

Accessibility Customer Service Volunteer Guide



**Accessibility Ontario Disability Act (AODA) and Serve-Ability
&
Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)
Training**

e|change

"The Exchange is a beautiful place for people, programs, and partnerships

- Caledon based space
- Community inclusive
- Collaboratively focused

Beyond the physical space, the Exchange Collaborative is a philosophy that leverages opportunities to address community needs because we are better together."



The Exchange Collaborative partners are committed to meeting the required regulations for compliance of volunteers. We value and take pride in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

Accessible customer service is not only about the physical building and the environment; it is also about understanding that people with disabilities may have different needs and how you may address these needs.

Legislated Responsibilities

Ontario Human Rights Code – Duty to Accommodate

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (AODA)

Information and Communication Standards

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Purpose:

To improve opportunities for people with disabilities by identifying and removing barriers to full participation.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Purpose:

To achieve a fully accessible Ontario by 2025

AODA Standards

1. Customer Service
2. Built Environment
3. Employment
4. Information and Communication
5. Transportation

Customer Service Standard

What is Accessible Customer Service?

- Flexible service that meets the needs of an individual customer
- Putting the person first
- Understanding that some methods of service may not work for all people
- Allowing for comments and suggestions on how to improve accessible customer service
- Providing as much notice as possible if there is a disruption in service

Principles of Accessible Customer Service

Dignity
Independence
Integration
Equal Opportunity

As a volunteer what is my role?

1. Help to identify and remove barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in the community
2. Take time to understand the needs of each customer
3. Ask how you can help
4. Be open to working with people with disabilities to find the best solution
5. Put people first. "Person with a disability" puts the focus on the person.
6. Wait until the individual describes their situation to you, instead of making assumptions.

General Customer Service Tips

- Treat all clients with respect. Give them your full attention.
- Offer a variety of methods of communication, such as read information aloud, write down instructions, draw a diagram etc.
- Understand the nature and scope of the services your organization provides.
- Accept feedback.

People with Disabilities

- Approximately 1.8 million Ontarians, 15.5% of the population
- The numbers are increasing as the population gets older
- In 2026 approximately 16% of people in Canada will have a disability

General Types of Disabilities

Physical

Hearing

Vision

Deaf-Blind

Speech

Mental Health

Learning

Other Disabilities

- Intellectual
- Sensory: Taste, Smell, Touch
- Other conditions: Cancer, Diabetes, Asthma
- Temporary disabilities

Physical

Physical Disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through muscle weakness, tremors, and a paralysis. Physical disabilities can be congenial such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendonitis. A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to:

- ❖ Perform manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key or gripping a door knob
- ❖ Move around independently
- ❖ Control the speed or coordination of movements
- ❖ Reach, pull or manipulate objects
- ❖ Have strength or endurance

Tips for Customer Service

- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, don't touch, move or lean on them.
- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
- 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.

Hearing

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
- ❖ Pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers

Tips for Customer Service

- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- If possible communicate in a quiet, well lit area so that they can see your face and read your lips
- Don't shout.
- Speak clearly
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.

Vision

- ❖ Vision disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity to total blindness.
- ❖ Vision loss can result in:
 - ❖ Difficulty reading or seeing faces
 - ❖ Difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar places
 - ❖ Inability to differentiate colours or distances
 - ❖ A narrow field of vision
 - ❖ The need for bright light or contrast
 - ❖ Night Blindness

Tips for Customer Services

- Verbally identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the person.
- If the person uses a service animal do not touch or approach the animal, it is working.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, and location as necessary
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.

Speech

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak.

Typical disabilities include problems with:

- ❖ Pronunciation
- ❖ Pitch and loudness
- ❖ Hoarseness or breathiness
- ❖ Stuttering or slurring

Tips for Customer Service

If possible communicate in a quiet area.

- Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences. Be patient.
- Don't assume that a person with speech impairment also has another disability.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no".
- Ask them to repeat as necessary or write their message.

Deaf-Blindness

Deaf-Blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. The result for a person who is deaf-blind is significant difficulty accessing information and performing daily activities.

Deaf-blindness interferes with communication, learning, orientation and mobility. People who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, Braille, telephone devices, communication boards, and any combination thereof.

Tips for Customer Service

- Direct your attention to your customer not the intervener.
- Understand that communication can take some time, please be patient.

Mental Health

Mental Health disabilities include a range of disorders however there are three main types of mental disability:

Anxiety

Mood

Behavioral

People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; be perceived as pushy or abrupt; be unable to make a decision; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Tips for Customer Service

- Treat each person as an individual by showing them the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
- If they appear to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- 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.
- Take client away from situation, noise and distractions to facilitate one on one service.

Learning

Learning disabilities include a range of disorders that effect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding and processing. People with a learning disability have below average, average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in difficulties in reading, problem solving, time management, way finding and processing information.

Tips for Customer Service

- Learning disabilities are generally invisible and ability to function varies greatly. Respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling in forms and so on with courtesy.
- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.

Intellectual

Intellectual disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by genetic factors such as Downs Syndrome, exposure to environmental toxins, such as Fetal Alcohol 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
- ❖ Memory
- ❖

Tips for Customer Service

- Use clear, simple language.
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions.
- Be patient and verify your understanding.

Sensory

Smell disabilities can involve the inability to sense smells, or a hypersensitivity to odours and smells. A person with a smelling disability may have allergies to certain odours, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.

Touch disabilities can affect a person's ability to sense texture, temperature, vibration or pressure. Touch sensations may be reduced or heightened resulting a hypersensitivity to touch, temperature, or the opposite, numbness and the inability to feel touch sensations.

Taste disabilities can limit the experience of the four primary taste sensations; sweet, bitter, salty and sour. A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify spoiled food or noxious substances.

Other

Other disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses and diseases including ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS's, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement.

Temporary

Temporary disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, seizure disorders; heart disease, stroke and joint replacement are a few examples.