

# AODA Training Manual for Staff

## Unit 1: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

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.

### AODA Section 1.

Recognizing the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario, the purpose of this Act is to benefit all Ontarians by:

- a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises on or before January 1, 2025; and
- b) providing for the involvement of persons with disabilities, the Government of Ontario and of representatives of industries and various sectors of the economy in the development of accessibility standards.

The standards require the people or organizations identified in the standard to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. Barriers keep people with disabilities from fully participating in activities that most of us take for granted. The customer service standard is the first standard to come into effect under the AODA.

The Government of Ontario is working with different standards development committees to develop other standards in the areas of transportation, information and communications, the built environment and employment. These committees include people with disabilities or their representatives, business owners, government representatives and members of the public. The standards development committees propose standards for government consideration and the government may adopt them by regulation. Once adopted by regulation, the standards will impose requirements to make these areas more accessible to people with disabilities. They may apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario.

When we think of disabilities, we tend to think of people who use wheelchairs and who have physical disabilities that are visible and obvious. But disabilities can also be invisible. We cannot always tell who has a disability. The AODA uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

### AODA Section 2.

In this Act, “disability” means,

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes

mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

d) a mental disorder, or

e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

For more information about the Ontario Human Rights Code, visit: [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca), and click on “The Code” under the Resources Section of the website.

When you think about accessibility, it is important to be aware of both visible and invisible barriers. A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. Attitude is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome because it’s hard to change the way people think or behave. Some people don’t know how to communicate with those who have visible or invisible disabilities – for example, assuming someone with a speech problem has intellectual limitations and speaking to them in a manner that would be used with a child; or forming ideas about the person because of stereotypes or a lack of understanding.

### **Self-test: Unit 1**

Which of the following statements about the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is false?

a) Accessibility standards can apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario.

b) The customer service standard is the only standard being developed under the AODA.

c) The government of Ontario is working with different standards development committees to develop other standards.

d) The goal of the AODA is to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025.

### **Unit 2: The Customer Service Standard**

The term “customer” will be defined as anyone who is a tenant, resident, or visitor to United Mennonite Home. This term will be used throughout the Training Manual.

Ontario’s accessible customer service standard is now the law. It came into force on January 1, 2008. People, businesses and other organizations that provide goods or services to the public or to other businesses or organizations in Ontario (“providers”) have legal obligations under the standard. The

standard is aimed at making their customer service operations accessible to people with disabilities. The customer service standard is the first of five standards that will help lead the way to an accessible Ontario by 2025.

The standard applies to all people or organizations, both public and private, that:  
Provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other businesses or organizations, and have one or more employees in Ontario.

Providers in the following sectors are affected:

Private, Non-profit, and Public, including provincial and municipal governments, universities, colleges, hospitals, school boards and public transportation organizations.

The following is a summary of requirements. There are more details of the requirements in the Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.

Providers must:

Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.

Make reasonable efforts to ensure that policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

Have a policy dealing with people's use of their own assistive devices to access goods or services or any other measures the organization offers to enable an individual access the goods or services.

Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability.

Let people with disabilities bring their service animals onto the parts of the premises open to the public or other third parties, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.

Let people with disabilities be accompanied by their support persons while on the parts of the provider's premises open to the public or other third parties.

Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access goods or services are temporarily disrupted.

Train anyone who interacts with the public or other third parties on the provider's behalf on topics outlined in the customer service standard.

Train anyone who is involved in developing the provider's customer service policies, practices and procedures on topics outlined in the customer service standard.

Establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way the organization provides goods or services to people with disabilities, including the actions to be taken if a complaint is received, and make information about the process readily available to the public.

Designated public sector organizations and other providers with 20 or more employees must:

Document in writing all their policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities

Let "customers" know that the documents are available upon request

Upon request, provide the documented information to a person with a disability in a format that takes into account their disability.

## **Self-test: Unit 2**

Under the customer service standard, providers of goods and services must meet specific requirements. Which of the following is not a requirement?

