The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

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Learning Points

- What is AODA and Customer Service Standards.

- Barriers to accessibility.

- Interacting and Communicating with People with Disabilities.

AODA

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.

Five Standards:
- Customer Service (Ontario Regulation 429/07)
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Built Environment

GOAL: An Accessible Ontario by 2025.

What is a Disability?

AODA uses the same definition of disability as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

"Disability means any degree of physical disability, vision, sensory, intellectual or developmental, learning, mental health and includes multiple disabilities."

Principles of Customer Service

- Respect
- Dignity
- Independence
- Equal opportunity and
- Integration

Accessibility is about *removing barriers*, not a person's disability.

Words with Dignity

When referring to someone with a disability it is extremely important that you put the person FIRST! E.g. Person _with_ a physical disability, or hearing difficulty etc.

Refer to a person's disability only when it is relevant to the situation.

Barriers to Accessibility

Physical

Attitudinal

Information/Communicational

Disabilities may be visible or invisible

Technological
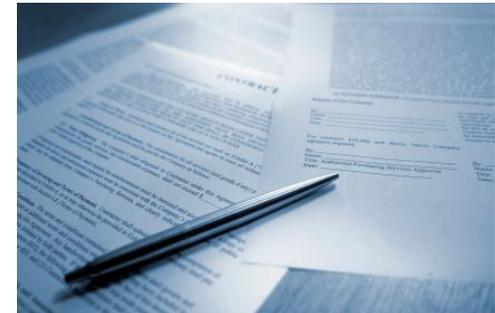
A Policy or practice

One thing in common:
They all deny dignity and Independence.

Communication/ Information Barriers

Communication barriers are things/situations that make it difficult for a person with a disability to give or receive information. A few examples are:

- Small print size in information brochures and application forms.

- Not facing the person with whom you are communicating.

- Signs that are not clear or easy to understand.

- Many people speaking at once.

- Voice announcements that are not also shown visually.

- Lack of access to services such as sign language interpreting and captioning.

- Denying a person the extra time needed to convey or receive information.

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Systemic Barriers

Systemic barriers occur when an organization has policies, practices or procedures that restrict a person who has a disability from using a service or product.

If there are no policies, practices and procedures on accessibility and how to interact with a disability-that is also a systemic barrier.

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Technology Barriers

Poor design of technology or lack of technology that prevents people with disabilities from accessing your services.

- Websites that cannot be read by screen readers.
- Telephones that do not offer amplification and tone controls.
- Lack of TTY(teletypewriter) .
- No captioning, assistive listening devices, microphones, text-to-text communication systems in meeting rooms etc.

Attitudinal Barriers

Attitude is one of the hardest barriers to eliminate and yet, removing this barrier costs nothing. Ignorance about people with disabilities result in behaviours that interfere with creating societies that include everyone.

People with disabilities face many different attitudinal barriers. Some attitudes suggest the person with a disability is incapable; others that the person is "special". All attitudinal barriers deny people the right to be treated respectfully and equally.

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Architectural or Structural Barriers

These are design elements that prevent a person with a disability from accessing a place or service. Sometimes they are called built environment barriers.

Examples are:

- Steps, stairs and steep ramps.

- Doorways too narrow for someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter.

- Railings that are hard to grasp or that have ends that stick out and catch clothing.

- Items left in the walkway, blocking safe passage.

- Lack of color contrast between flooring, walls and furniture.

Test your knowledge

Which of these attitudes are barriers to accessibility?

1. Believing that everyone with disabilities has the same needs and approach to tasks.

2. Lowering expectations of a person with a disability because you think he/she is less capable.

3. Pity for someone because she/he has a disability.

4. All of the above.

Answer: 4, All of the above.

Provide the BEST Customer Service

- Don't make assumptions about a person's abilities based on what you can see

- If someone appears to be having trouble, ask if you can help. Accept the answer.

- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, don't touch, move or lean on them.

Customer Service- cont'd.

- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a person using a wheelchair, try to find a seat or yourself so the two of you are at eye level.

