

PEOPLE FIRST

Accessible Customer Service Training



Developed by

www.ChangingPaces.com

www.PeopleFirstAccessibilityTraining.com

Disability Awareness Quiz



QUIZABILITY

A grid of nine colorful icons representing various disabilities: a yellow eye with a slash, a red question mark, a blue family silhouette, a purple question mark, a yellow hand with sound waves, a pink question mark, a pink wheelchair silhouette, a purple silhouette of an elderly person with a cane, and an orange silhouette of an adult and a child.

The quick quiz about disabilities



Agenda

- "Talk to Me" – Serving Customers with Disabilities (Video)
- Objectives
- The AODA Purpose, Components & Vision
- Customer Service Standard Compliance & Principles
- General Etiquette & Common Courtesies
- Definition of Terms
- Appropriate Language
- Barriers to Accessibility
- Types of Disabilities, Communication Tips, Accommodation Opportunities & Assistive Devices
- Service Animals & Support Persons
- Summary



Objectives

- ❑ To provide an overview of the purpose and vision of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA).
- ❑ To convey appropriate direction on interacting and communicating with people with disabilities as well as their service animals and support personnel.
- ❑ To demonstrate and have you experience strategies for providing customer service to people with disabilities who use assistive devices.
- ❑ To facilitate discussion on how to handle situations where accessibility is difficult or solutions are ambiguous.



The AODA Purpose

- To achieve full access for all Ontarians by first developing and implementing and then fully enforcing Accessibility Standards on or before January 1, 2025.



The AODA Vision

- ❑ Accessible Ontario in 20 years or less
- ❑ Inclusive of buildings, communications, services & employment
- ❑ Education to change attitudes, values & behaviours
- ❑ Full participation for people with disabilities
- ❑ Dignity, quality of life & a strong economy for all Ontarians

Customer Service Standard Compliance



- Commencement Date
- Who is Affected?
- Deadlines for Compliance
- Non-Compliance Penalties
- Establishment of Policies & Practices
- Use of Service Animals or Support Persons
- Notice of Temporary Disruptions
- Training
- Feedback Process
- Format of Documents

Accessible Customer Service Principles

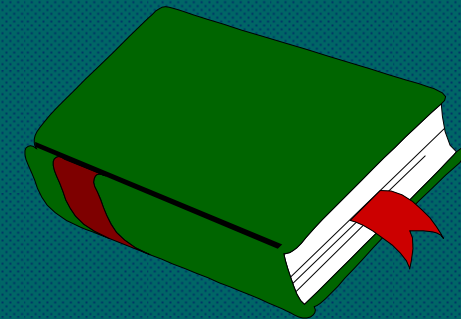


- Dignity
- Independence
- Inclusion
- Equal Opportunity

County of Elgin Policy Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (attached)



- Purpose
- Principles
- Procedures & Practices
 - Support Persons
 - Feedback Process
 - Service Disruptions
 - Service Animals
 - Format of Documents
 - Training
 - Assistive Devices



General Etiquette & Common Courtesies



- Offer to accommodate special needs for all customers.
- Don't make assumptions about abilities or hidden disabilities.
- Treat all people with dignity, respect and patience.
- Ask before you provide help - don't just jump in.
- Talk directly to the person, not their companion.
- Relax, speak normally and make eye contact.
- Respect boundaries & personal space.



Definition of Terms

- ***Impairment:*** Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function;
- ***Disability:*** Any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being and;
- ***Handicap:*** A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that, limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual.

EXAMPLE:

Damage to a spinal cord (***impairment***) causes loss of movement of lower limbs (***disability***), leading to the impossibility of entering a building with stairs (***handicap***).

Appropriate Language



A Way with Words and Images: Suggestions for the portrayal of persons with disabilities

*The word "disabled" is not an adjective, not a noun.
People are not conditions. It is therefore preferable not to use
the term "the disabled", but rather "persons with disabilities".*

INSTEAD OF...

