



Accessible Customer Service Training – AODA

For Volunteers in cGaming Sites

All volunteers must be trained on the AODA and sign off that they have read and understand the material. It is important that our volunteers understand how to interact appropriately with people and customers with different disabilities.

Purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (or “the Act”) is a provincial law. Its goal is to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025 by developing and enforcing accessibility standards.

The accessibility standards are the legal requirements that all organizations in Ontario must follow to become more accessible to people with disabilities. They address key areas of daily life, including: customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, and design of public spaces. The standards are found in the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation which was established under the Act.

The Human Rights Code and the AODA work together, but they have some important differences. Under the Human Rights Code, when a person with a disability needs accommodation, there is a duty to accommodate. There is no set formula for accommodating people with disabilities. Even though some accommodations can benefit many people, you still need to consider individual needs each time a person asks to be accommodated. A solution for one person may not work for someone else.

This means organizations may need to provide an individualized response to an accommodation request. The Code applies to all Ontario organizations regardless of type and size. This includes "owner-operator" organizations without employees. It also covers volunteers and unpaid workers.

The AODA sets accessibility standards that organizations must meet. The human rights principles of the Code help to inform and guide how AODA standards are to be met. The AODA standards apply to all organizations (public, private, and not-for-profit) with one or more employees in Ontario. 1 in 7 people in Ontario has a disability. That’s almost 2 million Ontarians. By 2036, that number will rise to 1 in 5 as people age.

Definition of Disability

The Act uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code, which includes physical disabilities, as well as vision, hearing, speech, developmental, learning and mental health disabilities. A disability can be temporary or permanent.

Principles:

- **Dignity** – provide service in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
- **Independence** – a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- **Integration** – provide service in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless a different way is necessary to enable them to access goods, services or facilities.
- **Equal opportunity** – provide service to a person with a disability in such a way that they have an equal opportunity to access your goods, services or facilities as what is given to others.

Policy:

- Consider a person's disability when communicating with them
- Allow assistive devices and provide information on using devices available
- Allow service animals
- Welcome support persons – e.g. a support person may dab a bingo card on paper or electronics.
- Inform customers when accessible services are temporarily unavailable
- Invite customer feedback

Accessible customer service is about:

- Considering a person's disability when communicating with them
- Not making assumptions about what a person can or cannot do because of their disability
- Inclusion – making everyone feel welcome and included
- Understanding that people with disabilities may have different needs
- Serving customers with disabilities is also about showing sensitivity and respect
- **Use the right words** - Use "disability" not "handicapped"
- Say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person"
- Avoid sympathetic statements such as victim of, suffers with, confined to a wheelchair, physically challenged, or stricken with a particular illness or disabilities

Key tips - Work Related Accessibility

People with physical/mobility 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:

- Ask before you help; people with disabilities often have their own way of doing things
- 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
- Don't touch items or equipment (e.g., canes, wheelchairs) without permission
- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors
- Think ahead and remove any items that may cause a physical barrier, such as things left in an aisle

People with vision loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not.

Not everyone with vision loss is totally blind. Many have some vision.

Tips:

- When you know someone has vision loss, don't assume the individual can't see you; many people who have low vision still have some sight
- Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the customer
- Ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (e.g., a menu or schedule of fees)
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive
- Offer your elbow to guide them if needed. If they accept, lead – don't pull
- If you need to leave the customer, let them know by telling them you'll be back, or saying goodbye
- Don't leave the customer in the middle of the room – guide them to a comfortable location

People with hearing loss

People who have hearing loss may be deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. They may also be oral deaf – unable to hear, but prefer to talk instead of using sign language. These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost.

Tips:

- Once a customer has identified themselves as having hearing loss, make sure you are in a well-lit area where they can see your face and read your lips

- As needed, attract the customer’s attention before speaking; try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand
- If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or if possible, move to a quieter area
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (e.g., using a pen and paper)
- Speak directly to your customer – not to their sign language interpreter – if they are accompanied by one

People who are deafblind

A person who is deafblind has some degree of both hearing and vision loss. People who are deafblind are often accompanied by an intervenor, a professional support person who helps with communication.

