your organization. The following are examples of some devices you may come across when serving your customers with disabilities:

People who have vision loss

- Digital audio player - enables people to listen to books, directions, art shows, etc.
- Magnifier - makes print and images larger and easier to read
- Portable global positioning systems (GPS) - helps orient people to get to specific destinations
- White cane - helps people find their way around obstacles

People who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, hard of hearing

- FM transmitter system or other amplification devices - boosts sound closest to the listener while reducing background noise
- Hearing aid - makes sound louder and clearer
- Teletypewriter (TTY) - helps people who are unable to speak or hear to communicate by phone. The person types their messages on the TTY keyboard and messages are sent using telephone lines to someone who has a TTY, or to an operator (Bell Relay Service) who passes the message to someone who doesn't have a TTY.

People who have physical disabilities

- Mobility device (e.g., a wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches) - helps people who have difficulty walking
- Personal oxygen tank - helps people breathe

People who have learning disabilities

- Electronic notebook or laptop computer - used to take notes and to communicate
- Personal data managers - stores, organizes and retrieves personal information
- Mini pocket recorders - records information for future playback

People who have intellectual/developmental disabilities

- Communication boards (e.g., a Bliss board) - used to pass on a message by pointing to symbols, words or pictures
- Speech generating devices - used to pass on a message using a device that “speaks” when a symbol, word or picture is pressed.

How do I interact with a customer who uses an assistive device?

- Many customers with disabilities will have their own personal assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, scooters or walkers. Don't touch or handle an assistive device without permission.
- If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair remember to:
 - Wait for and follow the person's instructions.
 - Confirm that your customer is ready to move.
 - Describe what you are going to do before you do it.
 - Try to avoid uneven ground and objects.
 - Don't leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
- Don't move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your customer's reach.
- Respect your customer's personal space. Don't lean over him or her or on his or her assistive device.
- Let your customer know about accessible features in the immediate environment (e.g., automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

Unit 5: Using assistive devices when providing goods and services to a person with a disability

Assistive devices that may be provided by your business or organization

- Accessible interactive kiosks
- Adjustable desk/workstation - changes the height or tilt of a writing surface
- Automatic door opener
- Elevator
- Lift - raises or lowers people who use mobility devices
- Mobility devices such as a manual wheelchair, a motorized scooter or shopping cart
- Teletypewriter (TTY).

Training on equipment or assistive devices

Your organization is required to ensure people designated in the standard receive training on how to use equipment or assistive devices that your organization offers to customers with disabilities. The assistive devices your organization provides likely come with instruction manuals.

The following information may be helpful to staff who need to use a TTY and Bell Relay Service to communicate with customers.

Communicating using a TTY and Bell Relay Service

A teletypewriter (TTY) is a device that allows users to send typed messages across phone lines. Many people who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or deafblind use TTYs to call other individuals.

This device generally has a keyboard and display that lets the user send and receive typed messages over telephone lines. People who are deafblind may use an additional large print or braille display to read the typed messages.

A stand-alone TTY must communicate with another TTY. TTY users can directly call other TTY numbers or they can call a Relay Service. The Bell Relay Service number is 1-800-855-0511. The Relay Service operator will receive the messages on a TTY and relay the messages, by standard phone, to a person who does not have a TTY. A standard phone user can also place a call through the Relay Service operator to a TTY user.

Unit 6: Service Animals

Guide dogs and other service animals

What is a service animal?

Think of a service animal as an animal with a job to do for a person with a disability. Examples include guide dogs and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 refers to the definition of “guide dog” under the Blind Persons’ Rights Act, which states that: a guide dog is a dog that has been trained as a guide for a blind person at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the Blind Persons’ Rights Act. The Ministry of the Attorney General may issue identification cards to identify a person who is blind and his or her guide dog.

The customer service standard requires you to let people with disabilities use their service animals on the parts of your premises open to the public or to third parties unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.

