



# Guidelines for Delivering Accessible Customer Service

for

## Community Care Peterborough

**Mission:** Powered by Volunteers and Staff, Community Care Peterborough supports the health and wellbeing of individuals, caregivers and communities. As a trusted health care partner, our high quality programs allow people across our rural and urban region to maintain their independence and dignity.

# *“How May I Help You?”*

## **Part 1: Overview**

**There may be barriers that keep people with disabilities from fully participating in activities that most of us take for granted.**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is a law in Ontario that ensures that all workplaces implement Customer Service Standards to ensure that their goods and services are accessible to persons with disabilities. Community Care Peterborough (CCP) is committed to providing persons with disabilities equal opportunity to access programs, goods, and services.

Compliance with this Standard requires Community Care Peterborough (CCP) to:

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures for providing services to people with disabilities.
2. Communicate with a person with a disability in a way that takes their disability into account.
3. Set a policy to allow people to use their own personal assistive devices to access our goods and use our services.
4. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas or CCP premises that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by law (e.g., in a kitchen where food is prepared.)
5. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services at CCP premises open to the public.
6. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on our behalf.
7. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how CCP provides goods or services to people with disabilities and how staff will respond to feedback and take action on any complaints.
8. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on are unavailable.

## Part 2: Who are people with disabilities? What do we mean when we say “disability”?

Disabilities come in many forms, sometimes obvious and sometimes not. We cannot always tell who has a disability. The AODA uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

“Disability” as defined by the AODA includes:

- ◇ Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness
- ◇ A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
- ◇ A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the process involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- ◇ A mental disorder
- ◇ An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

## Part 3: What are Barriers?

A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability.

**Attitude** is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. For example, some people assume that someone with a speech problem has intellectual limitations and speak to them in a manner that would be used with a child. Or, some people may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering help, or they might ignore or avoid the person with a disability because they just don’t know what to do or say.

**Architectural or structural** barriers may result from design elements of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways or even room layout and placement of furniture.

**Information and communication barriers** can make it difficult to receive or convey information. For example, a person who is Deaf cannot communicate via standard telephone. And things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, or unclear language can all cause difficulty.

**Technology**, or lack of it, can prevent access to information. Tools like computers and telephones can present barriers if they are not set up with accessibility in mind.

**Systemic barriers** can result from policies, practices and procedures if they restrict a person with disabilities, often unintentionally – for example, a clothing store with a “no refund” policy and no way for someone in a scooter to enter the change room to try on clothing before purchase.

## **Part 4: What is Accessible Customer or Client Service?**

Accessible service covers a variety of elements. As outlined in our Mission Statement (What We Hope to Accomplish), Community Care Peterborough is committed to providing service to adults with disabilities in a manner that:

- Respects their dignity and independence;
- Is integrated as fully as possible into the customary method of service delivery;
- Ensures reasonable efforts are made to provide an opportunity equal to that offered to other service users to obtain and use our services;
- Allows persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way as other customers; in other words, an equality of outcome;
- Is sensitive to the individual's need; and
- Is responsive by delivering service in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the specific accommodation required.

Accessible customer service can mean many things. In general, it is the understanding that each individual may need a slightly different type of accommodation for the service we provide. For example:

- A person who is blind may need to have information read aloud
- An individual with a learning disability may need to have instructions written down
- Someone who uses a wheelchair may need help in finding an accessible route they can use

**Simply stated, accessible customer service is good customer service – courteous, helpful and prompt. General tips:**

- If you're not sure what to do, ask "How may I help you" Those with disabilities know if they need help and how you might provide it.
- Speak directly to the person asking the question, not to his or her support person or companion.
- Make no assumptions about what type of disability the person has. Some disabilities are not visible.
- Take the time to get to know the client's needs.
- Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities need a little longer to understand and respond. A good start is to listen carefully.
- Make an effort to learn about appropriate language and terminology to use when referring to persons with disabilities.
- If you cannot understand what the person is saying, politely ask them to repeat.
- Don't touch or speak to service animals, and avoid eye contact – they are working and have to pay attention.
- Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission.

## **Part 5: How should I interact with someone who uses assistive devices, the assistance of a service animal or a support person?**

### **Assistive Devices**

Assistive Devices include wheelchairs, walkers, white canes used by those who are blind or have low vision; note-taking devices, machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks, canes, devices for grasping

#### **Do**

- Remove potential barriers to the use of devices and offer assistance in a manner that respects the person's dignity and independence.
- Ensure persons with disabilities are aware of assistive devices on the premises

#### **Don't**

- Lean on or reach over a customer or their device

### **Service Animal**

Service Animals are specially trained to assist an individual with a disability.

#### **Do**

- Allow service animals to be present where customers usually have access, unless otherwise excluded by law (i.e., area where food is prepared. They are permitted access to dining area.)

#### **Don't**

Touch, talk to or make eye contact with a service animal

### **Support Persons**

Support Persons are those who accompany a person with a disability to help them with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs with access to goods or services

#### **Do**

Permit clients and support person to enter the premises together; provide the person with a disability access to their support person on the premises.

Get client's consent if confidential information is going to be shared when a support person is present. Speak directly to the client

#### **Don't**

Do not charge an admission fee for the support person if they are exempt from paying – notice will be provided if any cost recovery is anticipated for an extra person (e.g., lunch)

## **Part 6: How can I provide excellent service to customers with disabilities?**

Always start with people first. In language, that means saying “a person with a disability” rather than “a disabled person.” In an interaction, it means addressing the person’s service needs, rather than focusing on the disability.