Tips:

- A customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note
- Speak directly to your customer, not to the intervenor

People with speech or language disabilities

Cerebral palsy, stroke, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or express themselves. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

Tips:

- Don’t assume that a person who has difficulty speaking doesn’t understand you
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with “yes” or a “no”
- Read visible instructions for communication devices, if the person uses one
- Be patient; don’t interrupt or finish your customer’s sentences
- Confirm what the person has said by summarizing or repeating – don’t pretend if you’re not sure
- Speak directly to the customer and not to their companion or support person

People who have learning disabilities

The term “learning disabilities” refers to a range of disorders. One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

Tips:

- Be patient – people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond
- Try to provide information in a way that works for your customer (e.g. some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math)
- Be willing to rephrase or explain something again in another way

People who have developmental disabilities

Developmental disabilities (e.g. Down syndrome) or intellectual disabilities, can mildly or profoundly limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do every day physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

Tips:

- Don't make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do
- Use plain language
- Provide one piece of information at a time
- Ask the customer if they need help reading your material or completing a form

People who have mental health disabilities

Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. It can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. A person with a mental health disability may experience depression or acute mood swings, anxiety due to phobias or panic disorder, or hallucinations.

You may not know someone has a mental health disability unless you are told. Stigma and lack of understanding are major barriers for people with mental health disabilities.

Tips:

- If you sense or know that a customer has a mental health disability, treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
- Be confident, calm and reassuring
- Respect your customer's personal space
- Limit distractions that could affect your customer's ability to focus or concentrate – loud noise, crowded areas and interruptions could cause stress

People who use assistive devices

An assistive device is a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help them with daily living (e.g., a wheelchair, screen reader, hearing aid, cane or walker, an oxygen tank).

Tips:

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission
- Don't move assistive devices or equipment (e.g., canes, walkers) out of your customer's reach
- Let your customers know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, elevator)

If your organization offers any equipment or devices that can help customers with disabilities access your services, make sure you and your staff know how to use them. It could be helpful to have instruction manuals handy or an instruction sheet posted where the device is located or stored.

Some examples of assistive devices that your organization might offer include:

- Mobility devices, such as a manual wheelchair or motorized scooter
- Lift, which raises or lowers people who use mobility devices
- Technology that makes it easier for people with disabilities to communicate or access information, such as certain computer software, an amplification system or a TTY phone line
- Accessible interactive kiosk, which might offer information or services in braille or through audio headsets

People who use service animals

There are various types of service animals who support people with various types of disabilities. People with vision loss may use a guide dog. Hearing alert animals help people with hearing loss. Other service animals are trained to alert a person to an oncoming seizure or to help people with autism, mental health disabilities, physical disabilities and other disabilities.

An animal is a service animal if:

- a) it can be readily identified by visual indicators such as a vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- b) the person provides documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that they need the animal for reasons relating to their disability.

The law requires you to allow service animals on the parts of your premises that are open to the public. In cases where another law prohibits a service animal from entering certain areas (e.g. a service animal would not be allowed in the kitchen of a cooking school), provide another way for the person to access your goods, services or facilities. While service animals may be prohibited from certain areas, service dogs are allowed in areas where food is sold, served or offered for sale.

Tips:

- Don't touch or distract a service animal, it is not a pet, it is a working animal and has to pay attention at all times
- If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer
- You can provide water for the service animal if your customer requests it, but the customer is responsible for the care and supervision of the animal
- If the service animal is prohibited by another law, explain why to your customer and discuss other ways to serve them, e.g. leaving the dog in a safe area or serving your customer in another area where the animal is allowed

People with a support person

A support person may accompany some people with disabilities. A support person can be a paid personal support worker, an intervenor, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help your customer with communication, mobility, personal care or with accessing your services.

Welcome support people to your workplace or business. They are permitted in any part of your premises that is open to the public. If your organization is one that charges admission, such as a movie theatre, provide advance notice about what admission fee or fare will be charged for a support person.

Tips:

- If you're not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting your goods, services or facilities, or simply ask
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person
- If your organization charges an admission fee or fare, be familiar with its policy on fees or fares for support persons

When it may be necessary to require a support person

There are certain cases when it might be necessary for a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person on your premises. You must first discuss the situation with the person and consider available evidence before you determine that:

- A support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises; and
- There is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and that of others on the premises

In such a situation, you must waive the admission fee or fare for the support person, if one exists.

People accessing equipment, services or facilities

If you notice that your customer is having difficulty accessing your equipment services or facilities, a good starting point is to simply ask "How can I help you?"

If there is not a simple solution the issue should be directed to gaming centre staff. Your customers are your best source for information about their needs. Being flexible and open to suggestions will help create a good customer experience. A solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.

Disability and Human Rights *(Brochure 2016)*

Ontario's Human Rights Code

The Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the *Code*) provides for equal rights and opportunities, and freedom from discrimination. The *Code* recognizes the dignity and worth of every person in Ontario. It applies to the areas of employment, housing, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trade or professional associations.