Under the standard, an animal is a service animal if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or if the person has a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that the animal is required for reasons relating to his or her disability. If it is not obvious that the animal is a service animal, you are not required to allow the animal on your premises if the person does not have a letter from a physician or nurse, or an identification card from the Ministry of the Attorney General.

The following chart lists some types of service animals, key tasks they perform and those who use service animals.

Service Animal	Key Tasks	Users
Autism assistance or service dog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeps a child from running into danger and provides assistance when sensory stimulus is heightened. Dog is attached to the child's waist by a belt and a leash held by an adult 	People with autism or other developmental/ intellectual disabilities
Guide dog, dog guide or seeing eye dog	Follows directions of owner, alerts owner to changes in elevation (e.g., curbs, stairs) and obstacles	People with vision loss
Hearing ear, hearing, sound alert or hearing alert dog, cat or animal	<p>Alerts owner to sounds often by a nudge or pawing and leads him/her to the source of the sound.</p> <p>May use a special signal to alert owner to fire alarm</p>	People who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing
Psychiatric service dog	Retrieves and prompts the person to take medicine, retrieves or activates medical alert, leads person out of crowds, etc.	People with mental health disabilities
<p>Service or mobility dog or animal, special skills dog or animal</p> <p>(Small ponies or miniature horses are used but are not as common).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May pull wheelchairs, carry objects, pull items, turn handles or push buttons such as door openers. Larger dogs may provide balance support. 	People with physical disabilities
Seizure, seizure alert, seizure assist or seizure response dog or animal	<p>Steers owner from danger during a seizure, activates medical alert</p> <p>Can alert owner to an oncoming seizure</p>	People who have epilepsy or other seizure disorders

The standard doesn't require that service animals be formally trained, but most service animals in Ontario are trained at organizations in Canada or in the United States. Service animals are used in many countries around the world and so visitors to Ontario may also use service animals.

Tips on interacting with a customer who uses a service animal

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal.
- Avoid touching or addressing service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Avoid making assumptions about the animal. Not all service animals wear special collars or harnesses. If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.
- Remember your customer is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. You are not expected to provide care or food for the animal. However, you could provide water for the animal if your customer requests it.

How do I serve a customer if their animal is not allowed because of another law?

Where an animal is excluded by law from your premises, consider explaining why the animal is excluded. Explore or discuss with your customer another way of providing goods or services. For example:

- Bring goods or services to the person in a part of your premises where the animal is not restricted.
- Offer a safe location where the service animal can wait, if the person is able to be separated from the animal while obtaining the service, and offer assistance to the person with a disability while he or she is separated from the service animal.

Unit 7: Support Persons

Who is a support person?

A support person is an individual hired or chosen to accompany a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods or services.

Personal care needs may include, but are not limited to, assistance with eating or using the washroom. Medical needs may include, but are not limited to, monitoring someone's health conditions, providing injections and providing support when someone has moderate to severe seizures.

The support person can be a paid personal support worker, volunteer, a friend or a family member. He or she does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

Customers with disabilities must be allowed to use their support persons while accessing your organization's goods or services on the parts of the premises open to the public or third parties. If your organization charges for admission, you are required to have a policy regarding what amount, if any, is charged for support persons. Advance notification of a fee, if any, is required.

Functions of support persons

The following chart contains some examples of functions performed by support persons:

Person with a Disability	Support Person's Functions
Person who is deafblind	To guide, to provide transportation and adaptive communication such as tactile or adapted American Sign language, large print notes, print on palm or two-handed manual signing
Person who is Deaf, deafened, oral deaf	To provide sign language or oral interpretation services - to translate conversation, not to participate in it
Person with a learning disability	To help with complex communication or note-taking
Person with an intellectual/developmental disability	To help with travel, daily activities, prompting medication, complex tasks, or to keep them from dangerous situations
Person with a mental health disability	To help with communication tasks such as completing complex forms. To help in environments such as crowded, noisy settings or high-stress situations such as interviews
Person with a physical disability	To provide services related to travelling, personal care such as toileting or eating, monitoring medical conditions
Person with a seizure disorder	To assist in the event of a seizure, e.g. to protect the individual from falls or biting their tongue
Person with a speech impairment who uses an augmentative or alternative communication system (symbol board, electronic communication system)	To relay or interpret a person's communications
Person with vision loss	To read or to guide

Tips on interacting with a customer who has a support person

- A customer with a disability might not introduce their support person. If you are not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting your goods or services or simply ask.
- Once you have determined who your customer is, speak directly to them, not to their support person.
- Be familiar with your organization's policies, practices and procedures about providing accessible customer service.

