

## ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or AODA , aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities.

Dean Group is committed to accommodating candidates with disabilities through every stage of the recruitment process.

Should you require accommodations during the interview process or during your assignment, please contact your consultant at Dean Group to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Being able to interact and communicate with people with disabilities is a big part of providing accessible customer service. Sometimes the best approach is to ask a person with a disability how you can best communicate with them.

Below are some suggestive tips to interact and communicate with people who have various disabilities:

### People who are deafblind

A person who is deafblind may have some degree of both hearing and vision loss. Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional support person who helps with communication.

- Speak directly to your customer, not to the intervenor.
- A customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note

### People who have hearing loss

People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. These are terms used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost.

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- Make sure you are in a well-lit area where your customer can see your face and read your lips.
- If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (for example, using a pen and paper).

### People who have physical disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities. Only some people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair. Someone with a spinal cord injury may use crutches while someone with severe arthritis or a heart condition may have difficulty walking longer distances.

- If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level.
- Don't touch items or equipment, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission.
- 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.

### People who have vision loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not.

- Don't assume the individual can't see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight.
- Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to them.
- Ask your customer if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (for example, a menu or schedule of fees).
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive.
- Offer your elbow to guide them if needed.

### People who have learning disabilities

The term "learning disabilities" refers to a variety of disorders, such as dyslexia, that affect how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

- Be patient people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond.
- Try to provide information in a way that takes into account the customer's disability. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math.

### People with speech or language impairments

Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or may cause slurring. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

- Don't assume that a person with a speech impairment has another disability.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no".
- Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences.

### People who have mental health disabilities

Mental health issues can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. For example, some customers may experience anxiety due to hallucinations, mood swings, phobias or panic disorder.

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident, calm and reassuring.
- If a customer appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.

### People who have intellectual / developmental disabilities

Developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do every day physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

- Don't make assumptions about what a person can do.
- Use plain language.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.

### How to interact with people who use assistive devices

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. Personal assistive devices can include things like wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes or speech amplification devices.

- 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., public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- How to use equipment or assistive devices available on your premises, or that you otherwise provide, to help you in the provision of goods and services to customers with disabilities
- If your organization offers any equipment or devices for customers with disabilities, you and your staff must be trained to use them. It could be helpful to have instruction manuals handy, an instruction sheet posted where the device is located or stored, and instructions available, on request, in alternate formats.
- Some examples of assistive devices that your organization might offer include:

- Teletypewriter (TTY), which allows callers to send typed messages across phone lines
- Lift, which raises or lowers people who use mobility devices
- Accessible interactive kiosk, which might offer information or services in Braille or through audio headsets
- Wheelchair
- Computer with adaptive software, such as JAWS for those individuals unable to read print.

### How to interact with people with disabilities who require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal

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.

- 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.

### How to interact with people with disabilities who require the assistance of a support person

Some people with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person, such as an intervenor. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help your customer with a variety of things from communicating, to helping with mobility, personal care or medical needs.

According to the standard, a support person must be allowed to accompany an individual with a disability to any part of your premises that is open to the public or to third parties.

If your organization charges admission, you are required to provide notice, in advance, about what admission fee will be charged for a support person.

- If you're not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting your goods or services, or simply ask.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person.

### What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing your goods or services

If you notice that your customer is having difficulty accessing your goods or services, a good starting point is to simply ask how you can best help. Remember that your customers are

your best source for information about their needs. The solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration. Accessibility benefits us all

For More Information, please visit

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>