



Braun-Valley Associates

P.O. Box 2168 ~ 201 Front St. Suit 405 ~ Sarnia, Ontario N7T 7L7
Phone 519-336-4590 ~ Fax 519-336-8164

***Accessibility Standard Training
for Customer Service
for BVA Employees***

What is the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act?

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is a law in Ontario that allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them.

Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by:

- a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and
- b) providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and various sectors of the economy in the development of accessibility standards.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed in 2005. Under the Act, the Ontario government is putting accessibility standards in place in the following areas:

- Customer service
- Employment
- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Built environment.

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service applies to all people or organizations in Ontario that provide goods or services, and have one or more employees. It affects the private, non-profit, and public sectors.

To provide Accessible Customer Service, organizations need to:

- Create and put in place an accessibility plan that:
 - Considers a person's disability when communicating with them
 - Allows assistive devices in your workplace, like wheelchairs, walkers and oxygen tanks
 - Allows service animals
 - Welcomes support persons
 - Lets customers know when accessible services aren't available
 - Invites customers to provide feedback
- Train all staff on accessible customer service
- Put their plan in writing
 - Let customers know how to find their plan (eg., on their website)
 - Offer their plan in accessible formats, like large print, if requested
- Report their progress online

Ontario's new accessibility standard aims to give people with disabilities great customer service. This document will assist BVA employees with:

- The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service and how it will help you welcome customers with disabilities
- How to serve customers with different kinds of disabilities
- How to help customers who use assistive devices, like wheelchairs or oxygen tanks
- Service animals, such as guide dogs, and how to welcome customers who use them
- What a support person does and how to help customers who are accompanied by a support person
- What to do when a customer with a disability needs help accessing goods and services.

How to Communicate with People with Different Types of Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of disability. Openly communicating and responding to our customers' needs is the key to excellent customer service for all. If you're not sure about the best approach, just politely ask a person with a disability how you can best communicate with them.

Here are a few tips for interacting with people who have various disabilities:

People with 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.

Tips:

- 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 with 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.

Tips:

- When you know someone has vision loss, don't assume the individual can't see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight.
- Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the customer.
- Ask 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 hearing loss

People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. They may also be oral deaf – unable to hear, but prefer to talk instead of using sign language. These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost.

Tips:

- Once a customer has identified themselves as having hearing loss, make sure you are in a well-lit area where they can see your face and read your lips.
- As needed, attract the customer's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- 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 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.

Tips:

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

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.

Tips:

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

People who have learning disabilities

The term "learning disabilities" refers to a variety of disorders. One example is dyslexia, which affects 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.

Tips:

- 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 who have intellectual / developmental disabilities

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

Tips:

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

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.

Tips:

- If you sense or know that a customer has a mental health disability be sure to treat them 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.

How to Interact with People who Use Assistive Devices, and How to Use Any Equipment that Your Worksite Provides to Help Customers with Disabilities

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.

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 customers know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, etc.).

If your work location offers any equipment or devices for customers with disabilities, make sure you know how to use them. It could be helpful to have instruction manuals handy or an instruction sheet posted where the device is located or stored.

Some examples of assistive devices that your work location might offer include:

- 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
- Wheelchairs

How to Interact with a Person who has 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, service animals must be allowed on the parts of your work premises that are open to the public. In some instances, service animals will not be permitted in certain areas by law (for example, a restaurant kitchen).

Tips:

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal. Avoid touching or addressing them.
- If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.

How to Serve a Person Accompanied by 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.

Welcome support people to your workplace or business. They are permitted in any part of your premises that is open to the public. If your worksite is one that charges admission, such as a movie theatre or bowling alley, provide notice, in advance, about what admission fee will be charged for a support person.

Tips:

- 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.

How to Assist People with Disabilities Who Need Help 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 can I help you?" Your customers are your best source for information about their needs. A solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.