Self-test: Units 4, 5, 6 & 7

Which of the following should you **not** do when serving a customer who uses an assistive device, a service animal, or a support person?

- a) Speak directly to the customer.

- b) Pet a guide dog because he's so cute and you love animals.
- c) Request permission to move your customer's wheelchair.
- d) Be aware of how to use specific assistive devices offered by your organization.

Answer:

b) is the correct answer:

Avoid touching or petting service animals – they are working and must pay attention at all times.

Unit 8: What to do if a customer with a disability is having difficulty accessing goods or services

What can I do to help my customer access goods or services?

All customers have their own specific needs or preferences. Being positive, flexible and open to suggestions will help to create a good customer experience. A good starting point is to ask your customer how you can help them access your goods or services.

Often, good customer service for people with disabilities can be achieved through simple and effective solutions to challenges. For example:

- Your customer is in a wheelchair and cannot enter the coffee shop where you work because of a step at the door. You could offer to serve her at the door.
- Your customer is Deaf and does not have a sign language interpreter with him. Ask him, in writing, if using a pen and paper to communicate would be a good way to serve him.
- Your customer cannot access some of the products in the shop where you work because they are displayed on counters that are too high to reach from her scooter. Offer to bring the products to the customer who will be able to feel, see, touch or smell the goods herself and maintain her independence.
- The menu in the restaurant where you work cannot be read by your customer who has low vision. Offer to read it out to him.
- If your business does not have automatic door openers, be prepared to open the door.

Remember, your customers are your best source for information about their needs. Ask them what you can do to help them. They will likely appreciate your attention and consideration for their needs.

Unit 9: Policies, practices and procedures

Units 9, 10, 11 and 12 provide supplementary information that you may use to provide training on the requirements of the standard.

Requirements of the standard

Under the customer service standard, your organization must provide ongoing training on changes to the policies, practices and procedures on serving people with disabilities.

Organizations usually have some form of customer service policies, practices and procedures on

serving customers with disabilities. Some of these are formal, documented practices. Others are unwritten and informal (i.e., “the way we do things around here”).

Under the customer service standard, providers must:

- Establish policies, practices and procedures for providing goods or services to people with disabilities. These policies, practices and procedures are in addition to those specifically identified in other sections of the standard.
- Use reasonable efforts to ensure the policies, practices and procedures on how you will provide your goods or services to people with disabilities are consistent with the principles in the customer service standard. These principles are dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.
- Establish a policy that deals with the use of assistive devices by people with disabilities to access your goods and services or the availability, if any, of other measures which enable them to do so.

Principles

Dignity - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people. People with disabilities are not treated as an afterthought or forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

Independence – allowing a person with a disability to do things on their own without unnecessary help, or interference from others.

Integration – service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable the person to access goods or services.

Equal opportunity – people with disabilities have an opportunity equal to that given to others to access your goods or services.

Policies on the use of assistive devices

The standard requires organizations to have a policy about the use of a customer’s personal assistive device, or the availability of any other measures that enable a person with a disability to access your goods or services.

Your organization may offer assistive measures that enable people with disabilities to use your services (e.g., assistive devices, services or alternate service methods).

Unit 10: Disruptions in service

Requirements of the standard

- Provide notice to the public when there is a temporary disruption to your facilities or services that are usually used by people with disabilities to access your goods or services. This applies whether a temporary disruption is planned or unexpected.
- In the notice, include information about the reason for the disruption, its expected

- duration and a description of alternate facilities or services, if available.
- Place the notice in an obvious location on your premises, such as on your website, if you have one, or post it by another method that is reasonable under the circumstances.

