

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Center
Disability Settlement Service
Presents

The Accessibility For Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)

Making our Programs and Services
Accessible for All

Context and Relevance

- At Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, we provide a wide range of services to meet the diverse needs of our community. We strive to meet the needs in a way that is respectful and responsive to each person's needs.
- Many people will come to us and seek our services if we demonstrate accessibility and inclusion
- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) mandates that we each receive training on providing Accessible Customer Service
- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) helps us to be more aware and inclusive.
- Once clients disclose disability, we are uniquely able to help them. This sets our agency apart!

Definition of Disability

- Same as the Ontario *Human Rights Code*
- Any degree of disability, infirmity, impairment, malformation or disfigurement caused by bodily injury, birth defect, or illness.
- This means that potentially each of us could become disabled in some way

Profile of Disability in Ontario

- Approximately 15.8 per cent (2.5 million) Ontarians have a disability. *
- The number of people with disabilities increases as population ages. Population projections estimate that by 2021, Canadians aged 65 and older will number close to 6.7 million or about one-fifth of the total population. *
- Ontarians with disabilities have untapped potential for labour market contributions – unemployment rate of Ontarians with disabilities (26%) is five times higher than unemployment rate of Ontarians without a disability (5%). *
- People with disabilities have a spending power of \$21-25 billion a year in Canada. **

Source: * Statistics Canada's Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) 2001

** Royal Bank of Canada Financial Group

Definition of Barrier

A “barrier” is anything that stops a person with a disability from fully taking part in society because of that disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Source: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Part I, Section 2

The AODA Vision...

An accessible Ontario in 20 years or less:

- **Fundamental, comprehensive change to ensure accessible buildings, communications, services and employment for people with disabilities.**
- **Facilitate the full participation of Ontarians with disabilities in Ontario's community and economic life.**
- **Inform and change attitudes, values and behaviour towards accessibility.**
- **Essential to maintain quality of life and strong economy for all Ontarians.**
- **An investment that makes good economic sense.**

Standards Development Approach

Standards development committees are being established to address barriers to accessibility that have a major impact on daily living for people with disabilities.

The approach:

- **Common standards** may apply broadly to all persons and organizations in Ontario and may address barriers common to all sectors. Four areas for common standards are:
 - **Customer Service** – Service delivery to the public. Could include business practices and employee training.
 - **Built Environment** – Access to, from and within buildings and outdoor spaces. Could include counter heights, aisle/door widths, parking and signs, as well as pedestrian access routes and signal systems.
 - **Employment** – Hiring and retaining employees. Could include employment practices, policies and processes such as job advertisements and interviewing.
 - **Information & Communications** – Information processing and communication. Could include publications, software applications and websites.

Standards Development Approach

Every provider of goods or services that has 20 employees or more must prepare documents describing its policies, practices and procedures in relation to the standards in effect

Customer Service Standard

- On January 1, 2008 the Ontario government's new standard on accessible customer service for people with disabilities came into force.
- All organizations in Ontario that provide goods or services to the public, and have at least one employee, will be covered by the standard. This includes private businesses, non-profit organizations, as well as the provincial government and municipal governments, universities, colleges, hospitals, school boards and public transit organizations.

Customer Service Standard

- **Under the new standard, organizations will be required to:**
- **Demonstrate a commitment to removing barriers to quality customer service for people with disabilities;**
- **Train employees and volunteers on how to provide accessible customer service;**
- **Offer an accessible way for people with disabilities to provide customer feedback and commit to taking action on any complaints;**
- **Provide information on any service disruption that would prevent accessibility for people with disabilities (for example posting signs at the entrance of a building to let customers know that the elevator is temporarily out of service);**

Customer Service Standard

- **Make information available about the accessibility features of your customer service practices;**
- **Permit the use of accessibility supports such as service animals, assistive devices and accessibility support persons;**
- **Communicate with customers in a way that takes into consideration their disability (for example providing a publication in an alternative format, such as audio or large print).**
- **The standard came into force on January 1, 2008; private businesses and non-profits begin reporting compliance in 2012.**

Guidelines for Providing Accessible Customer Service

- Do not make assumptions about what type of disabilities has or what he or she can or cannot do
- Some disabilities are not visible. Be patient. People with some disabilities may take a little longer to understand and communicate with you.
- If you are not sure what to do, ask, “How can I help?”
- Before you help, ask the person if they need help and how best to provide it. Follow their instructions.
- If you cannot understand what the other person is saying, politely ask again

Guidelines for Providing Accessible Customer Service

- Speak directly to the client, not their interpreter or aide.
- Use plain language and short sentences.
- Do not touch a service animal.
- Ask permission before touching someone's wheelchair or assistive device.
- Concentrate on what the client is saying rather than their voice or wording.
- Do not interrupt or finish the client's sentences. Give him or her the time they need to collect and articulate their thoughts

Guidelines for Providing Accessible Customer Service

- If verbal communication is not working, ask how the client would find it easier to communicate

People with Vision Disabilities

- Introduce yourself verbally when you approach your client. If you need to leave your client at any time, let him or her know you are stepping away and will be back.
- Some people with vision disabilities may use a service animal or white cane, others may not according to their preference. Never touch a service animal or device without explicit permission.
- Clients with vision loss may not be able to read paperwork, locate landmarks, see hazards, or recognize faces. Offer to read any paperwork verbally or describe it. Be conscious not to breach client confidentiality. Offer to shut the door before reading personal info.
- Some people may have difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar places. Offer your elbow to help guide, and describe obstacles if necessary. Always ask what kind of help they need.

