



Got Access?

A Guide for an Accessible Aurora



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“Disability” can include:

- Physical conditions
- Sensory conditions
- Cognitive or intellectual conditions
- Mental health conditions
- Developmental disabilities or various types of chronic disease or disorders

Did you know?

1.5 million people in Ontario have a disability.

People with disabilities travel, shop and do business just like everyone else.

Excellent customer service includes treating all customers equitably with respect, dignity and courtesy.



Ontario Human Rights

The Human Rights Code calls for equal rights, opportunities and freedom from discrimination. The Code prohibits discrimination in employment on grounds of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or disability.

In the workplace, employees with disabilities are entitled to the same opportunities and benefits as people without disabilities. This may include special arrangements or workplace “accommodations” to enable them to fulfill their job duties.

Customers, clients and tenants with disabilities also have the right to equal treatment and equal access to facilities and services. Therefore, we must recognize the dignity and worth of every person and provide equal rights and opportunities to everyone without discrimination.



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About the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

In 2005, the Government of Ontario passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). Its goal is to make Ontario accessible by 2025. Accessibility standards are created as part of the AODA. These standards are rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow in order to identify, remove and prevent barriers so that people with disabilities will have more opportunities to participate in everyday life.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service was the first standard to become law as part of the regulation. The next four standards — information and communications, employment, transportation and design of public spaces — have been combined under one regulation, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation or IASR. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) builds on the first standard for accessible customer service and moves us closer to an accessible Ontario by 2025.



Accessible Customer Service

The Town of Aurora is committed to providing excellent customer service to all residents and visitors and treating everyone with dignity and respect.

To do this, we must recognize the diverse needs of all of our residents—including the needs of people with disabilities.

In 2008, the Government of Ontario launched the Accessible Customer Service Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Its goal is to ensure that people with disabilities get the same level of customer service as everyone else.

The law requires that all public and private sector organizations in Ontario, including The Town of Aurora, identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessible customer service. It also states that all staff, Council members, volunteers, board and advisory committee members must be trained on how to provide accessible customer service.

This guide will give you tips on how best to interact with a person who has a disability, so that you can provide excellent customer service to all Aurora residents and visitors.



The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)'s goal is to ensure that people with disabilities get the same level of customer service as everyone else.

When interacting with a person with a disability, remember the T.A.L.K. principle:

- T** = Take the time to ask “may I help you?”
- A** = Ask—do not assume
- L** = Listen attentively and speak directly to the customer
- K** = Know the accommodations and services that are available



If you notice a person is having difficulty accessing your goods or services, a good starting point is to simply ask how you can best help. Be patient – and remember your customers are your best source of information about their needs. The solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.

How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities

Being able to interact and communicate with people who have 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.

Here is some helpful information on how to address individuals that have a disability.

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

- 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 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.



Tips

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. Make eye contact or give a small wave with 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.



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.
- Do not touch items or equipment, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission.
- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, do not 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 potential hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not.



Tips

- Do not assume the individual can not 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 aloud 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 with speech or language disabilities

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



Tips

- Do not assume that a person with a speech disability has another disability.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no”.
- Be patient. Do not 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.



Tips

- 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 effectively, do everyday physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability.



Tips

- Do not 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.



Tips

- Do not touch or handle any assistive device without permission.
- Do not 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 (for example, public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, automatic door openers, etc.)

How to interact with a person who requires 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. Hearing alert animals can help people who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf or hard of hearing. Other service animals are trained to alert an individual of an oncoming seizure.

Under the Accessible Customer Service Standard, service animals are allowed in the same spaces that are open to the public, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. You may ask a person for a letter verifying that their animal is required for reasons relating to their disability if it is not readily apparent.



Tips

- 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 are 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 Accessible Customer Service Standard, a support person must be allowed to accompany an individual with a disability to any part of the premises that is open to the public or to third parties. If an event or program charges admission, advance notice must be given about what admission fee will be charged for a support person.



Tips

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

Service Disruptions

It is possible that from time to time, there will be disruptions in service such as elevators under repair, renovations that limit access to an area or technology that is temporarily unavailable. If a disruption in service is planned and expected, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

Customers with disabilities may go to a lot of trouble to access services such as booking specialized transit or arranging for their support person to attend. By providing reasonable notice of service unavailability, you can save the customer an unnecessary trip. Notice can be provided through several methods such as a website, by telephone or in writing.

In the event of an unexpected disruption in service, provide notice quickly and in as many ways as possible. Consider offering alternative methods of service during the disruption.

Feedback

Under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, The Town of Aurora has established a process for receiving and responding to feedback about how the municipality provides goods or services to people with disabilities.

Organizations may have other types of external or internal feedback processes such as online surveys, email, phone or print.