Unit 11: Feedback Process

Requirements of the standard

- Establish and implement a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way you provide goods or services to people with disabilities.
- Ensure your feedback process allows people to provide feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, on disk or by another method.
- Ensure your feedback process specifies the actions you or your staff will take if a complaint is received.
- Make information about the feedback process readily available to the public.

Unit 12: Documentation

(THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO US. IT IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

Note: Requirements on documentation apply to designated public sector organizations and any other provider of goods or services with 20 or more employees.

Requirements of the standard

Your organization must prepare the following documents and make them available upon request:

- Documents describing policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities, including the use of personal assistive devices to access the organization's goods or services or the availability, if any, of other measures which enable them to do so.
- Documents describing policies, practices and procedures with respect to the entry of service animals and support persons to those areas of the premises where goods or services are provided that are open to the public or other third parties, including:
 - When the provider may exclude service animals by law, if applicable
 - Alternative measures available if an animal is excluded by law
 - If admission is charged, what amount will be charged for support persons
 - If, and under what circumstances it may be necessary to require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.
- A document that sets out the steps that will be taken when there is a temporary planned or unexpected disruption to facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use

to access your goods or services including:

- The circumstances when a notice will be provided about a temporary disruption and where it will be posted
- Information that will be included in the notice of a temporary disruption
- What alternative facilities or services, if any, are available during the temporary disruption to continue to provide service to people with disabilities.
- A document describing your training policy on providing goods or services to people with disabilities, including a summary of the contents of training and the details of when that training will be provided.
- A document describing your process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which goods or services are provided to people with disabilities, including what actions will be taken on any complaints received.

Under the standard, customers must be informed that these documents are available upon request. Notice may be given by posting the information in an obvious place on premises owned or operated by the provider, by posting it on the provider's website, if any, or by another method that is reasonable in the circumstances.

Availability of documents and their format

If your organization is required by the standard to give a document to a person with a disability, you must provide the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account their disability.

Some people with disabilities, such as those with learning disabilities or vision loss, may use materials in CD-ROM or braille respectively. Other formats to consider are large print, e-mail, DVD or electronic text on a disk.

Under the standard, a provider and a person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information. So, consider discussing with the customer the alternate format that they can use. For example, if the customer asks for large print, be clear about what "large print" means to them. For some, it may be an 18 point font size in a font style like Arial, and others may need larger print.

Appendix A: Awareness Quiz

Purpose: This quiz will help you to evaluate any misconceptions you may have about people with disabilities

Which of the following statements are true/false? (Check the appropriate answer).

1. A positive attitude is important when meeting or helping a person with a disability.
 True False
2. Generally, people see the disability first and the person second.
 True False
3. All disabilities are caused by a disease or are inherited.
 True False
4. People with mobility impairments do not care about how they look, and they cannot shop the way other people do.
 True False
5. Someone who uses a power wheelchair cannot drive a motor vehicle.
 True False
6. If you notice someone is wearing a hearing aid, speak loudly so he or she can hear you.
 True False
7. When guiding a person who has vision loss, you should always take them by the arm.
 True False
8. Someone who is severely physically disabled cannot do anything alone.
 True False
9. A person who is Deaf cannot use the phone.
 True False
10. A person can have a disability and not be held back by it.
 True False
11. People who have vision loss have a better sense of hearing.
 True False
12. You should avoid using expressions such as “look”, “see” and “watch out” when talking to someone with vision loss.
 True False
13. The majority of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing can speechread.
 True False
14. If you see someone who uses a wheelchair having trouble, you should give him or her a push.
 True False
15. Over one million Canadians have some kind of disability that makes it difficult for them to read conventional print.
 True False

