

*Accessibility for Ontarians
with Disabilities Act,
2005(AODA)
The Customer Service
Standard*





Background

In 2005, Ontario passed into law the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Under the AODA, businesses and organizations that provide goods and services will have to meet accessibility standards with the goal of making Ontario fully accessible by 2025.

Why is this important?

We all benefit when everyone has access to places, people, and experiences. Ontario benefits daily from the many contributions made by people with disabilities. Greater accessibility will also help prepare Ontario for the future. As our population ages, the number of people with disabilities will increase.

Purpose

The purpose of the Act is to develop, implement, and enforce accessibility standards in key areas of daily living to address barriers for people living with disabilities.

The first standard developed under the Act is the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service.

Ontario's next three accessibility standards are combined to make up the Integrated Accessibility Standard:

- Transportation- making it easier for people with disabilities to get to where they need to go
- Employment- expanding Ontario's labour pool and welcoming people with disabilities into more workplaces, and
- Information and Communications- giving people with disabilities access to more of the information we all depend on.

The regulation sets out the requirements for each of the three standards, as well as general requirements that apply to all.

The final standard is the Built Environment Standard, which helps remove barriers in buildings and outdoor spaces for people with disabilities

Customer Service Tips

The Customer Service Standard outlines what businesses and organizations in Ontario must do to make their goods and services more accessible to people with disabilities.



Requirements of the Customer Service Standard include:

- Policies, practices, and procedures

Create policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities

- Independence, dignity, integration, and equality

Ensure policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the key principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality

- Personal assistive devices

Set a policy on allowing people with disabilities to use assistive devices to access goods and services

- Communication

Be prepared to communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability

- Service animals

Allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into the public parts of the premises except where excluded by law

- Support persons

Let people with disabilities be accompanied by their support persons while accessing goods or services

- Training

Provide training of staff, volunteers, and contractors on serving people with disabilities.

- Notice of service disruption

Inform people in advance when facilities or services regularly used by people with disabilities are temporarily unavailable.

- Feedback processes

Establish a process to receive and respond to feedback on services to people with disabilities. Inform people about the feedback process.

- Documentation

Write and make public information on policies, practices and procedures related to all the service standards. Make the information available in formats that take into account the needs of people with disabilities.



POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

The Customer Service Standard requires that organizations use reasonable efforts to ensure they are consistent with the key principles of:

Dignity

People with disabilities deserve to be treated as customers and clients who are valued and deserving of full and equal service

Independence

People with disabilities have the freedom to make their own choices and to do things in their own way

Integration

People with disabilities deserve to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other people

Equality

People with disabilities ought to have the same opportunities to benefit from the way you provide goods or services to others

The Manor Village Life Centers will ensure staff and volunteers are aware of ways of communicating that take into consideration the customer's disability. The key to ensuring communication is flexibility in our approach. All staff members and volunteers should recognize and adapt their approach to meet each customer's needs.

Types of Disabilities

- Vision
- Hearing
- Deaf-Blindness
- Physical
- Speech or Language
- Mental Health
- Intellectual, Learning & Developmental



Vision Disabilities

There are different types of vision disabilities which can reduce a person's ability to see clearly. Some people may experience reduced side vision or a lack of central vision meaning they cannot see straight ahead but are not completely blind.

Depending on the severity of the vision loss, you may or may not be able to identify a person with limited vision. Some require assistance of a service animal or may use a white cane.

Others may not show any signs of their limitations.

Don't assume a customer needs or wants your help. Keeping with the core principle of independence, treat the customer as you would treat any other customer - ask how you may help them!

Customer Service Tips:

- Speak normally, be patient and friendly
- Offer assistance, but wait until the person accepts your offer or makes a request
- Identify yourself when you approach the individual and speak directly to them
- When offering to guide someone through unfamiliar surroundings offer your elbow and walk slowly. You may verbally advise of obstacles or indicate when coming up to a door, walkway, ramp or slope.
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive
- If you need to leave the customer to get something, let them know where you are going and when you will return
- If a guide dog or service animal is present, do not touch the animal

Hearing Disabilities

There are varying degrees of hearing loss ranging from problems with distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words to complete hearing loss. These individuals may use assistive devices to communicate, and it may be difficult to recognize a person with a hearing disability.

Customer Service Tips:

- Ensure the customer sees you and knows that you are communicating with them.
- Avoid placing your hands, papers, or other objects in front of your mouth while talking with the person



- If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or moves to a quieter area
- Avoid talking to the customer while leading them
- In emergency situations, assist the customer in recognizing and responding to the emergency
- If you cannot speak in sign language, offer a paper and pen so you can write notes back and forth to share information
- Make sure you are in a well-lit area where your customer can see your face and read your lips
- If a sign language interpreter is present, direct your attention to the customer, not the interpreter

Deaf-Blindness Disabilities

Deaf-Blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss that results in a person experiencing difficulty in accessing information and performing daily activities. Some people who are deaf-blind will have some sight or hearing, others will have neither and will rely on their other senses.

Those people who are deaf-blind can use any combination of sign language systems, Braille, telephone device, and communication board and often use services of an Intervener to relay information, facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides.