Assistance may be offered if a customer requires help providing feedback due to a disability. This may include arranging for accessible formats and communication supports upon request. It is important to notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports.

Integrated Accessibility Standards

In addition to setting out the requirements for each of the IASR standards — information and communications, employment, transportation and design of public spaces — the regulation includes general requirements that apply across all four standards.

Here are some of the general requirements.

Accessibility policies and plans

All obligated organizations must develop, implement and maintain policies that govern how they will achieve accessibility through meeting the requirements of the regulation. The Government of Ontario, designated public sector organizations and large organizations to develop, implement and maintain multi-year accessibility plans. Accessibility plans must outline strategies for removing existing barriers and preventing new ones and show how the requirements of the IASR will be met.

Training

All obligated organizations must train employees and volunteers about the regulation, as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to people with disabilities. These organizations must provide this training to those who participate in developing the organization's policies and all those who provide goods, services or facilities on the organization's behalf.

Procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities

The Government of Ontario, Legislative Assembly and designated public sector organizations must incorporate accessibility criteria when procuring or acquiring goods, services and facilities except where it is impractical to do so.

Self-service kiosks

When designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks, the Government of Ontario and designated public sector organizations must incorporate accessibility features.

Large and small organizations must consider accessibility for people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.



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Information and Communications

The Information and Communications Standard outlines how organizations will be required to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities.

Here are some of the information and communications requirements.

Accessible formats and communication supports

Organizations must provide or make arrangements for accessible formats and information and communication supports when a person with a disability requests them. The accessible formats and communication supports must be made available in a timely manner and at no additional cost.

Accessible websites and web content

The Government of Ontario, the Legislative Assembly, designated public sector organizations and organizations with 50 or more employees must conform to the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 as outlined in the Information and Communications Standard.

Educational and training resources

Public libraries (as defined in the regulation) and libraries of educational and training institutions must provide more of their collections in accessible formats upon request where they exist.

Emergency procedures, plans or public safety information

Organizations that prepare emergency procedures, plans or public safety information and make them available publicly must provide this information in accessible formats or with communication supports upon request.



Libraries of educational and training institutions must provide more of their collections in accessible formats upon request where they exist.

Employment

The Employment Standard will help employers make their employment practices and workplaces more accessible to potential and existing employees with disabilities.

Here are some of the employment requirements.

Recruitment, assessment and selection

Every employer must notify employees and the public about the availability of accommodations for job applicants who have disabilities.

Applicants must be informed that accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request for interviews and other selection processes.



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Plans and processes

Employers that use performance management or provide career development must take into account the accessibility needs of their employees with disabilities in those processes.

Every employer must provide individualized workplace emergency response information for employees with disabilities if the disability makes it necessary.

While all employers must accommodate their employees with disabilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code, this regulation requires that employers, other than small organizations, have a written process for developing and documenting individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.



All employers must accommodate their employees with disabilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code

Transportation

The Transportation Standard will make it easier for everyone to travel in Ontario including people with disabilities, older Ontarians and families traveling with children in strollers.

The standard applies to:

- Conventional transportation services such as York Region Transit (YRT) and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)
- Specialized transportation services including TTC's Wheel-Trans and York Region's Mobility Plus
- Other public transportation services such as those that service public school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities.

Municipalities and taxicabs

Municipalities that licence taxicabs must ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs do not charge higher fares or additional fees to a passenger with a disability. They must also consult with the public to determine the proportion of accessible taxis required in the community.



Built Environment

Ontario's Building Code continues to be amended to ensure buildings are accessible to accommodate everyone. New construction and renovations will be subject to updated accessibility requirements.

The accessibility standards for the built environment focus on removing barriers in two areas:

- Public spaces
- Buildings

The design of public space standard only applies to new construction and major changes to existing features.

Here are highlights of what the provincial standard covers:

- Recreational trails/beach access routes. For example, meet minimum requirements for trails and beach access routes (i.e. clear width), post signs with specific information at the start of the trails
- Outdoor public eating areas like rest stops or picnic areas, such as providing a minimum number of picnic tables
- Outdoor play spaces, like playgrounds in local communities. This includes consulting with people with disabilities to help incorporate accessibility for children and caregivers with various disabilities into play spaces
- Outdoor paths of travel, like sidewalks (i.e. clear width), ramps, stairs, curb ramps, rest areas and accessible pedestrian signals
- Accessible parking on and off street. For example, making four percent of spaces accessible in new lots new lots with less than 100 spaces.
- Service-related elements like service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas
- Maintenance and restoration of public spaces

**For more information on the Accessibility for
Ontarians with Disabilities Act, visit www.accesson.ca**

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Alternate formats available upon request

