

Accessibility in Ontario: what you need to know

Ontario has laws and standards that are intended to make the province more inclusive by helping to reduce and remove the barriers you may face in everyday life. Learn about accessibility requirements, review accessibility standards and find resources.

Accessibility standards

Ontario's accessibility standards help businesses and organizations to identify and remove barriers to improve accessibility in five areas:

- customer service
- access to information
- public transportation
- employment
- outdoor public spaces

These standards are part of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>) (AODA).

Customer service

As a person with a disability, organizations must provide you with the right customer service so you can access their goods, services or facilities. Staff must be trained in providing accessible customer service.

You can have your support person with you at all times. You can also give feedback through accessible surveys or comment forms.

Feedback process

Under the AODA, organizations with one or more employees must have a process to receive feedback. That way, people can give feedback on how the organization provides goods, services or facilities to customers with disabilities.

Organizations must also let people know how they will respond to feedback and take action on complaints. Information about the feedback process must be readily available to the public.

Provide your feedback

If you feel you haven't received accessible customer service:

1. contact the organization and ask for the person in charge
2. tell them you would like to comment on your accessibility experience using their feedback process
3. explain the purpose of your feedback is to prevent the same problem from happening again
4. if necessary, provide your feedback in writing and explain:
 - the problem
 - how it affected you
 - your rights under the law
 - how to contact you should they have any questions

Find out how to make customer service accessible (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-customer-service-accessible>) .

Access to information

You have the right to get information from an organization in a format you can use.

The formats include:

- HTML and Microsoft Word
- braille
- large print

A range of information must be provided to you in an accessible format, including:

- public notices
 - for example, when an elevator, accessible washroom or ramp are out of service
 - emergency information
 - for example, evacuation plans
 - event information, when you **request it in advance**
-

Public transportation

When you travel on public transit:

- announcements should be made for every destination point or stop
- specialized transit services should be available during the same hours and on the same days as other public transit
- your guide dog/service animal must be allowed to ride with you

Taking a taxi

When you travel by taxi:

- you must be charged the same rate as someone without a disability
- your guide dog/service animal must be allowed to ride in the taxi with you
- vehicle registration and driver-identification must appear in an accessible format

Read more about the accessible transit standard (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-provide-accessible-transportation-services>) .

Employment

Employers must provide you with accessible job and accommodation information.

When you apply for a job in Ontario, you can request:

- application forms in the format of your choice
- accommodations for your interview and any tests that you may have to be complete as part of the application

Once you're hired, the organization must provide you with emergency information in a format you can use.

Read more about the accessible employment standard (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces>) .

Employment programs and services

Employment Ontario

Employment Ontario (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>) offers programs and services that help support job seekers and workers of all abilities with:

- upgrading skills
- training and skills development
- finding a job

The **Ontario Employment Assistance Services** partners with organizations to deliver employment services, including career planning, assessments and counselling, to people who self-identify as having a disability and who are looking for work. The **Supported Employment program** helps people with

disabilities gain job readiness and employment opportunities, while also matching employers with the skilled workers they need

Set up an appointment with a counsellor

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario#section-3>) to find out if you're eligible and get matched with a service provider. Service providers can help you with your career planning, interviews and job preparation.

Other organizations and services

You can also find training and job opportunities through other organizations and services:

- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) (<https://cnib.ca/en/programs-and-services/work/im-looking-work-come-work?region=on>) offers a suite of programs to support job seekers and employers looking to support individuals affected by blindness.
- Canadian Hearing Services (CHS) (<https://www.chs.ca/employment-services-for-job-seekers>) offers specialized services to support the deaf and hard of hearing with their employment goals.
- DiscoverAbility Network (<https://discoverability.network/job-seeker/>) connects job seekers with disabilities directly with employers through Magnet, an advanced job matching tool.
- The Employment Service (<https://feat.findhelp.ca/>) connects people with disabilities to training programs to gain higher level skills for sustainable jobs. The program is open to people with disabilities, regardless of whether they are in receipt of the Ontario Disability Supports Program (ODSP) income support.
- March of Dimes Employment Services (<https://www.modcemploymentservices.ca/services/client-services/>) offers job exploration, active job search, including resumé development and interview skills, job preparation and on-the-job support.
- The Growth Opportunities Program (<https://metaservices.ca/durham-services/>) provides assessments, plus help with resumé and interview skills, as well as job search and job coaching to people with disabilities who are 16 years of age in the Durham, Belleville and surrounding areas.

- Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) (http://www.odenetwork.com) is a network of over 140 employment service providers dedicated to increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Ontario Disability Support Program: Employment Supports (https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/employment_support/index.aspx) can help you find and keep a job or advance your career. Get advice about job accommodations and funding for work-related assistive devices.
- OWLWare connects people with disabilities with digital training programs such as the: Accessible Media Production Program (https://owlware.com/programs/) which offers training in creating accessible social media and the Digital Ventures (https://owlware.com/training/) program which helps people to upgrade their digital media skills.
- Project Work (https://projectwork.ca/employment-programs/) helps people who have an intellectual disability find and keep entry-level jobs. This service is open to applicants who are 18 years of age or older and live in the Greater Toronto Area.
- The Workplace Essential Skills Program (https://www.ccrw.org/about-us/where-are-you-located/ontario/) at the Canadian Council for Rehabilitation and Work helps job seekers with disabilities who have graduated from college or university with job searches, skills updates and other supports.
- Youth Job Connection (https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-help-finding-youth-or-student-job#section-0) serves people aged 15 to 29, including those with disabilities, who are not currently working, in school or in training, and who face multiple and/or complex barriers to employment. This program provides more intensive supports beyond traditional job search and placement opportunities through certain service provider locations. There may be exceptions available to the maximum funding permitted for youth with disabilities to help cover costs related to assistive devices and other accommodations.
- Youth Job Connection Summer (https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-help-finding-youth-or-student-job#section-1) is a summer-specific program

available through certain service provider locations. It provides part-time and after-school job opportunities to high school students, aged 15 to 18, including those with disabilities, who are facing challenging life circumstances and may need support transitioning between school and work.

Receiving accommodations in your workplace

The Employment Standards (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191#BK20>) require businesses and organizations to be accessible across all stages of employment.

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code (<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>), employers have a legal duty to accommodate the individual needs of employees with disabilities.

Tips for receiving accommodation

Accommodation in the workplace is a shared responsibility. To request an accommodation, tell your employer about your needs, provide the information they need and work with everyone involved to explore solutions.

Examples of accommodation include:

- modified duties
- changes to workstations
- flexible work hours or break times
- assistive devices

You can tell your employer about your need for accommodation, but you do not have to discuss your disability in detail.

There are limits to the duty to accommodate, such as when negative results outweigh the benefits of providing the accommodation, causing extreme hardship. For example, spending money to accommodate you would be an

extreme hardship on your employer if it would cause them to go out of business.

Learn more about making a workplace more accessible (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-workplaces-accessible>).

Learn more about your right to be accommodated (<http://www.hrlsc.on.ca/en/how-guides-and-faqs/your-right-accommodation>).

Accommodating employees with disabilities in your workplace

Businesses and organizations are required to accommodate employees with disabilities throughout their employment.

Accommodating the individual needs of people with disabilities is a legal duty under the Ontario Human Rights Code (<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>) and the AODA. This enables people to benefit equally and take part fully in the workplace and all parts of life.

Tips for accommodating employees

Accommodation is a process. You and your employee must work together to find the best solution that respects your employee's needs and dignity. You can ask your employee for additional information related to accommodation, but not about the disability itself.

For example, if an employee requires time off work because of their disability:

- **it is appropriate** to ask about their expected return date or what supports they may need when they come back
- **it is not appropriate** to ask about what symptoms they are experiencing or the medical advice they have received

Be aware of what you need to do as an employer. The Employment Standards (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191#BK21>) apply to all stages of

employment for paid employees, including:

- recruitment, assessment and selection
- workplace accommodation
- performance management
- career development and advancement
- return to work

When an employee requests an accommodation because of a disability, you have a duty under the Ontario Human Rights Code (<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>) to:

- accept the request and act quickly
- get expert help if needed
- keep information confidential
- cover the cost of the accommodation to the point of undue hardship

By proactively removing barriers, you can help create an accessible and inclusive workplace allowing employees to reach their full potential.

Learn how to make your workplace accessible

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-workplaces-accessible>) .

Read about your duty to accommodate employees with disabilities

(<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/8-meeting-accommodation-needs-employees-job>) .