- a) Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
- b) Have a policy dealing with people's use of their own assistive devices to access goods or services, or the availability, if any, of other measures which would enable them to do so.
- c) Train only managers and executives.
- d) Accept feedback and have a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way in which the organization provides goods or services to people with disabilities, including what action will be taken if a complaint is received.

## **Unit 3: How to interact and communicate with “customers” who have disabilities**

If you're not sure what to do, ask your “customer”, "May I help you?" Your “customers” with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.

Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to his or her support person or companion.

Avoid stereotypes and make no assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities the person has. Some disabilities are not visible and “customers” are not required to give you information about any disabilities they may have.

Take the time to get to know your “customer's” needs and focus on meeting those needs just as you would with any other “customer”.

Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond. A good start is to listen carefully.

Make an effort to learn about appropriate language and terminology to use when referring to people with disabilities.

If you cannot understand what your “customer” is saying, politely ask them to repeat themselves.

Don't touch or speak to service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission.

Vision loss reduces a person's ability to see clearly. Few people with vision loss are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some people can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.

Vision loss can restrict your “customers” abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some of these “customers” may use a guide dog or white cane, but others may not. Sometimes it may be difficult to tell if a person has vision loss.

Don't assume the individual can't see you.

Don't touch your “customer” without asking permission.

Offer your elbow to guide the person. If he or she accepts, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so. Lead – don't pull.

Identify landmarks or other details to orient your “customer” to the environment around him or her.

Don't touch or speak to service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

Identify yourself when you approach your “customer” and speak directly to him or her, even if he/she is accompanied by a companion.

There is generally no need to raise your voice because the person does not necessarily have hearing loss. Say your name even if you know the person well as many voices sound similar.

Be clear and precise when giving directions, e.g., two steps behind you, a metre to your left, etc. Don't use “over there” or point in the direction.

If you're uncertain about how to provide directions, ask the person how to do so.

Do not be afraid or embarrassed to use words such as “see”, “read” and “look.” People with vision loss also use these words.

When providing printed information, offer to read or summarize it.

People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

People who are profoundly deaf may identify themselves as culturally Deaf or oral deaf. In Deaf culture, indicated by a capital “D,” the term is used to describe a person who has severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing.

Oral deaf is a term describing a person who was born deaf or became deaf before learning to speak, but is taught to speak and may not typically use Sign Language.

The term “deafened” describes a person who has lost their hearing slowly or suddenly in adulthood. The person may use speech with visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speechreading or sign language.

The term “hard of hearing” describes a person who uses their residual hearing (hearing that remains) and speech to communicate. The person may supplement communication by speechreading, hearing aids, sign language and/or communication devices.

Attract the “customer’s” attention before speaking. Generally, the best way is by a gentle touch on the shoulder or with a gentle wave of your hand.

Ask how you can help. Don’t shout.

Move to a well-lit area, if available, where your “customer” can see your face.

Don’t put your hands in front of your face when speaking. Some people read lips.

If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example, using a pen and paper.

Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate. Sign Language may be your “customer’s” first language. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.

Look at and speak directly to your “customer”. Address your “customer”, not the interpreter or support person.

Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary.

Confirm that your “customer” understands you.

If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area, if possible, so the person can hear or concentrate better.

Don’t assume that the “customer” knows sign language or reads lips.

### **Self-test: Unit 3**

Which of the following should you not do when serving a “customer” with a disability?

- a) Speak directly to your “customer”, not to their support person or companion.
- b) Grab the arm of your “customer” with vision loss and pull them to the check-out counter.
- c) If your “customer” uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- d) Ask your “customer” to repeat information if you didn’t understand the first time.

### **Unit 4: 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. It helps the person to maintain their independence at home, at work and in the community.

There are a variety of assistive devices that some of your “customers” may use, depending on their disability. Many will be personal assistive devices, meaning they are owned and brought along by the

individual, while others may be provided by your organization. The following are examples of some devices you may come across when serving your “customers” with disabilities:

Digital audio player - enables people to listen to books, directions, art shows, etc.