16. When a customer with a disability is in your workplace, you should always provide extra attention.
- True False
17. Guide dogs see colours and read signs.
- True False
18. People who are Deaf or hard of hearing see better than everyone else.
- True False
19. People who are Deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing cannot talk at all.
- True False
20. People who use wheelchairs are paralysed.
- True False
21. Mental health disability is a rare, untreatable disorder.
- True False
22. People with learning disabilities cannot be productive.
- True False
23. Intellectual disability is the same as mental health disability.
- True False
24. About one in seven Ontarians has a disability.
- True False
25. Forty-seven percent of Ontarians over the age of 65 have disabilities.
- True False

Answers to Awareness Quiz

1. **True** – Barriers are broken down in part through open, positive attitudes and accepting people for who they are, not what they can or cannot do.
2. **True** – A disability is just one of the characteristics of the individual, but too often, the disability is seen before the person.
3. **False** – Some disabilities are the result of a disease; some are inherited; and others are the result of an accident.
4. **False** – People with disabilities have different interests and enjoy different activities just like everyone else.
5. **False** – There are many modifications available for vehicles to allow people with disabilities to drive, including people in power wheelchairs.
6. **False** – It is important to look directly at someone who is hard of hearing and speak clearly. Shouting may only create sound distortions when amplified through the hearing aid.
7. **False** – People who have vision loss may prefer to take your arm when you are guiding them. Ask if they need your assistance first.
8. **False** – There are many helpful aids for people who have physical disabilities which may help them to be more independent.
9. **False** – There are different systems that allow someone who is Deaf to use the telephone, such as the Teletypewriter (TTY) or a relay system.
10. **True** – Many people with disabilities can enjoy activities just like everyone else. Often barriers – not disabilities – prevent people with disabilities from participating in everyday life.
11. **False** – Generally, people with vision loss have no better sense of hearing than anyone else, though many people with vision loss learn to use their other senses more efficiently.
12. **False** – There is no need to use special language around people who have vision loss. They use the same expressions as everyone else.
13. **True** – Most people who are Deaf or hard of hearing can speechread, but not all do it well. Most can understand about 25 per cent of what is being said. People who excel at speechreading can understand approximately 45-50 per cent of what is being said.
14. **False** – Try to respect the person's independence by asking if your assistance is needed first.
15. **True** – It is estimated that one million Canadians have a disability that makes it difficult or impossible for them to read conventional print. An increasing number of senior citizens are becoming part of this group.
16. **False** – People with disabilities may require assistance at times but you shouldn't assume assistance will be needed in every case. Your customers want to be treated with dignity, so consider discreetly asking if help is needed first.
17. **False** – Guide dogs do not see the colours of traffic lights and do not read the signs on washroom doors. The owner decides when to cross the street by listening to the traffic flow.
18. **False** – Generally, people who are Deaf or hard of hearing have no better sense of sight than anyone else, but they may concentrate more on what they are seeing.
19. **False** – People who are Deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing may choose not to speak because they are unsure of pronunciation, or are concerned that their voices may sound different. Most people

who are Deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing can make sounds, and can probably speak some words.

20. **False** – Not everyone who uses a wheelchair is paralysed. People might use a wheelchair if they have arthritic spines or sore legs, severe asthma or a heart condition that limits their ability to walk.
21. **False** – Many types of mental health disabilities are treatable and not necessarily permanent.
22. **False** – Many people develop ways to work with, or around, their particular type of learning disability. Repeated practice can help a person with a learning disability perform some tasks with less difficulty.
23. **False** – Unlike mental health disability, intellectual disability is a limitation affecting intellectual capacity, not emotional equilibrium. Also, an intellectual disability is a permanent condition that cannot be medically treated or cured.
24. **True** – According to the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006, from Statistics Canada, about 1.85 million Ontarians (one in seven) have a disability.
25. **True** – According to the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006, from Statistics Canada, about 47 percent of Ontarians over the age of 65 have a disability.