Buildings

AODA requirements

Ontario's Design of Public Spaces Standards establish a baseline level of accessibility for:

- service counters
- waiting areas with fixed seating
- outdoor spaces, such as sidewalks and parking lots

The Ontario Building Code (<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/page7393.aspx>) — not the AODA — covers most requirements for making buildings accessible (https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontarios-building-code) . These include requirements for:

- ramps
- washrooms
- power door operators
- signs
- pools
- spas

Accessibility requirements under the Ontario Building Code (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontarios-building-code>) only apply to new construction. They also apply if an existing building has plans for extensive renovations.

Principal authorities, including municipalities, are responsible for enforcing the Ontario Building Code. This includes reviewing building plans, issuing permits and conducting construction inspections.

To find out about accessibility requirements for buildings in your area, please contact your local municipality's building department.

Funding for accessibility in your home

While the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility does not provide funding to help with accessibility renovations for your home, other programs can help.

Available financial support

Whether you rent or own your home, you can apply to programs to help with the cost of your accessibility renovations.

- **The Home and Vehicle Modification Program** provides funding to eligible people with mobility disabilities to continue living safely in their homes, avoid job loss and participate in their communities. To be eligible, individuals are assessed based on financial need and an income requirement. Visit the March of Dimes Canada (<https://www.marchofdimes.ca>) website to learn more.
- **Investment in Affordable Housing funding** is offered through a group of programs designed to support safe independent living, renovate and repair housing, improve housing affordability or increase the supply of affordable housing. Contact your local municipality or service manager (<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/page1202.aspx>) for more information.
- **Tax credits** for people with disabilities may help eligible applicants offset the additional costs of living with a disability, such as accessibility renovations, transportation costs and medical equipment. Visit the Canada Revenue Agency (<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/ndvdl/s/gmnts/dsblts/dtc/menu-eng.html>) website to learn about tax credits.

Learn more about how to make public spaces accessible (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-public-spaces-accessible>).

Outdoor public spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standards set requirements to make most external public spaces accessible. The standards also address requirements to make certain internal public spaces accessible.

Like the Ontario Building Code, the standards only apply to new construction and planned redevelopment of existing public spaces.

Municipalities and businesses must consult with the public when building or rebuilding outdoor public spaces, such as:

- recreational trails

- beach access routes
- new or redeveloped outdoor public eating areas
- playgrounds and outdoor play spaces
- service counters
- waiting areas with fixed seating
- sidewalks
- parking lots

Contact your local municipality (<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1591.aspx>) or business association to learn more about taking part in consultations.

Learn more about how to make public spaces accessible (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-public-spaces-accessible>).

Guide dogs and service animals

If you have a guide dog or other service animal, they must be allowed to stay with you when you receive services in:

- restaurants
- grocery stores
- taxis

If your guide dog/service animal **does not wear a vest or harness**, you can show documentation from one of these regulated health professionals:

- audiologist or speech-language pathologist
- chiropractor
- nurse
- occupational therapist
- optometrist

- physician or surgeon
- physiotherapist
- psychologist
- psychotherapist or mental health therapist

In some cases, the law **does not allow service animals**.

Learn more about the accessible customer service standard.

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-customer-service-accessible>)

Definition of a service animal

According to the AODA's Customer Service Standards

(<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110191#BK149>) , one of two conditions must apply for your animal to be considered a service animal:

1. the animal is easily identifiable as relating to your disability (for example, it is a guide dog or other animal wearing a vest or harness)
2. you can provide documentation from a regulated health professional confirming the animal is required due to a disability

Service animals are not pets. Additional fees or requirements that apply to pets do not apply to service animals.

What you need to know under the law

You are allowed to bring your service animal into areas that are open to the public unless the animal is excluded by another law.

Some municipalities may also have by-laws restricting certain breeds of animals or dogs from the municipality.

In cases where another law prohibits service animals from entering the premises, the business or organization must provide another way for you to access their goods, services or facilities.

Documentation and certification

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA, service animals **do not** need to have certificates or identity cards.

However, you may be asked to provide acceptable documentation. This includes:

- documentation from a regulated health professional
 - an identification card from the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General for people who are blind and use a guide dog
-

Accessibility improves business

Identifying, preventing and removing barriers for people with disabilities creates an Ontario that is built for everyone - whether you're pushing a stroller, making a delivery, or using a walker or a wheelchair.

