



TOWN OF LAKESHORE

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

BEST PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION:

The Town of Lakeshore is committed to ensuring that we the best practices and procedures when interacting with people with disabilities. We will also educate all our staff on the different types of disabilities.

The Town of Lakeshore is committed to providing customer service to persons with disabilities in a manner that:

- Respects their dignity and independence;
- Is integrated as fully as practicable into the method of service delivery;
- Ensures an opportunity equal to that given to other customers to obtain and use our goods and services;
- Allows a person with disabilities to benefit from the same service, in the same place, and in a similar way to other customers; and
- Understands that each individual may need a slightly different type of accommodation.

BACKGROUND:

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

The purpose of this legislation is to “achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, service, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.” It will also create more opportunities for persons with disabilities to work, study, enjoy recreation and contribute to society.

The AODA creates, implements and enforces standards for accessibility in five key areas: customer service, information and communication, employment, built environment and transportation.

The first standard, Customer Service comes into effect January 1, 2010. This Standard details specific requirements for all service providers. In general, providers must deliver service in a way that preserves the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Providers must also integrate services and provide equal opportunity.

Accessible Customer Service can mean many things. Mainly it is the understanding that each individual may need a slightly different type of accommodation. For example, a person who is blind may need to have information read aloud to them.

Accessible customer service should be courteous helpful and prompt. Each person and each disability is different so it is important to know a little bit about how to best communicate, interact and assist people with disabilities.

COMMUNICATION:

Choosing the right word when talking about disabilities can influence and reinforce public perception. They can create either a positive or negative view of people with disabilities or an indifferent or negative depiction.

Some general tips that can make our communication and interaction more successful are as follows:

- Use **disability** or **disabled** not handicap or handicapped
- Never use demeaning or disrespectful words such as retarded, dumb or crippled
- Use **person with a disability** as opposed to a disabled person
- Never assume you are familiar with a disability if it is not visual obvious, wait until it is described to you

People with disabilities prefer the following terms used to describe their disabilities:

Instead of:

Please use:

Afflicted by cerebral palsy for example	Person who has cerebral palsy or Person with a disability
Aged (the) or the Elderly	Seniors
Autistic	A person with autism or A person who has autism
Birth Defect	A person with a disability since birth
Blind	A person with a vision disability
Brain damaged	A person with a brain injury
Confined to a wheelchair	A person who uses a wheelchair
Crazy or Mental	A person with a mental disability
Cripple	A person with mobility impairment
Deaf	A person with a hearing loss
Deaf and Dumb	A person who is deaf without speech
Disabled	A person or people with a disability
Epileptic, Fits, Spells	People who have epilepsy or has seizures

Instead of:	Please use:
Handicapped (the)	Person with a disability
Hidden disability	Person with a non-visible disability
Invalid	Person with a disability
Learning disabled	Person with a learning disability
Mentally retarded	A person with an intellectual /development disability
Mongoloid	Person with Down Syndrome
Normal	Person who is not disabled
Patient	Person with a disability or is the word for Relationship between a physician and client
Physically challenged	Person with a physical disability
Spastic	Person who has muscle spasms
Stutterer	Person with a speech impediment
Visually impaired (the)	Person with vision loss.

PHYSICAL:

Physical disabilities include a range of functional limitations from difficulties in moving one or more body parts to congenital disabilities such as tendonitis. A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to:

- Perform manual tasks such as turning a door knob
- Move around independently
- Control the speed or coordination of movements
- Reach, pull or manipulate objects
- Have strength or endurance

Best practices and procedures for employees of the Town of Lakeshore with regards to people with physical disabilities are as follows. It is important to note that not all physical disabilities are easy to identify.

- Speak normally and directly to your customer.
- Ask if they need help before you act

- Do not touch or lean on their wheelchair or other devices
- Communicate to them the accessible features of the immediate area
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter
- Step around a counter that may be too high or wide to better serve the customer
- Provide seating for those who cannot stand in line
- Be patient – customers will identify their needs to you

HEARING:

Hearing loss can cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words. A person who has hearing loss may be unable to:

- Use a public telephone
- Understand speech in a noisy environment
- Pronounce words clearly to be understood

Best practices and procedures for the Town of Lakeshore employees with regard to people with a hearing disability may include the following general tips.

- Attract the customer's attention by gently touching their shoulder or waving your hand.
- Always ask how you can help, do not shout but speak clearly
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, make sure they understand
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth when speaking
- People with hearing loss may use a sign language interpreter- remember to speak or interact with that person and not the interpreter
- If the issue is personal – please be discreet and use a private room whenever possible
- If the person uses a hearing aid, please try to use a quiet area
- Write notes to communicate if deemed necessary
- Do not touch service animals at any time
- There is a Relay Service available by calling 1-800-855-0511 where the operator is the intermediary. Use this service if you are required to make a call to someone with a hearing disability. It is free for local calls and standard long distance charges apply.

