

# Accessibility Standards for Customer Service



For Square One Older Adult Centre  
and Square One Seniors Wellness Services



**SQUARE ONE**  
**SENIORS WELLNESS**  
**SERVICES**



The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005(AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislation with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the Province.

### **The Accessibility Standard**

The purpose of the accessibility standards is to move organizations in Ontario forward on accessibility to programs and services available to individuals. Because of our commitment to meet the needs of our members and community, Square One Older Adult Centre and Square One Seniors Wellness Services has a firmly based philosophy of accessibility. As a result, every effort will be made to ensure goods and services will be delivered in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of people with impairments, challenges and disabilities. In addition we are committed, when possible, to enable persons with disabilities to use or benefit from all of our programs and services delivered in an integrated manner. We understand that each individual may need a slightly different kind of accommodation and we are willing to try to provide that remembering that good customer service is always courteous and helpful. We are committed to delivering service in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the specific accommodation required.

Best practices for Accessible Customer Service follows four principles – Dignity, Independence, Integration and Equal Opportunity. Therefore any policies, practices and procedure for providing programs and services to person with impairments, challenges and disabilities will be based on these principles. The Provincial Accessibility Standard details specific requirements for service providers which include: Creation of policies related to service provision; ensuring communication takes in account the impairment or disability experienced by the person; ensuring people can use their own assistive devices to access the program or service; ensuring individuals can be accompanied by service animals except were excluded by law; accommodate participation of a support person for an individual who requires such services; train staff, volunteers and contractors about the standard and its implementation (such training to be trained and confirmed); establish a feedback process so people can comment on how services and programs are provided to individuals who are impaired, challenged or disabled; provide notice when facilities or services on which people with impairments, challenges or disabilities rely are out of service or unavailable. We also encourage our staff, contractors and volunteers to use respectful language and avoid using outmoded language when referring to a person who is impaired, challenged or disabled.

### **Definition of Impairment, Challenge or Disability**

Specifically the Standard applies to persons with a disability as defined under the Human Rights Code. This definition includes a person with any degree of physical impairment or infirmity resulting from an injury, illness or birth defect. This includes person with mental impairments or developmental disabilities. It also includes persons with mental disorders, learning challenges and disabilities.

## How Can I Help

Providing good customer service always starts with the same question. “How can I help you?” Every person is different and might need a different kind of assistance so it is very important to establish what kind of help the person might require. Someone with learning disabilities might need written instructions, a vision impaired person might need a device or someone to read for them, a person in a wheel chair may need an alternate route to a location. Always remember to acknowledge the person before the disability.

The Charts below defines a specific category of challenge, impairment or disability and outline some tips for helping our customers to the best of our ability. Language and how we use it changes as time goes by. Words that describe a condition may have changed because they may have been viewed as disrespectful by the people with the disability. For example the term intellectual disability has replaced the out-dated term of retarded because the intellectually disabled community decided they did not like the word retarded and embarked on a campaign to change the words to describe their condition as intellectually disabled. In some cases respectful and out-dated language has been included as a guideline for speaking to or about people who may be our customers.

### Intellectual Disability

Definition	Tips for serving customers
Intellectual development and capacity that is below average. This disability can range from mild to severe. Therefore each person with this disability will have a different ability to learn, communicate, live independently and participate in activities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Do not make assumption about what people can do or understand.</li> <li>2) Use plain language.</li> <li>3) Provide one piece of information at a time; step by step instructions.</li> <li>4) Ask if the person understands.</li> <li>5) Even if the person has a support worker try to address the person when you talk.</li> </ol>
Respectful Language – Person with an Intellectual Disability	Out-dated Language - Retarded

### Learning Disability

Definition	Tips for serving customers
Ability to acquire, retain, interpret or comprehend information is unconventional or different. Persons with this disability have average to above average intellect but may encounter challenges in mathematics, language based skills or writing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Take time and be patience – the person is trying to understand.</li> <li>2) You may have to explain things a different way i.e. writing information down.</li> <li>3) Understand that this person might need you to explain things to them in more detail.</li> </ol>
Respectful Language – Person with a Learning Disability	Out-dated Language – Slow, stupid, brain damaged

## Mental Health Disorder

Definition	Tips for serving customers
The absence of psychological wellbeing and satisfactory adjustment to society. Some common features of these disorders include phobias, panic attacks, depression, manic phases, hallucinations – auditory and visual as well as mood swings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Be confident and reassuring.</li> <li>2) Do not be confrontational.</li> <li>3) If the person is upset ask how you can help.</li> <li>4) Take the person seriously but try not to take things personally. Your reality may be different from theirs.</li> </ol>
Respectful Language – Person with a Mental Health Disorder or Disability	Out-Dated Language – Crazy, insane, nuts, wacko, hyper sensitive, weakling

## Speech or Language Disability

Definition	Tips for serving customers
May have problems communicating, may find it hard to pronounce words, may stutter or slur; may use communication boards or other assistive devices.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Give people whatever time they need to get their point across and don't make assumptions.</li> <li>2) Ask questions that can be answered by yes or no</li> <li>3) Don't interrupt until the person has finished their sentence.</li> <li>4) Say "I'm sorry I don't understand could you repeat that."</li> <li>5) Use paper and pencil if required.</li> </ol>
Respectful Language - Speech Impairment or Disability	Out-Dated Language - Speech defect, stutterer, slow

