

Customer Service Guidebook



**Lanark County Accessibility
Advisory Sub-Committee**

REVISED: JANUARY 25, 2012

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Purpose

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) provides for the development of standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodations, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025.

The Minister responsible for the AOSA is required to establish a process to develop and implement all accessibility standards necessary to achieving the purposes of this Act. Within this process, standard development committees are established by the Minister to develop proposed accessibility standards.

Persons or organizations may be required to meet more than one accessibility standard under the AODA. The long term objective of this Customer Service Standard is that persons or organizations providing goods and services in the Province of Ontario provide accessible customer service for persons with disabilities.



Principles of Accessible Customer Service

This standard incorporates the following core principles of accessible customer services for persons with disabilities:

- a) **Dignity:** Customer services for persons with disabilities are provided in a manner that respects the dignity of persons with disabilities;
- b) **Equity:** Customer services for persons with disabilities are provided in a manner that affords equal opportunity and benefits;
- c) **Inclusion:** Customer services for persons with disabilities are provided in a manner that promotes their integration and full participation;
- d) **Independence:** Customer services for persons with disabilities provide maximum autonomy, while respecting their right to privacy and security;
- e) **Responsiveness:** Customer services for persons with disabilities are responsive to their customer service requirements and delivered in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the accommodation required;
- f) **Sensitivity:** Customer services for persons with disabilities are provided in a manner that is sensitive to their needs.

Still Having Difficulty?

If a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing services provided by the County of Lanark, staffs are instructed to ask the person how he or she can be accommodated and what alternative methods of service provision would be more accessible.

Members of the Lanark County Accessibility Advisory Sub-Committee are available provide and advise in matters relating to Accessibility. For further information on the Sub-Committee please contact:

Clerk/Deputy C.A.O.
The Corporation of the County of Lanark
99 Christie Lake Road
Perth, ON K7H 3C6

Phone: 1-888-9-LANARK (1-888-952-6275)
OR (613) 267-4200 EXT 1502

Fax: (613) 267-2964

E-Mail: info@lanarkcounty.ca

Feedback Process

Feedback from our customers gives the County of Lanark staff and Council opportunities to learn and improve. The County recognizes the right of our customers to make a complaint, compliment, or make suggestions on ways to improve our services.

To assist the County of Lanark in ensuring that the delivery of goods and services to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, the customer is invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, in person, e-mail or telephone, addressed to:

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The clerk will respond either in writing, in person, e-mail or telephone acknowledging receipt of feedback and will set out the action to be taken in response to any complaints. A response will be provided within twenty-one (21) days.

Information about the feedback process will be posted at each County facility and on the website:
www.lanarkcounty.ca

Requirements of Customer Service Standard

What you need to know:

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07) came into force on January 1, 2008. If you are a provider of goods or services, and have one or more employees in Ontario, you will be required to comply with the regulation.

- If you are a public sector organization designated in the standard, you must comply by January 1, 2010.
- If you are a private business, non-profit organization, or any other service provider with at least one employee in Ontario, you must comply by January 1, 2012.

The following is a summary of requirements:

- 1) Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
- 2) Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
- 3) Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your goods and use your services and about any other measures your organization offers (assistive device, services, or methods) to enable them to access your goods and use your services.
- 4) Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her ability.

- 5) Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.
- 6) Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.
- 7) Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.
- 8) Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted.
- 9) Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
- 10) Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provisions of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.
- 11) Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the

Service Animals

Means any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. A service animal is not a pet. To be considered a service animal under the standard, it must either be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with the disability must be prepared to show a letter from a doctor or nurse confirming that it is required for reasons relating to his or her disability.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the County will permit the person to enter the premises with the animal and keep it with him or her, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises, the County will look to other available measures to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the County's goods and services.



Support Persons

Means any person whether a paid professional, volunteer, family member, friend who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help with communications, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, they are permitted to enter the premises together and are not prevented from having access to each other while on the premises. The County may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on its premises, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.

Where fees for goods and services are advertised or promoted by the county, it will provide advance notice of the amount payable, if any, in respect of the support person.

Confidentiality and Privacy Laws must be considered with respect to information available to persons providing support.

Appropriate behaviour is expected of a support person as it is of the customer with the disability and all other customers.

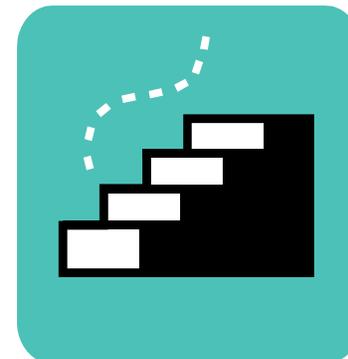
information about your feedback process readily available to the public.

If you are a designated public sector organization or other provider with 20 or more employees, you must:

- 1) Document in writing all your policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and meet other document requirements set out in the standard.
- 2) Notify customers that documents required under the customer service standard are available upon request. |
- 3) When giving documents required under the customer service standard to a person with a disability, provide the information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

Some small steps you can take immediately to improve accessibility include:

- Treating all customers with dignity and respect
- Asking 'How may I help you?'



Best Practices and Procedures for Customer Service:

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 paralysis. Physical disabilities can be congenital 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 grip a door knob
- Move around independently
- Control the speed or coordination of movements
- Reach, pull or manipulate objects
- Have strength or endurance

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

**DISABILITIES ARE NOT ALWAYS VISIBLE
OR EASY TO DISTINGUISH.**

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

- Anxiety
- Mood
- 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; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

- 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 your customer exhibits unusual behaviour, focus on the service they need and how you can help.

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to your customer. Don't speak to someone who is with them
- 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 customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.)
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line
- Be Patient. Customers will identify their needs to you

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

Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. Remember, customers who are deaf or hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating.

Here are some tips on serving customers who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Don't touch service animals-they are working and have to pay attention at all time
- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is 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 or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth

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 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
- Processing information

Best practices and procedures 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

- ✚ Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions
- ✚ Be patient and verify your understanding
- ✚ If you can't understand what is being said, 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

- Deaf people may use a sign language interpreter to communicate-always direct your attention to the Deaf person- not the interpreter
- Any personal (e.g. financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information
- Don't touch service animals-they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

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. Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an Intervener who relay information and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides.

Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an Intervener, a professional who helps with communicating. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some tips on serving customers who are deaf-blind:

- 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 a 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 its an emergency

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

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you're told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or use body language.

As much as possible, treat your customers with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have an intellectual or developmental disability:

- ✚ Don't assume what a person can or cannot do
- ✚ Use clear, simple language
- ✚ Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information

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

Some people have problems communicating. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Here are some tips on serving customers with speech or language impairments:

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

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

Vision disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. 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 manoeuvring in unfamiliar places
- Inability to differentiate colours or distances
- A narrow field of vision
- The need for bright light, or contrast
- Night blindness

Vision disabilities can restrict your customers' abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have vision disabilities:

- 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 its an emergency
- Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them their chair, or guide them to a comfortable location
- Don't walk away without saying good-bye