Customer Service Tips:

- Understand that communication can take some time, be patient
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- Avoid sudden movements or touching of the individual that may catch them off guard, unless it is an emergency

Physical Disabilities

Physical Disabilities come in many forms and degrees of severity. The most visible would include persons using a wheelchair or persons with amputations. Many physical disabilities are not visible or may even be episodic in nature. For example, a person who has arthritis, heart disease or lung disease may not show visible signs most of the time but occasionally suffer from their disabilities.



Customer Service Tips:

- If you are providing extended customer services, consider pulling up a chair and talking to the customer at eye level
- Ask how you can help
- If you notice a customer struggling or in distress, offer assistance
- Always ask before touching or moving any assistive device
- Ensure your environment is clear and free of obstacles that could make it difficult for the customer to pass

Speech or Language Disabilities

Cerebral Palsy, hearing loss, a stroke, neurological disorders 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.

Customer Service Tips:

- If you do not understand the individual, it is perfectly okay to ask the person to repeat the information
- Ask close-ended questions inviting a yes or no response
- Ask the customer how you can help them
- Be patient, it may take longer for the customer to share information and ask questions
- Never interrupt or assume you know what the customer is requesting

Mental Health Disabilities

Mental health disabilities may affect an individual's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. Often, you will not be aware you are serving/assisting a person who has a mental health disability, and it will not affect the way you provide services.

Customers with mental health disabilities may face barriers such as increased anxiety, sudden mood swings, hearing voices, seeing things and feeling things that are not there, or poor concentration and memory.



Customer Service Tips:

- Listening skills are important when dealing with such situations as you need to understand the real issue to know how you can offer help
- Ask how you can assist them and try to work with the individual to find the solution
- Be patient, confident and reassuring

Intellectual, Learning & Developmental Disabilities

Intellectual, learning and developing disabilities can range from mild to severe. Many people have intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities which do not affect their everyday lives. These individuals may use computer programs, recording devices, to calculate prices and store their pictures.

Intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities include a range of disorders which affect the verbal and non-verbal information processing, retention, and understanding.

Customers with intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities can have average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways

Customer Service Tips:

- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information
- Remember the customer is an adult and unless you are informed differently, can make his/her own decisions
- Be patient and verify understanding
- Provide information in smaller sections
- Respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling out a form, etc. with courtesy
- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary



Support for Persons with Disabilities

Service Animals:

Service animals can assist in guiding people with vision loss, or alert individuals who are hearing impaired to alarms, open automatic doors for people with physical disabilities and warn people with neurological conditions of impending seizures. Service Animals are allowed to go wherever people with disabilities go. The person with the disability has supervision of the animal at all times.

Support Persons:

Support persons may accompany people with disabilities to assist with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs.

Support persons are permitted to accompany a person with a disability anywhere they go. Always speak directly to the person with a disability and not the support person.

When discussing confidential matters confirm with the customer whether they want the support person to be present.

Support persons may accompany individuals with disabilities for communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs.

Personal Assistive Devices:

It is inappropriate to lean on, reach over, or restrict the movement of an assistive device. Personal Assistive Devices may include:

- Wheelchair, walker, cane
- Hearing aid, amplification device
- Keyboard, pointing device
- Communication boards
- Magnification devices

Service Disruption Notices:

Service disruption notices must be posted in places likely to be seen by people with disabilities and must indicate:

- Reason for the disruption
- Anticipated duration
- Alternative facilities or services available if any

If there are planned disruptions in service provide a reasonable amount of advance notice. Notice of unexpected disruptions should be posted as soon as practical.



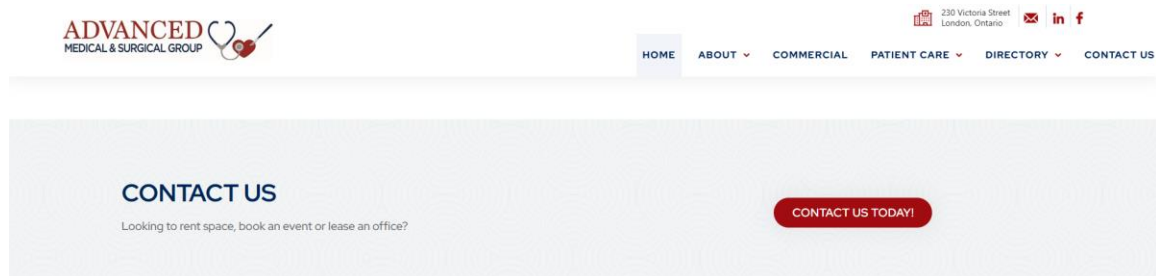
Communications & Feedback

The Customer Service Standard requires implementing an accessible feedback process to receive and respond to comments on services provided to people with disabilities.

In order to submit feedback please visit the following link and click on the contact us option. Link is below. If you require accommodation to be able to provide feedback, please speak with the receptionist located on the 1st floor reception desk or call 519-873-1451. Feedback regarding the manner in which we provide accessible customer service can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, or by email. Accessible formats and communication support are available upon request.

Contact Us | Advanced Medical Group | Medical Practice

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