Appendix B: Talk about disabilities – Choose the right word

Words can influence and reinforce the public's perception of people with disabilities. They can create a positive view of people with disabilities, or a negative view. Here are some tips that can help make your communication and interaction with people with all types of disabilities more successful:

- Use “disability” or “disabled,” not “handicap” or “handicapped.”
- Don't use terms such as “retarded,” “dumb,” “psycho,” “moron” or “crippled.” These words are very demeaning and disrespectful to people with disabilities.
- Remember to put people first. It is proper to say “person with a disability,” rather than “disabled person.”
- If you are not sure about a disability, it's better to wait until the individual describes their situation to you rather than make your own assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.

For more information, visit www.AccessON.ca

Appendix C: Tips for guiding a customer who has vision loss

- Ask first if your customer wishes to be guided. If the answer is “yes,” offer your arm. Ask which arm is better. Walk at a normal pace. The person will walk about a step behind. Announce handrails, doors (to the right/left, push/pull to open, etc.) and describe the surrounding areas such as what is in an aisle.
- If you are guiding towards stairs:
 - Let the customer know if they have to walk up or down
 - Approach the stairs head on, not at an angle and come to a full stop in front of the stairs
 - Lead or guide your customer to the rail side to allow them to take hold of it
 - Let them find the first step and then start to climb or descend the stairs
 - Try to be one step ahead and announce the last step.
- If you are going through a narrow doorway or a passage, go first, after explaining the circumstances and describing the area.
- Upon entering a room, offer to describe the dimensions and the location of people and furniture.
- If the person wishes to sit, offer to guide him/her and place his/her hand on the back of the chair.
- Keep the person informed when others approach or leave.
- If you must leave the individual alone, do not leave them standing in the middle of the room, with nothing to hold onto. If they are not seated, guide them to a door, wall, or piece of furniture to stand next to. This will help the person to stay spatially oriented.
- Before opening the door for a customer with vision loss, ask if they want you to open it. Indicate whether the door opens to the right or left and whether the door will be pushed or pulled. They may be using the door's location as a reference point.

Appendix D: Test Your Knowledge

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, different standards on accessibility are being developed that will set requirements for the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living.	True	False	See Unit 1
2. The customer service standard is a voluntary standard. Your business or organization can decide whether or not to put it into practice.	True	False	See Unit 2
3. The term “disability” only applies to people who use wheelchairs.	True	False	See Unit 1
4. Avoiding someone because of their disability is a barrier in attitude.	True	False	See Unit 1
5. Your organization must accept feedback about the way it provides goods or services to people with disabilities.	True	False	See Unit 11
6. You should not ask your customer to repeat himself if you don’t understand him the first time. It might offend him.	True	False	See Unit 3
7. If a person has vision loss they cannot see anything.	True	False	See Unit 3
8. It’s helpful for someone who uses a hearing aid if you reduce background noise.	True	False	See Unit 3
9. You should always speak directly to your customer, not to their support person or companion.	True	False	See Unit 7
10. If your customer uses a manual wheelchair, feel free to push them around your store.	True	False	See Unit 3
11. You can always tell when someone has a disability.	True	False	See Unit 3
12. Assistive devices enable a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities.	True	False	See Unit 4
13. Your organization must allow people with disabilities who use a support person to bring their support person with them while accessing goods or services on parts of the premises that are open to the public.	True	False	See Unit 7
14. Service animals should be treated as pets.	True	False	See Unit 6

Answers to “Test Your Knowledge”

1. **True.**
 2. **False** - All providers of goods and services to the public or other third parties with one or more employees and all designated public sector organizations in Ontario must comply with all of the applicable requirements of the customer service standard.
 3. **False** - The AODA uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code, which includes both visible and non-visible disabilities. The term “disability” does not only apply to people who use wheelchairs.
 4. **True.**
 5. **True.**
 6. **False** - If you cannot understand what your customer is saying, politely ask again.
 7. **False** - Few people with vision loss are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some people can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.
 8. **True.**
 9. **True.**
 10. **False** - Don’t touch a person’s wheelchair or assistive device without permission.
 11. **False** - Disabilities can be visible and non-visible. You cannot always tell who has a disability.
 12. **True.**
 13. **True.**
- False** - Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Don’t touch or address them.