## Physical Disability, Impairment or Disability Affecting Mobility

Definition	Tips for serving customers
Person is restricted on a range from mild to severe in mobility, control or speed of movements, balance, ability to grasp object, ability to walk, ability to sit, ability to stand. Can result from disease, injury or may be present at birth. May be temporary condition.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Speak directly to the customer</li> <li>2) Ask before you help</li> <li>3) Respect personal space</li> <li>4) Do not move any item they may have</li> <li>5) Describe what you are going to do before you do it.</li> <li>6) Do not leave a customer in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position.</li> <li>7) Provide service at an accessible counter.</li> </ol>
Respectful Language – Physical Disability, Mobility Impairment	Out-dated Language – Handicapped, physically challenged, crippled

## Visually Impairment or Disability

Definition	Tips for serving customers
Low or no vision which restrict the ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards, may use a white cane or guide dog. May be able to view written document with the use of assistive devices or documents with large print.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Don't assume customer cannot see you.</li> <li>2) Speak directly to the customer.</li> <li>3) Ask if the person needs help.</li> <li>4) Offer elbow to guide and if accepted walk slowly and wait for permission to move.</li> <li>5) Be precise in descriptions and do not leave the customer without telling them</li> </ol>
Respectful Language - Person who is blind	Out-dated Language – Handicapped, invalid

## culturally Deaf, Oral Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing

Definition	Tips for serving customers
culturally Deaf persons may use American Sign language to communicate while a person who is Hard of Hearing may use residual hearing and speech to communicate. A person who is oral deaf may speak. All these individuals may use hearing aids, communication devices, TTY phones, real-time translation or interpreters.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Attract the customer's attention before speaking, wave or touch them gently on the shoulder.</li> <li>2) Look directly at the person.</li> <li>3) Make sure there is lots of light and that you do not cover your mouth when you speak.</li> <li>4) Use a computer or pen and paper if required.</li> <li>5) Do not ever shout although modulating your voice with a person who is harder of hearing because they have suffered mild hearing loss is acceptable.</li> </ol>
Respectful Language- Person with hearing loss, Person who is deaf	Out-dated Language – deaf & dumb, deaf mute, hearing impaired

## Deaf Blind Disability

Definition	Tips for serving customers
Cannot see or hear to some degree.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Speak directly to the person</li> <li>2) Identify yourself to the support person</li> <li>3) Do not interrupt any translation the support person may provide. Please wait patiently for the person's reply.</li> </ol>

## Sensory & Environmentally Disability

Definition	Tips for serving customers
Sensitivity to an object or environment resulting in a range of reactions including anaphylaxis, asthma attack, migraine headaches. Results from smelling tasting or touching objects or environments. In addition a lack of taste, touch or smell can also be considered a disability. Both are invisible disabilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Maintain a scent-free environment</li> <li>2) Provide information about environmental changes in advance of the event. ie construction or painting.</li> <li>3) If individuals identify a specific allergy, efforts should be made to accommodate their participation in programs or events.</li> </ol>

## **What Should I Do?**

Assistive Devices are those that people may bring with them or that are already on the premises and are used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing service. Some assistive devices are wheelchairs, walkers, canes, TTY and other listening devices, magnifiers for individuals with low vision, oxygen tanks, and scooters. Ensure the customer is permitted to enter the premises with the assistive device. Try to make sure your physical environment is barrier free when possible. Do not lean on or reach over a person using an assistive device. If assistance is required keep the person's dignity and independence in mind. For example if you are pushing someone in a manual wheelchair try really hard not to take them anywhere backwards. It is really hard when you cannot see where you are going. Always ask permission before taking any action. Ensure that people know about any assistive devices available at your premises.

Service Animals are trained specially to assist a person with a disability. While most service animals wear a harness, some do not. If the animal does not wear a harness, we request that a physician's letter be provided confirming the service animal is required by the individual or we can request a certificate confirming the animals have been trained by a professional training institute to assist an individual. Service animals are permitted everywhere unless otherwise excluded by law (i.e. food preparation areas). Animals are permitted in areas where food is ordered and served. Leave the care and supervision of the animal to the owner. Never pet or make eye contact with a service animal.

Support Persons are persons who accompany an individual to assist with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or with access to the program or service. Support persons are welcome everywhere. Make sure you speak directly to your customer and not just to the support person. Obtain consent from the customer before you share any confidential information about the person with the support person. Support persons are welcome to attend events, programs and services at a membership rate.

Making information available in many formats is important. Large Print menus, brochures and policies should be available upon request. The website should be available in an accessible way. Emergency procedures should be available in different formats. Be willing to read aloud anything that is not available in another format.

## **What If I Can't Help**

Sometimes we cannot help. The elevator may go out of service, parking spaces may not be available, and renovations may disrupt access. If a service disruption is planned then a notice is posted ahead of time. In the event of an unexpected service disruption, provide notice as quickly as possible and in as many ways as possible to individuals who may be impacted personally. Bell Relay Service Operators (BCRS) are available to assist in receiving calls to and from persons who use TTY. To place a call through BCRS call 1 800-855-0511. The Executive Director can also contact a sign language interpreter.

## **What If the Customer Wants to Comment?**

We welcome any comments on the provision of programs and services to people with disabilities. Comments can be directed to our Executive Director via telephone, mail or e-mail. The comments will be reviewed by staff and adjustments made to service procedures where appropriate. The nature and results of comments and feedback may result in adjustments to our policies.