



Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (AODA) was passed in 2005. The goal of the act is to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025. Ontario Regulation 429/07 requires that anyone that deals with the public on behalf of the Township of North Dundas be provided with training on the AODA Customer Service Standard. Please circulate this information to all of your volunteers, have them read the information and sign the acknowledgment form attached.

This training must include:

- The purpose of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require a guide dog or support person
- How to use assistive devices on premises
- What to do if a person is having difficulty accessing goods or services

Purpose

The purpose of the AODA is to teach people how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities and to put people first and focus on the person instead of their disability. Use “disability” or “disabled,” not “handicap” or “handicapped”. If you are not familiar with the disability, wait until the individual describes their situation to you. Do not make assumptions.

What is good Accessible Customer Service?

1. Service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
2. When a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without necessary help or interference from others.
3. Service is provided to a person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers.
4. Service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an opportunity to access your goods or services equal to that given to others.

What to do

1. Ask “How can I help?”
2. When communicating, take into account the person’s disability.
3. Offer a variety of methods of communication – written, larger print, oral, and/or pictures.
4. Understand the nature and scope of the service you offer (the Regulation does not require more services than you presently provide – just flexibility in the manner you provide it).
5. Accept feedback – it is a great learning tool.

PHYSICAL DISABILITY

A physical disability includes a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body through muscle weakness, tremors, and paralysis. A physical disability may affect an individual’s ability to: perform manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key, gripping a door knob, move around independently, control the speed or coordination of movements, reach, pull, or manipulate objects and/or have strength or endurance.

Tips:

- Speak normally and directly to customer.

- People with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things. Ask, before you help.
- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, don't touch, move, or lean on them.
- Provide your customers information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevator, etc.).
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter.
- If a counter is too high or wide, step around it to provide service.
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.
- Be patient. Customers will identify their needs to you.

HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss can cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds, or words. A person who is deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing may be unable to: use a public telephone, understand speech in noisy environments or pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers.

Tips:

- Attract the customers attention before speaking – a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout. Speak clearly.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat, rephrase, or write notes back and forth if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- Deaf people use a sign language interpreter – always direct your attention to the deaf person.
- Any personal matters (financial) should be discussed in a private room.
- If the person has a hearing aid, try to speak in a quiet area with few competing sounds.
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.

VISION

Vision disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, side vision, or lack of central vision. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Vision loss can result in: difficulty reading or seeing faces, difficulty maneuvering in an unfamiliar place, inability to differentiate colours or distances, a narrow field of vision, the need for bright light, or contrast and night blindness.

Tips:

- Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact.
- If the person uses a service animal – do not touch or approach the animal – it is working.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, location as necessary.
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.
- Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it is an emergency.
- Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair or guide them to a comfortable location. Don't walk away without saying good-bye.

DEAF – BLINDNESS

Deaf – blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. The result for a person who is deaf-blind has significant difficulty accessing information and performing daily activities. People who are deaf – blind communicate using various sign language systems, braille, telephone devices, communication boards, and any combination thereof. Many people who are deaf – blind use the services of an intervenor who relay information, facilitate auditory, and visual information, and act as sighted guides.

Tips:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf – blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A customer who is deaf – blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Do not touch or address the service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch a person who is deaf – blind suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency.
- Understand that communication can take some time – be patient.
- Direct your attention to your customer, not the intervenor.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Intellectual disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors such as Down Syndrome, brain trauma, or psychiatric disorders. A person with an intellectual disorder may have difficulty with: understanding spoken and written information, conceptual information, perception of sensory information and memory.

Tips:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use clear, simple language. Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.
- Remember that the person is an adult unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions.
- Be patient and verify your understanding. If you can't understand, don't pretend, just ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant.

SPEECH DISABILITIES

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical speech disabilities include problems with: pronunciation, pitch and loudness, hoarseness and stuttering or slurring.

Tips:

- If possible, communicate in a quiet environment.
- Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Ask them to repeat necessary, or to write a message.
- Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no". Verify your understanding.
- Patience, respect, and willingness are your best tools to find a way to communicate.

LEARNING DISABILITIES

People with a learning disability may take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities include a range of disorders that effect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding and processing. Learning disabilities can result in: difficulties in reading, problem solving, directions and processing information.

Tips:

- Learning disabilities are generally invisible and ability to functions varies greatly.
- Respond to any requests with verbal information, assist with filling in forms and be courteous.
- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.

MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

Mental health disabilities include a range of disorders however there are three main types – anxiety, mood and behavioural. People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated, act aggressively,

be perceived as pushy or abrupt, be unable to make a decision and start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Tips:

- Treat each person as an individual.
- Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations.
- Stay calm and courteous, even if the customer exhibits unusual behavior, focus on the service they need and how you can help.

OTHER DISABILITIES

Other disabilities include smell, touch, or taste, and can result from accidents, illnesses, and diseases such as ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, seizure disorders, and heart disease. Some disabilities are invisible.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Assistive devices include: wheelchairs, scooters, canes, walkers, braces, and computer software programs. They are part of a person's personal space.

Tips

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.
- Don't move assistive devices or equipment, such as canes and walkers out of your customer's reach.
- Let your customer know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. accessible washrooms).

SERVICE ANIMALS

People with vision loss may use a guide dog, but there are other types of service animals as well. Hearing alert animals help people who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard of hearing. Other service animals are trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure.

Under the standard, you are required to allow service animals on the parts of your premises that are open to the public or to other third parties, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. You may ask a person for a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that their animal is required for reasons relating to their disability if it is not readily apparent.

Tips:

- 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. If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.

SUPPORT PERSONS

Support persons assist people with disabilities in a variety of ways, by assisting with communication such as an intervenor, sign language interpreter, or as a Personal Support Worker.

Tips:

- A support person may be a friend or a relative. If you're not sure which person is the customer, simply ask.
- Speak directly to your customer. Don't speak past your customer to the support person.



Acknowledgment of Training Completion

I _____ hereby acknowledge and confirm that I have read and understand the Accessibility for Ontarians Act handout provided to me by the Township of North Dundas and that if I have any questions, I may contact the Township of North Dundas for additional information.

I further promise and agree to act and abide in accordance with the provided training when representing the Township of North Dundas as a volunteer.

Date: _____

Signature

Name (Printed)

Please complete and return by mail, email or fax to:
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