DEAF-BLINDNESS:

A person who is both deaf and blind has significant difficulty assessing information and performing daily tasks. This disability interferes with communication, learning, orientation and mobility.

Various communication devices are used by people with a deaf-blind disability. Some of these are various sign language systems, Braille, telephone devices, communication boards, and an intervener. An intervener is a trained professional who helps their client with communication issues by using special sign language, manual alphabet and /or finger spelling.

The Town of Lakeshore's best practices and procedures for customers/residents with this type of disability include:

- Never assume – some people with this disability do have partial sight or hearing
- The customer will most likely explain how to communicate with them by way of a card or note
- Never address or touch a service animal
- Never touch a person with this disability without permission unless it is an emergency
- Patience is very important
- Direct your attention to the customer at all times.

VISION:

Few people with this disability are totally blind, many have limited vision issues. Some have tunnel vision or loss of side or peripheral vision, others lack central vision (cannot see straight ahead) and some see the outline of objects and some see the direction of light.

A person with vision loss may have:

- Difficulty reading or seeing faces
- Difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar places
- Inability to differentiate colours or distances
- A narrow field of vision
- The need for bright light, or contrast
- Night blindness

The Town of Lakeshore's best practices and procedures for customers/residents with vision disabilities include:

- Verbally identify yourself before making physical contact
- Do not touch or approach service animals

- Verbally describe the setting and/or location as necessary
- Offer your arm for guidance if necessary – do not grab or pull
- Never touch the person without first asking permission, unless it is an emergency
- Do not leave the customer in the middle of the room, guide them to a chair or a more comfortable location
- Do not leave without acknowledging

INTELLECTUAL:

A disability can affect a person's ability to think and reason. Down's Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disorders are a few of the intellectual disabilities. People with this type of disability may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken or written information
- Conceptual information
- Perception of sensory information
- Memory issues

At the Town of Lakeshore, we realize that customers/residents with intellectual disabilities may have difficulty doing many things that we take for granted. Our best practices and procedures will enable our employees to understand this type of disability and help us to recognize the signs. The following are some general guidelines to help us serve our customers/residents with intellectual disabilities:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do
- Use clean simple language
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information
- Remember that the person can and will make their own decisions
- Be patient and verify your understanding
- If you do not understand, ask again
- Provide one piece of information at one time
- Speak directly to the person

SPEECH:

A speech disability involves the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Speech disabilities include:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- Stuttering or slurring

The Town of Lakeshore knows that to be able to have good customer service communication is of utmost importance. Best practices and procedures developed for speech disabilities include the following:

- Communicate in a quiet environment whenever possible
- Your full attention to the customer/resident is required at all times, never interrupt
- Ask them to repeat if necessary or write their message for you
- Ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no” whenever possible
- Make sure you understand, repeat the information back to them to verify
- Communicate with patience, respect and willingness

LEARNING:

People with a learning disability have average or above average intelligence but take in and process information in different ways. Some examples of learning disabilities are:

- Difficulties in reading
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Way finding
- Processing information

Best practices and procedures for customer service at the Town of Lakeshore for customers/residents with learning disabilities are as follows:

- Learning disabilities are generally invisible and the ability to function varies greatly - we should respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling in forms and any other way we can help
- Allow extra time, do not rush and have patience.

MENTAL HEALTH:

These are the three main types of mental health disability:

- Anxiety
- Mood
- Behavioral

Some common signs of mental health issues are aggressive acts, irritated and edgy, pushy, abrupt, unable to make decisions, start laughing or angry for no apparent reason.

The Town of Lakeshore best practices and procedures in relation to mental health disabilities include the following:

- Treat each person as an individual. Ask how we can make him/her most comfortable and respect their needs to the utmost
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations
- Stay calm and courteous, focus on the service needed and how we can help

SENSORY DISABILITY:

Smell, Touch and Taste are three sensory disabilities that people can have.

A person with a smelling disability may have allergies to certain odours, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes or spoiled food.

A person with a touch disability may be unable to sense texture, temperature, vibration to pressure.

A person with a taste disability has limited ability to recognize the four primary taste sensations; sweet, bitter, salty and sour.

Other disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses and diseases including asthma, cancer, heart and stroke disease.

One very important factor for all of us to remember is that disabilities are not always visible or easy to distinguish.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES:

The term “assistive device” refers to an auxiliary aid such as communication aids, cognition aids, personal mobility aids and medical aids. The following is a list of the assistive devices available to people with various disabilities:

- Canes, crutches, wheelchairs, walkers
- Hearing aids
- Accessible telephone service – TTY/teletypewriter
- Electronic Door openers
- Accessible parking areas
- Accessible ramps at all Municipal buildings
- Screen reading software application for the Town of Lakeshore web site

Some best practices and procedures for the Town of Lakeshore in regards to activities at Town Hall to assist people with disabilities that could be adopted are as follows:

- Council chambers should have the microphones turned on at all public meetings to assist those residents that are hearing impaired

- Municipal Elections will provide election materials in accessible format when requested
- Location for elections should be accessible for electors with disabilities
- Notices should be displayed when the Town Hall is not open for business. This could be posted on the premises and also posted to the municipality's web site.
- Always ask permission before touching an assistive device of any kind.

USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS AND SUPPORT PERSONS:

As Town of Lakeshore employees, we should be aware of the use of service animals and support persons for residents/customers with certain disabilities. Our best practices and procedures include:

- Every employee is to use reasonable efforts to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and/or services
- Every employee shall allow persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal unless the animal is excluded by law
- If an animal is excluded by law to enter the premises, the reason must be explained to the persons with disabilities
- Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services shall be explored and acted upon with the assistance of the persons with the disability whenever needed
- Should a service animal be unruly or disruptive, an employee may ask the person with the disability to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods or services
- Every employee should be aware that some people with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person or service animal while accessing goods and/or services.
- Service animals assist people with a variety of disabilities: visual, hearing, autism, epilepsy, diabetes, etc. The disability may not always be apparent.
- Service animals are not limited to dogs.
- A service animal is a working animal, not a pet and when working, can be wearing a harness or on a leash. Do not touch, feed or speak to the animal unless given permission to do so.

- A support person is someone whose presence is justified by the support and assistance he/she provides exclusively for a person with a disability.
- A support person may be a personal support worker, family member, volunteer or a friend.
- Remember to speak directly to the customer, not the support person.
- Before talking about confidential information, check with the customer if they would like the support person present.
- Staff members may not always be introduced to the support person.

When a Person with a Disability is Having Difficulty

If a person with a disability is having difficulty, keep the following items in mind:

- Ask “How may I help you”
- Do not assume you know how to help them
- Do not feel hurt if they do not want assistance
- Keep a positive, flexible and willing attitude
- Remember it may take extra time to assist a person with a disability
- Know the resources and assistive devices available to help
- The following assistance may help a person with a disability:
 - Assist someone to reach for items
 - Offer to read a program guide, bill, etc.
 - Provide pen and paper to communicate

If it should happen that for some reason we cannot serve a person with a disability, we would need to be able to offer alternative methods of service while informing those that may be impacted personally. If this situation arises, staff will inform the Special Projects Officer so steps can be taken to address the situation so it does not occur in the future.

SERVICE DISRUPTION

A Service Disruption is any instance, planned or unplanned where services or facilities to customers with accessibility needs are not available.

The area where the disruption occurs is responsible to complete the appropriate Notice of Service Disruption form and post it in a conspicuous location in their area. If it is expected the disruption will be longer than one business day, they are to provide a copy of the notice to the Special Projects Officer so that it can be placed on the Internet.

A planned disruption typically occurs through maintenance and should be posted, at a minimum at least one day prior to the disruption occurring. The notice is to be posted in a conspicuous location and on the website.

FEEDBACK

To ensure the Town of Lakeshore is providing excellent customer service, Feedback forms have been created and will be placed in public locations. It is anticipated these forms will gauge the level of accessible service we are providing.

The Feedback form is two-sided, one side for the customer to complete, providing their comments and the other for staff to address the customer feedback. The staff member receiving the feedback form is required to complete the date received and whether any response or action has been or will be taken, signing their name and date. This side of the form is also to be completed upon receiving verbal or electronic (attach copy) feedback.

It is not necessary for the customer to provide their name or contact information; however, we will be unable to respond to the feedback should this information not be provided.

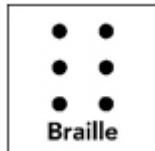
Completed feedback forms are to be provided to the Special Projects Officer.

International Symbols of Accessibility



This is probably the most recognizable symbol of accessibility. The wheelchair symbol should only be used to indicate access for individuals with limited mobility, including wheelchair users. For example, the symbol is used to indicate an accessible entrance, washroom or that a phone is lower for wheelchair users.

Braille Symbol



This symbol indicates that printed material is available in Braille, including exhibition labeling, publications and signage.

Accessible Print



The symbol for large print is 'Large Print' printed in 16-20 point font size. In addition to indicating that large print version of books, pamphlets, museum guides and theatre programs are available, you may use the symbol on conference or membership forms to indicate that print materials may be provided in large print.

Assistive Listening Systems



This symbol is used to indicate that assistive listening systems are available for the event. The systems may include infrared, loop and FM systems.

Sign Language Interpretation



This symbol indicates that Sign Language Interpretation is provided for a lecture, meeting, performance, conference or other program.

Closed Captioning (CC)



This symbol indicates that a television program or videotape is closed captioned for the deaf or hard of hearing people (and others).