- Communicate directly with the person, Don't ask a companion to respond on behalf of the person with a disability.

Communicating with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.

- Speak clearly and don't raise your voice.

- May use a sign language interpreter to communicate.

- Always direct your attention to the person who is deaf not the interpreter.

- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.

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Communicating with a Person who has a Vision Disability

- 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 and location as necessary.

- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.

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Communicating with Persons who have a Speech Disability

- 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.

- Verify your understanding.

Communicating with persons who are deaf-blind

- Direct your attention to your customer not the intervener.

- Never suddenly touch a person who is deaf-blind or touch him or her without permission.

- Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.

Communicating with Persons with Mental Health Disabilities

- 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 the customer exhibits unusual behaviour.

- Focus on the service they need and how you can help.

- Take the person away from the situation, noise and distractions to facilitate one on one service.

Communicating with Persons with Learning Disabilities

- 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 and only when asked.

- Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.
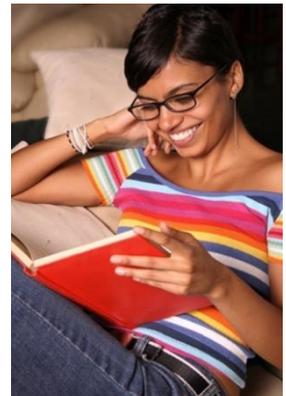
Communicating with Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

- Use clear, simple language.

- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.

- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions.

- Be patient and verify your understanding.

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Test Question

The best method to communicate with a person with disability:

1.Speak loudly and slowly.

2.Write out the conversation.

3.The way the person tells you when you ask her or him.

Answer: 3

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Personal Assistive Devices

An assistive device is anything built, used, designed made or adapted that helps a person to do everyday tasks.

- Examples of these devices includes teletypewriters (TTY), assistive listening systems, power door openers, automatic, doors, elevators, platform lifts and star lifts.

- If you have these where you work and you have not received training on how to safely activate these devices, you must find out who at your work is trained to help people access the devices.

Service Animals

- Service Animals accompanying persons with disabilities are welcome unless the animal is excluded by law. If a service animal is forbidden by law, staff should ensure that the person accesses our services with alternate assistance.

- A service animal may be a cat, bird, monkey, or other animal, not just a dog.

When can you prohibit Service animals?

- When another law specifically states that animals are excluded

- Health and safety – where the presence of an animal would be a serious risk to another person.

- Laws excluding particular animal breeds

Support Persons

- Support Persons assisting a person with a disability may be: a paid professional, volunteer, family member or a friend.

- Speak to the person with the disability, even if the support person is helping with communication.

- If you are going to discuss confidential information while a support person is present, you must get permission from the customer first.

- If the person's disability is such that he or she is not able to give that consent, you need to get consent from the individual's legal representative acting on the person's behalf.

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Accessing Goods or Services

Common situations and simple things we can do to help:

- If the absence of a functioning automatic door or power opener prevents someone from opening the door, offer to open the door manually.

- If a person is having trouble reading, discreetly ask if he or she would like you to read it to them.

- If a person cannot hear what you are saying, ask if she or he would like you to write out what is being said, or ask if they would like to see the information on a text device such as a computer monitor or a hand-held text device.

- Above all - smile. Stay calm. Ask "*How can I help?*" Be open to suggestions.

Alternate Format Request

All Community Living London documents will be made available in alternate formats. In order for requests to be processed, an Alternate Format Request form must be completed and submitted to the Department of Organizational Development.

All reasonable effort will be made to provide them in the requested format.

Forms are available on our website at

www.cll.on.ca

or

by calling 519-686-3000

Feedback

The organization provides a mechanism that allows the public to provide feedback on the manner in which the organization provides programs, goods and services to people with disabilities.

The feedback process permits the person to provide feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, or by electronic text on diskette or otherwise.

The feedback process details the organization's process for receiving and responding to feedback including timelines and contact information and this process will be made available on the organization's website.

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or by calling 519-686-3000.

Visit www.mcss.gov.on.ca for more information on AODA

Questions?