Magnifier - makes print and images larger and easier to read

Portable global positioning systems (GPS) - helps orient people to get to specific destinations

White cane - helps people find their way around obstacles

FM transmitter system or other amplification devices - boosts sound closest to the listener while reducing background noise

Hearing aid - makes sound louder and clearer

Mobility device (e.g., a wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches) - helps people who have difficulty walking

Personal oxygen tank - helps people breathe

Electronic notebook or laptop computer - used to take notes and to communicate

Personal data managers - stores, organizes and retrieves personal information

Mini pocket recorders - records information for future playback

Communication boards - used to pass on a message by pointing to symbols, words or pictures

Speech generating devices - used to pass on a message using a device that “speaks” when a symbol, word or picture is pressed.

Many “customers” with disabilities will have their own personal assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, scooters or walkers. Don’t touch or handle an assistive device without permission. If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair remember to:

- Wait for and follow the person’s instructions.
- Confirm that your “customer” is ready to move.
- Describe what you are going to do before you do it.
- Try to avoid uneven ground and objects.
- Don’t leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

Don’t move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your “customer’s” reach. Respect your “customer’s” personal space. Don’t lean over him or her or on his or her assistive device. Let your “customer” know about accessible features in the immediate environment (e.g., automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

### **Unit 5: Using assistive devices when providing goods and services to a person with a disability**

United Mennonite Home uses different assistive devices some of which are; lifts, slings, walkers, wheelchairs, automatic door openers, elevators, oxygen, and other devices as needed.

The staff of UMH are trained in the use of all assistive devices used on the premises.

## **Unit 6: Service Animals**

Think of a service animal as an animal with a job to do for a person with a disability. Examples include guide dogs and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 refers to the definition of “guide dog” under the Blind Persons’ Rights Act, which states that: a guide dog is a dog that has been trained as a guide for a blind person at one of the facilities listed in Ontario Regulation 58 under the Blind Persons’ Rights Act. The Ministry of the Attorney General may issue identification cards to identify a person who is blind and his or her guide dog.

The customer service standard requires you to let people with disabilities use their service animals on the parts of your premises open to the public or to third parties unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. Under the standard, an animal is a service animal if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability, or if the person has a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that the animal is required for reasons relating to his or her disability. If it is not obvious that the animal is a service animal, you are not required to allow the animal on your premises if the person does not have a letter from a physician or nurse, or an identification card from the Ministry of the Attorney General.

The standard doesn’t require that service animals be formally trained, but most service animals in Ontario are trained at organizations in Canada or in the United States. Service animals are used in many countries around the world and so visitors to Ontario may also use service animals.

## **Unit 7: Support Persons**

A support person is an individual hired or chosen to accompany a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to goods or services. Personal care needs may include, but are not limited to, assistance with eating or using the washroom. Medical needs may include, but are not limited to, monitoring someone’s health conditions, providing injections and providing support when someone has moderate to severe seizures. The support person can be a paid personal support worker, volunteer, a friend or a family member. He or she does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

“Customers” with disabilities must be allowed to use their support persons while accessing your organization’s goods or services on the parts of the premises open to the public or third parties.

### **Self-test: Units 4, 5, 6 & 7**

Which of the following should you not do when serving a “customer” who uses an assistive device, a service animal, or a support person?

- a) Speak directly to the “customer”.
- b) Pet a guide dog because he’s so cute and you love animals.
- c) Request permission to move your “customer’s” wheelchair.

d) Be aware of how to use specific assistive devices offered by your organization.

### **Unit 8: What to do if a “customer” with a disability is having difficulty accessing goods or services**

All “customers” have their own specific needs or preferences. Being positive, flexible and open to suggestions will help to create a good “customer” experience. A good starting point is to ask your “customer” how you can help them access your goods or services. Often, good “customer service” for people with disabilities can be achieved through simple and effective solutions to challenges. Remember, your “customers” are your best source for information about their needs. Ask them what you can do to help them. They will likely appreciate your attention and consideration for their needs.