People with disabilities will choose a business where they feel welcomed, and where they can easily get the products and services they want.

People with disabilities and older adults are a large and growing group of consumers.

There are 2.6 million people in Ontario with a disability; more than 40% of this population is over the age of 65. As the population ages, this number will grow.

Businesses can attract more customers and employees by removing as many barriers to access as possible, making Ontario open for business and open for jobs for everyone.

Learn how you can make your business or organization more accessible and inclusive for all (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-information-businesses>) .

Understand your rights

Discrimination

The AODA sets standards to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. However, it is not designed to address complaints if you feel that you have been discriminated against because you have a disability.

The Ontario Human Rights Code (<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>) addresses discrimination. It applies to both organizations and individuals in the public and private sectors.

Take action

If you feel you have been personally discriminated against based on a disability and would like to take action against a specific person or organization, you may contact the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (<https://tribunalsontario.ca/hrto/>). They handle discrimination claims filed under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

If you decide to file a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal, you may wish to:

- first consult with the Human Rights Legal Support Centre (<http://hrlsc.on.ca/en/welcome>) to get information about filing your claim and to access legal support
- contact the ARCH Disability Law Centre (<http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/>), a specialty legal aid clinic that provides legal services to people with disabilities
- read the outcomes of past human rights cases (<https://www.canlii.org/en/on/onhrt/index.html>)

If you wish to file a complaint against a specific business about accessibility or the way they provide services to people with disabilities, contact the business directly.

To do so, use the business's feedback process required under the AODA's Customer Service Standard.

If you prefer to provide feedback or report a suspected AODA violation in writing, you can send your comments to accessibility@ontario.ca (<mailto:accessibility@ontario.ca>)

.

Learn more about your rights and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights

Code and the AODA. (<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/learning/working-together-ontario-human-rights-code-and-accessibility-ontarians-disabilities-act>)

Resources

Accessibility services in your community

211 Ontario (<https://211ontario.ca/>) is a free helpline and website that connects you to community, social, health-related and government services in your area 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in over 150 languages.

211 provides contact information for over 60,000 community and government programs and services. They can help you understand what accessibility services and government benefits exist and explain how to apply.

2-1-1

Toll-free: 1-877-330-3213

TTY: 1-888-340-1001

Find programs and services in your area by entering a topic or organization name and a desired location.

Funding for accessibility improvements

The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility does not provide funding for businesses or communities to comply with the AODA. However, other programs may apply.

You can apply for funding programs and use business tax credits to help finance a project to improve accessibility in your business or community.

- The Ontario Trillium Foundation (<https://otf.ca/what-we-fund/investment-streams/capital-grants>) provides grants to community and non-profit organizations to make accessibility improvements. Apply for a grant (<https://otf.ca/apply-grant>) to register your organization and see deadlines and policies.

- The Enabling Accessibility Fund (<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/enabling-accessibility-fund.html>) is a federal funding program for projects aimed at improving accessibility in communities or workplaces.
- The Income Tax Act (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-3.3/section-20.html>) includes a federal tax credit for businesses or commercial building owners. The credit allows them to undertake building renovations so that people with mobility disabilities can access their building. For tax credit information, contact Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-5525.

Get involved

In your community

Volunteers are welcomed and valued in every Ontario community. You can find a volunteer opportunity (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/volunteering-ontario>) near you by:

- contacting a volunteer centre affiliated with the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network (<http://s643234117.online-home.ca/volunteering/find-my-volunteer-centre>)
- contacting a not-for-profit or charitable organization in your community

With your municipality

Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committees (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-serve-municipal-accessibility-advisory-committee-guide>) are required for all municipalities with a population of over 10,000.

Made up of volunteers with disabilities, they advise municipal councils about the requirements of Ontario's accessibility laws. They also advise on a wide range of municipal processes to help make public services or facilities accessible to everyone.

Contact your local municipality to learn more.
(<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1591.aspx>)

Updated: January 25, 2022

[about Ontario \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-ontario\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-ontario)

[accessibility \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility)

[news \(http://news.ontario.ca/newsroom/en\)](http://news.ontario.ca/newsroom/en)

[privacy \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/privacy-statement\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/privacy-statement)

[terms of use \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/terms-use\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/terms-use)

© Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2012–22 (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/copyright-information-c-queens-printer-ontario>)