Talk about disabilities – Choose the right word

Words can influence and reinforce the public's perception of people with disabilities. They can create a positive view of people with disabilities, or a negative view. Here are some tips that can help make your communication and interaction with people with all types of disabilities more successful:

- Use "disability" or "disabled," not "handicap" or "handicapped."
- Don't use terms such as "retarded," "dumb," "psycho," "moron" or "crippled." These words are very demeaning and disrespectful to people with disabilities.
- Remember to put people first. It is proper to say "person with a disability," rather than "disabled person."
- If you are not sure about a disability, it's better to wait until the individual describes their situation to you rather than make your own assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.

Principles

Dignity - service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people. People with disabilities are not treated as an afterthought or forced to accept lesser service, quality or convenience.

Independence - allowing a person with a disability to do things on their own without unnecessary help, or interference from others.

Integration – service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable the person to access goods or services.

Equal opportunity – people with disabilities have an opportunity equal to that given to others to access your goods or services.

Learn More

You can get more information on anything related to accessibility at ontario.ca/AccessON.

This document is available in an alternate format on request.

BVA ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE QUIZ

BVA Employee: _____

Date: _____

- 1 Which of the following should you **not** do when serving a customer with a disability?
 - a) Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person or companion.
 - b) Grab the arm of your customer with vision loss and pull them to the check-out counter.
 - c) If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
 - d) Ask your customer to repeat information if you didn't understand the first time.

- 2 Which of the following should you **not** do when serving a customer who uses an assistive device, a service animal, or a support person?
 - a) Speak directly to the customer.
 - b) Pet a guide dog because he's so cute and you love animals.
 - c) Request permission to move your customer's wheelchair.
 - d) Be aware of how to use specific assistive devices offered by your organization.

- 3 A positive attitude is important when meeting or helping a person with a disability.
 True False

- 4 Generally, people see the disability first and the person second.
 True False

- 5 All disabilities are caused by a disease or are inherited.
 True False

- 6 Someone who uses a power wheelchair cannot drive a motor vehicle.
 True False

- 7 If you notice someone is wearing a hearing aid, speak loudly so he or she can hear you.
 True False

- 8 When guiding a person who has vision loss, you should always take them by the arm.
 True False

- 9 A person who is Deaf cannot use the phone.
 True False

- 10 People who have vision loss have a better sense of hearing.
 True False

- 11 The majority of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing can speechread.
 True False

- 12 If you see someone who uses a wheelchair having trouble, you should give him or her a push.
 True False

- 13 Guide dogs see colours and read signs.
 True False

- 14 People who are Deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing cannot talk at all.
 True False
- 15 Mental health disability is a rare, untreatable disorder.
 True False
- 16 People with learning disabilities cannot be productive.
 True False
- 17 Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, different standards on accessibility are being developed that will set requirements for the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living.
 True False
- 18 The term “disability” only applies to people who use wheelchairs.
 True False
- 19 Your organization must accept feedback about the way it provides goods or services to people with disabilities.
 True False
- 20 You should not ask your customer to repeat himself if you don’t understand him the first time. It might offend him.
 True False
- 21 It’s helpful for someone who uses a hearing aid if you reduce background noise.
 True False
- 22 You should always speak directly to your customer, not to their support person or companion.
 True False
- 23 You can always tell when someone has a disability.
 True False
- 24 Assistive devices enable a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities.
 True False
- 25 Your organization must allow people with disabilities who use a support person to bring their support person with them while accessing goods or services on parts of the premises that are open to the public.
 True False

Answers:

- 1 b)
- 2 b)
- 3 True
- 4 True
- 5 False
- 6 False
- 7 False
- 8 False
- 9 False
- 10 False
- 11 True
- 12 False
- 13 False
- 14 False
- 15 False
- 16 False
- 17 True
- 18 False
- 19 True
- 20 False
- 21 True
- 22 True
- 23 False
- 24 True
- 25 True