Below are some tips to help us provide accessible service:

### **Hearing Disabilities – Definitions**

**Deaf:** In Deaf culture (capital D), the term is used to describe severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing.

**Hearing Impaired:** A person who uses residual hearing and speech to communicate.

**Deafened:** Caused to hear poorly or not at all (injury, exposure to noise).

### **Tips for Serving Individuals Living With Hearing Disabilities**

- Attract the client’s attention before speaking.
- Look directly at the person, speak clearly, keep your hands away from your face.
- Use pen and paper if necessary.
- Reduce background noise where feasible.
- Don’t assume a person uses sign language.

### **Deaf Blind Disability – Definition**

The person cannot see or hear to some degree. They may be accompanied by a support person.

### **Tips for Serving Individuals Living With a Deaf Blind Disability**

- Attract the client’s attention before speaking.
- Speak directly to the client, not the support person. Do introduce yourself to the support person also
- The client may explain how you should communicate with them
- Use clear, plain print on materials

### **Intellectual or Developmental Disability – Definition**

An intellectual or developmental disability can mildly or profoundly limit ability to learn, communicate, do everyday activities and live independently. This may be an invisible disability.

### **Tips for Serving Individuals Living With an Intellectual or Developmental Disability**

- Don’t assume what the client can or cannot do
- Use plain language and step by step instruction
- Take time, be patient
- After assisting, ask “Do you require additional information?”

### **Learning Disability – Definition**

A learning disability affects how a person receives, interprets, retains information. It may affect language based learning, mathematics, writing, and/or fine motor skills.

### **Tips for Serving Individuals Living With a Learning Disability**

- Take time, be patient
- Demonstrate a willingness to help
- Speak clearly and directly
- Use a method that works for the client (e.g., pen and paper, verbal)
- Explain any materials you provide

### **Mental Health Disability – Definition**

This is a broad classification for many disorders including:

- Those that affect how one feels
- Those that affect how one perceives the world
- Those that affect how fearful one perceives places, events or situations to be
- Those that affect how one sees oneself in relation to others
- Those that influence how one feels about food or body image

### **Tips for Serving Individuals Living with a Mental Health Disability**

- Take time, be patient
- Demonstrate a willingness to help
- Speak clearly and directly
- Use a method that works for the client (e.g., pen and paper, verbal)
- Explain any materials you provide

### **Speech or Language Disability – Definition**

Individuals may have trouble communicating, pronouncing words, may slur or stutter  
Some may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

### **Tips for Serving Individuals Living with a Speech or Language Disability**

- Give them time, don't interrupt or finish sentences
- Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no"
- Use pen and paper if appropriate
- Say "I don't understand. Can you repeat the question?"

### **Physical Disabilities or Disabilities Impacting Mobility – Definition**

A physical disability may restrict a person's control of movement; coordination and balance; ability to grasp objects; ability to walk, sit or stand. Can be present at birth, result from disease or injury, may be temporary or permanent.

### **Tips for Serving Individuals Living with Disabilities Impacting Mobility**

- Speak to the client directly
- For conversation, sit so you can make eye contact, where the person is using a wheelchair
- Ask before you help
- Respect personal space
- Don't move any items the client may have (e.g. Cane)
- Describe what you are going to do
- Don't leave the client in an awkward, undignified or dangerous position.

## **Vision Disabilities – Definition**

Most individuals who are legally blind have some remaining vision. Few are totally without sight. Some have tunnel vision (loss of side or peripheral vision) or lack of central vision (cannot see straight ahead); some can see outlines of objects. Low or no vision can restrict ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. May use guide dog or white cane May use a magnifier or reader.

## **Tips for Serving Individuals Living with a Visual Disability**

- Speak directly to the client
- Don't assume the client can or cannot see you
- Don't touch without permission. Offer your elbow to guide – if they accept, walk slowly
- Identify landmarks and trip hazards
- Be precise and descriptive with information
- Offer to read, describe or summarize information
- Don't be afraid to use words such as "see" or "look" – people with vision loss also use these words.
- Don't leave the client without advising them that you are leaving, and what they can expect.

**People with disabilities are generally aware that they may need accommodation and will work with you to find appropriate means. Most important is simply to be respectful and ask how we may help.**

**Part 7: What we should do if for some reason we can't serve a person with a**



## **disability?**

It is possible that from time to time there may be disruptions such as renovations or work projects that limit access, or there may be technology that is temporarily unavailable.

People with disabilities may often go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transit or arranging a ride. By providing advance notice, and details where alternatives exist, we can save a person an unnecessary trip. Notice can be provided on our website, by telephone or in writing and where possible a Notice should be posted at the affected site.

Copies of the Accessible Customer Service Policy are available on our website at: [www.commcareptbo.org](http://www.commcareptbo.org) and from any of our service locations.

## **MANDATORY TRAINING REGISTRATION**

Accessible Client Service Training is mandatory for all Community Care Peterborough staff and volunteers. If you have any questions about how you may best provide service, please ask your Community Care Coordinator or Director of Support Services.

## **VOLUNTEERS, BROKERED HELPERS, AND EXERCISE AND FALLS PREVENTION INSTRUCTORS**

Please complete and submit the “Confirmation of Understanding/Compliance” form (over) to the Executive Director.



**Confirmation of Understanding / Compliance with the Act**

By signing above, I confirm that I have read and understood the material contained in Community Care Peterborough’s “Guidelines for Delivering Accessible Customer Service”.

That understanding constitutes completion of the mandatory Accessible Customer Service training as required under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (the Act).

Record of your compliance with this Act will be retained by Community Care Peterborough.

**First and last name (print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_