### **Unit 9: Policies, practices and procedures**

Under the customer service standard, your organization must provide ongoing training on changes to the policies, practices and procedures on serving people with disabilities. Organizations usually have some form of customer service policies, practices and procedures on serving customers with disabilities. Some of these are formal, documented practices. Others are unwritten and informal (i.e., “the way we do things around here”).

Use reasonable efforts to ensure the policies, practices and procedures on how you will provide your goods or services to people with disabilities are consistent with the principles in the customer service standard. These principles are dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

### **Unit 10: Disruptions in service**

Provide notice to the public when there is a temporary disruption to your facilities or services that are usually used by people with disabilities to access your goods or services. This applies whether a temporary disruption is planned or unexpected.

### **Unit 11: Feedback Process**

Requirements of the standard:

Establish and implement a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way you provide goods or services to people with disabilities. Ensure your feedback process allows people to provide feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, by email, on disk or by another method. Ensure your feedback process specifies the actions you or your staff will take if a complaint is received. Make information about the feedback process readily available to the public.

### **Unit 12: Documentation**

Note: Requirements on documentation apply to designated public sector organizations and any other provider of goods or services with 20 or more employees.

Requirements of the standard:

Your organization must prepare the following documents and make them available upon request:

Documents describing policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities, including the use of personal assistive devices to access the organization's goods or services or the availability, if any, of other measures which enable them to do so.

Documents describing policies, practices and procedures with respect to the entry of service animals and support persons to those areas of the premises where goods or services are provided that are open to the public or other third parties.

A document that sets out the steps that will be taken when there is a temporary planned or unexpected disruption to facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access your goods or services.

A document describing your training policy on providing goods or services to people with disabilities, including a summary of the contents of training and the details of when that training will be provided.

A document describing your process for receiving and responding to feedback on the manner in which goods or services are provided to people with disabilities, including what actions will be taken on any complaints received.

Under the standard, "customers" must be informed that these documents are available upon request. Notice may be given by posting the information in an obvious place on premises owned or operated by the provider, by posting it on the provider's website, if any, or by another method that is reasonable in the circumstances.

### **Appendix A: Awareness Quiz**

Which of the following statements are true/false? (Check the appropriate answer).

1. A positive attitude is important when meeting or helping a person with a disability.

True . False

2. Generally, people see the disability first and the person second.

True . False

3. All disabilities are caused by a disease or are inherited.

True . False

4. People with mobility impairments do not care about how they look, and they cannot shop the way other people do.

True . False

5. Someone who uses a power wheelchair cannot drive a motor vehicle.

True . False

6. If you notice someone is wearing a hearing aid, speak loudly so he or she can hear you.

True . False

7. When guiding a person who has vision loss, you should always take them by the arm.

True . False

8. Someone who is severely physically disabled cannot do anything alone.

True . False

9. A person who is Deaf cannot use the phone.

True . False

10. A person can have a disability and not be held back by it.

True . False

11. People who have vision loss have a better sense of hearing.

True . False

12. You should avoid using expressions such as “look”, “see” and “watch out” when talking to someone with vision loss.

True . False

13. The majority of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing can speechread.

True . False

14. If you see someone who uses a wheelchair having trouble, you should give him or her a push.

True . False

15. Over one million Canadians have some kind of disability that makes it difficult for them to read conventional print.

True . False

16. When a “customer” with a disability is in your workplace, you should always provide extra attention.

True . False

17. Guide dogs see colours and read signs.

True . False

18. People who are Deaf or hard of hearing see better than everyone else.

True . False

19. People who are Deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing cannot talk at all.

True . False

20. People who use wheelchairs are paralysed.

True . False

21. Mental health disability is a rare, untreatable disorder.

True . False

22. People with learning disabilities cannot be productive.

True . False

23. Intellectual disability is the same as mental health disability.

True . False

24. About one in seven Ontarians has a disability.

True . False

25. Forty-seven percent of Ontarians over the age of 65 have disabilities.

True . False

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Participant Signature

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Print Name

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Date