PLEASE USE...



Barriers to Accessibility

- **Physical Barriers** exist in a structural environment that interferes with or impedes a person with a physical disability from accessing a particular location or service.
- **Communication Barriers** exist when an individual is unable to access information in a format they can use. Alternate forms of communication include such things as audio cassette, Braille, large print, closed captioned video and computer diskette.
- **Systemic Barriers** occur when practices or policies are put in place that discriminate against individuals by screening them out from participation.
- **Attitudinal Barriers** are inaccurate beliefs or perceptions about a person's ability based on assumptions and a lack of direct knowledge. This type of barrier impacts accessibility on all levels since most of the other barriers are rooted in attitudes as well. These can be the hardest to address in spite of the fact that they are the ones that we have the most control over.



Types of Disabilities, Communication Tips, Accommodation Opportunities & Assistive Devices



Physical Disabilities

Communication Tips

- Get to eye level
- Don't touch assistive devices
- Make conversations inclusive

Accommodation Opportunities

- Remove Obstacles
- Make meetings accessible
- Provide rest spots

Assistive Devices

- Manual or power wheelchairs
- Washroom grab bars



Visual Disabilities

Communication Tips

- Identify yourself
- Verbalize your handshake
- Orient your customer to the environment

Accommodation Opportunities

- Provide alternate formats for reading
- Contrasting colours for signage
- Offer to be a sighted guide, provide your elbow

Assistive Devices

- White cane, dark glasses, guide dog
- Magnification devices, Braille
- Software & hardware for audio conversion



Hearing Disabilities

Communication Tips

- Speak face to face unobstructed
- Speak to the customer, not the interpreter
- Do not shout

Accommodation Opportunities

- Follow the customer's cue for communication
- A quiet well-lit room is best environment
- Avoid chewing or smoking while talking

Assistive Devices

- Hearing aid(s), cochlear implant
- TTY, Bell relay service
- Closed captioning, flashing devices



Mental Health Disabilities

Communication Tips

- Make the customer comfortable
- Speak in a calm, patient manner
- Ask how you can respect their needs

Accommodation Opportunities

- Minimize stress wherever possible
- Nurture an atmosphere free of misconceptions about mental illness
- Be flexible in your approach
- Be understanding if a customer cancels a meeting at the last minute due to health



Intellectual Disabilities

Communication Tips

- Do not "talk down" to the customer
- Speak to the customer, not their companion
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences
- Don't take inappropriate comments personally

Accommodation Opportunities

- Be supportive and patient
- Don't make any assumptions about ability
- Some customers may be anxious to please, pose questions in a neutral way to elicit accuracy
- Support maintenance of routine & familiarity



Learning Disabilities

Communication Tips

- Verbalize instructions, allow extra time for reading
- Be willing to write instructions down
- Diagram instructions if needed
- Be direct, ask how you can meet their needs
- Patience and flexibility are critical

Accommodation Opportunities

- Communication options to include written, oral and audio-visual options
- Allow the customer to specify their needs
- Minimize environmental distractions

Service Animals & Support Persons



Service Animals

- Allowed to accompany their “partners” or handlers while accessing goods or services
- Certified service animals have identification
- Never touch or address them while they work

Support Persons

- Can be a friend or family member or a trained, paid support professional
- Speak directly to the customer, not the support person
- Permitted to accompany the customer while accessing goods or services
- Support persons may have access to modified admission fees

Summary



- ❑ You've seen an overview of the purpose and vision of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, (AODA)
- ❑ You've received appropriate direction on interacting and communicating with people with disabilities as well as their service animals and support personnel
- ❑ We've demonstrated and you've experienced strategies for providing customer service to people with disabilities who use assistive devices
- ❑ You've participated in discussion on how to handle situations where accessibility is difficult or solutions are ambiguous
- ❑ You're now fully informed and empowered on the topic of accessible customer service!