People with hearing disabilities

- Telephone services are not accessible to people with hearing disabilities. Clients may contact you through the Bell Relay service. The Relay operator will provide instructions for you if necessary. Speak directly to the client using short sentences, followed by the words “Go Ahead” to indicate the operator to relay the information. Wait for the client’s reply to be relayed back to you.
- When first speaking to the individual, it may be necessary to gesture to attract his or her attention to you, or lightly touch the hand as you speak.
- Do not shout when speaking to someone with a hearing loss. Just speak clearly and make sure nothing is covering your mouth as the client may be lip reading. Reduce background noise.
- Have a pen and paper with you to assist with communication through note-writing if the client prefers

People with physical disabilities

- If you need to have a conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, sit down beside the client so you can make eye contact.
- If you notice someone who appears to need help, ask them if and how you can help. He or she may have developed ways of doing things and are simply adapting it to your space. The client may not require help.
- If you are asked to help move a client's device, never move the item out of the person's reach.
- Inform you client about the accessible features in the immediate area, including the locations, how to access them, and who to contact for help.
- Keep ramps and corridors clear. Remove clutter, obstacles, and furniture if it may be in the way of someone unfamiliar with your site.

People with mental health disabilities

- Be confident and reassuring
- If at any time a client is aggressive with you, issue a verbal warning that such behaviour will not be tolerated, then professionally ask the individual to leave your office.
- If you received information about the client from a third party, ask the client for this same information as they may wonder who told you things about them.
- Explain what you are doing, what you need from the client, and why at each stage of the meeting
- If you write notes during the session, provide the client the notes. If you need to retain the notes, give the client a copy so that he or she feels in control and can refer to the notes at any time.

People with mental health disabilities (continued)

- If the client appears to be overwhelmed, Ask how you can best help. Offer to spread the conversation over several meetings.
- If the client appears to hesitate answering a question, be patient as they may be collecting their thought. After sufficient pause, ask the individual directly what you can do to help them provide the information you need.
- If the client appears to hesitate answering a question, be patient as they may be collecting their thought. After sufficient pause, ask the individual directly what you can do to help them provide the information you need.
- If the client appears to be in crisis. Assess the client's risk of harm, call for assistance, listen attentively to the client, give reassurance that help is coming, and encourage the client to contact someone they trust and a mental health agency in the coming days.

People with learning disabilities

- Discuss and explain any documentation provided in plain language. Avoid complex language and jargon. Invite the client to ask any clarifying questions.
- Be patient as the client may require more time to understand the information provided.
- If the client appears to be overwhelmed, Ask how you can best help. Offer to spread the conversation over several meetings.
- Speak naturally, clearly and directly to the individual. If verbal conversation is ineffective, offer to use any other strategies the client finds helpful. This may include notes, email, or speaking with a support person (at the clients' request). Always get written consent to speak with an alternate person.

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities

- Speak in plain language. Avoid complex language and jargon. Invite the client to ask any clarifying questions.
- Speak in short sentences.
- Provide one piece of information at a time
- Be patient as the client may require more time to understand the information provided. Make sure the person understands what you have said. If you don't understand the client, ask to repeat.
- If verbal conversation is ineffective, offer to use any other strategies the client finds helpful. This may include notes, email, or speaking with a support person (at the clients' request). Get the client's written permission to talk to someone else unless the person is their legal guardian or trustee.
- If the client appears to be overwhelmed, Ask how you can best help. Offer to spread the conversation over several meetings.

People with speech disabilities

- Do not assume that a person with a speech disability also has an intellectual or other disability. This is very seldom the case
- Ask the person if they are comfortable with one-to-one dialogue or prefer another way to interact.
- Have a pen and paper to communicate in writing if needed or preferred.
- Be patient as the client may require more time to understand the information provided. Make sure the person understands what you have said. If you don't understand the client, ask to repeat.
- Do not interrupt the person or finish his or her sentences.
- Ask questions that can be answered yes or no if possible.
- Avoid asking unnecessary questions. For example, rather than ask the person for their address, ask if they have a driver's license first. If so, just clarify if the information is current.

One Final Note

- **It is important to remember that any client may live with more than one type of disability, and you may not be able to tell what the disabilities are. In all cases, use customer service best practices and, if you are not sure how to help the person, ask “How may I help you” and follow his or her instructions.**

Other Information for Clients with Disabilities

- Advise clients that we have a way for them to provide feedback or concerns. They can either tell you directly or contact Tejinder by phone (extension 232) or email at tejinderk@dixiebloor.ca. We will address all concerns within 14 workdays where possible.
- If you notice that the elevator, phone or computer are temporarily down, please alert reception who will tell management and post the required notice.
- If there is an serious issue, incident, or accident involving a client or you while serving a client, contact your manager and your health and safety representative.

To test your knowledge

- A requirement of the AODA is that every employee, student or agent of DBNC must receive this training. In order to show that you read and understand the material, please answer the following questions and submit them to Tejinder at tejinderk@dixiebloor.ca. You will then be provided with a certificate of completion.
- **Question 1:** You see a client walking or looking around, appearing to need some help. You ask “How can I help you” and the person does not appear to hear you. What do you do?
- **Question 2:** You see someone struggling with his or her bags, paperwork etc and the person now appears to be struggling opening the door. What should you do?
- **Question 3:** You meet a new person who is accompanied by someone else. As you try to obtain information from the client, the other person answers all your questions, and tells you information you have not asked about. What will you do?

Discussion / Q&A

If you have any comments/questions at any time, please call or email me

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