At work, employees with disabilities are entitled to the same opportunities and benefits as people without disabilities. In some cases, they may need special arrangements or “accommodations” so they can do their job duties.

Customers, clients and tenants with disabilities also have the right to equal treatment and equal access to facilities and services. Examples of facilities and services are restaurants, shops, hotels and movie theatres, as well as apartment buildings, transit and other public places.

Public and private education providers must also make sure their facilities and services are accessible, and that students with disabilities are accommodated.

What is disability?

“Disability” covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. There are physical, mental and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, drug and alcohol dependencies, environmental sensitivities, and other conditions.

The *Code* protects people from discrimination because of past, present and perceived disabilities. For example, the *Code* protects a person who faces discrimination because she is a recovered alcoholic. So is a person whose condition does not limit their workplace abilities, but who is believed to be at greater risk of being able to do less in the future.

Removing barriers and designing inclusively

Persons with disabilities face many kinds of barriers every day. These can be physical, attitudinal or systemic. It is best to identify and remove barriers voluntarily instead of waiting to answer individual accommodation requests or complaints.

Identifying and removing barriers also makes good business sense. As well as meeting the needs of customers or employees with disabilities, removing barriers can also help other people, such as older persons and families with young children.

Employers, unions, landlords and service providers can start by doing an accessibility review of their facilities, services and procedures to see what barriers exist. You can then make an accessibility plan and begin to remove the barriers.

It is also helpful to create an accessibility policy and a complaints procedure. These steps will help you remove existing barriers and avoid making new ones. The best way to prevent barriers is to design inclusively. This means that when planning new facilities, renovating, buying computer systems or other

equipment, launching websites, setting up policies and procedures, or offering new services, make sure your choices avoid creating new barriers for people with disabilities.

Barriers aren't just physical. Taking steps to prevent "ableism" – attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities – will help promote respect and dignity, and help people with disabilities to fully take part in community life.

The duty to accommodate

Even when facilities and services are designed as inclusively as possible, you may still need to accommodate the individual needs of some people with disabilities. Under the *Code*, unions, landlords and service providers have a legal "duty to accommodate" persons with disabilities. The goal of accommodation is to allow people with disabilities to equally benefit from and take part in services, housing or the workplace.

Accommodation is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved, including the person asking for accommodation, should work together, exchange relevant information, and look for accommodation solutions together.

There is no set formula for accommodating people with disabilities. Even though some accommodations can benefit many people, you still need to consider individual needs each time a person asks to be accommodated. A solution for one person may not work for someone else.

Some examples of accommodations include:

- Increased flexibility in work hours or break times
- Providing reading materials in alternative formats including digitized text, Braille or large print
- Providing sign language interpreters or real-time captioning for persons who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing so they can take part in meetings
- Putting in automatic entry doors and making washrooms accessible in the workplace or the common areas of a condominium
- In some cases, changing job duties, retraining or assigning a person to another job

Many accommodations can be made easily, and at low cost. In some cases, putting the best solution in place right away may result in "undue hardship" because of costs or health and safety factors. Even if this happens, you still have a duty to look at and take next-best steps that would not result in undue hardship. Such steps should be taken only until more ideal solutions can be put in place or phased in.

Accommodation responsibilities

As a person with a disability:

- Tell your employer, union, landlord or service provider what your disability-related needs are related to your job duties, tenancy or the services being provided
- Provide supporting information about your disability-related needs, including medical or other expert opinions where needed
- Take part in looking at possible accommodation solutions

As an employer, union, landlord or service provider:

- Accept requests for accommodation from employees, tenants and clients in good faith
- Ask only for information that you need to provide the accommodation. For example, you would need to know that an employee's loss of vision prevents them from using printed material, but you do not need to know they have diabetes

- Take an active role in looking at accommodation solutions that meet individual needs
- Deal with accommodation requests as quickly as possible, even if it means creating a temporary solution while you develop a long-term one
- Respect the dignity of the person asking for accommodation, and keep information confidential
- Cover the costs of accommodations, including any required medical information or documentation (for example, doctors' notes, assessments, letters setting out accommodation needs, etc.)

For more information

Consult the Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability* and the *Policy on preventing discrimination based on mental health disabilities and addictions* for more information. See also *Human Rights at Work*, as well as other policies, guidelines, reports and submissions that address disability issues in the areas of education, restaurants, the Building Code, public transit and older persons.

To file a complaint – called an application – contact the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario at:

Toll Free: 1-866-598-0322

TTY Toll Free: 1-866-607-1240

Website: www.hrto.ca