

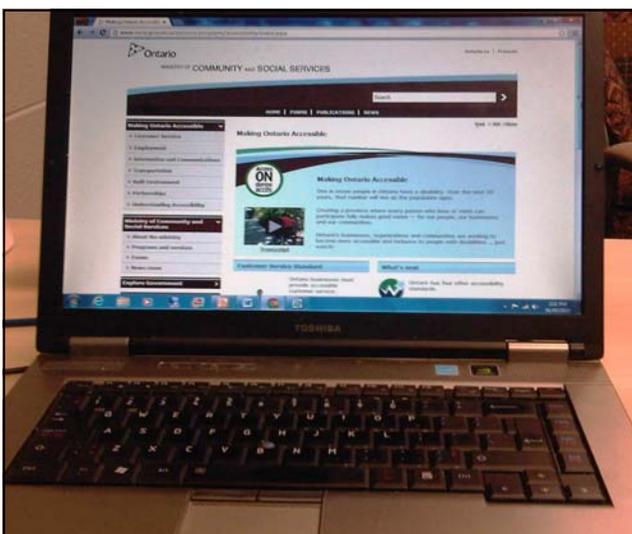
# Making Volunteer Services Accessible



One in seven people in Ontario have a disability. Over the next 20 years, that number will rise as the population ages.

Creating a province where every person who lives or visits can participate fully makes good sense — for our people, our businesses and our communities.

Please take a moment to review the following section about accessible customer service and human rights to ensuring we are doing all we can to create an environment that works for everyone of all abilities!



*For more information, visit:*

*<http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/accessibility/index.aspx>*

*Human Rights & Accessibility Training Videos:*

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

## **How to interact and communicate with persons who are deaf, culturally deaf or have hearing loss:**

- 1) If possible communicate in a quiet and well lit area.
- 2) Calmly get the person's attention before speaking and maintain eye contact. Many persons read lips.
- 3) If available use technical devices such as pocket talkers.
- 4) If the person is accompanied by a support person, identify yourself to the support person, but then speak directly to the person.

## **How to interact and communicate with persons who are deaf blind:**

- 1) If the deaf blind person is accompanied by a support person, identify yourself to the support person, but then speak directly to the person.
- 2) A person who is deaf blind may take the initiative, explaining how best to communicate.
- 3) If the person uses a service animal, do not touch or speak to the animal.
- 4) Ask permission before touching a deaf blind person.

## **How to interact and communicate with persons with physical/mobility disabilities:**



- 1) Try to sit or crouch so that you are speaking at eye level.
- 2) Respect personal space. A person's wheelchair is essentially an extension of their body. Do not assume help is needed and accept that person's right to refuse help.
- 3) Ensure the person is not left in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of pedestrian traffic.
- 4) Make sure the person's personal items or equipment, such as canes or walkers, are always in reach.
- 5) If the person is accompanied by a support person, identify yourself to the support person, but then speak directly to the person.

### **How to interact and communicate with persons with speech and language impairments:**

- 1) Be patient. Don't complete their words or phrases for them.
- 2) If possible, ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no"
- 3) Concentrate on the content of the conversation, not the delivery; communicate as naturally as you can.
- 4) If the person is accompanied by a support person, identify yourself to the support person, but then speak directly to the person..

### **How to interact and communicate with persons who are blind or have low vision:**

- 1) Don't assume the person cannot see you. Very few persons have total vision loss.
- 2) Identify yourself. Do not assume the person will recognize your voice.
- 3) Offer your arm but ask permission first.
- 4) Let the person know when you are leaving.
- 5) Don't leave the person in open space with no point of reference. Always leave them in contact with a tangible object such as a wall, chair or table.
- 6) If the person uses a service animal, do not touch or speak to the animal, as it is working and should not be distracted.
- 7) If the person is accompanied by a support person, identify yourself to the support person, but then speak directly to the person.



Let's Focus on Ability!



### **How to interact and communicate with persons with learning disabilities:**

- 1) Ensure written material is in large print and double spaced.
- 2) Encourage the person to use any communication devices they have with them.
- 3) If the person needs to remember anything after a meeting, provide written checklists or to-do lists.
- 4) Be patient and supportive.

### **How to interact and communicate with persons with mental health disabilities:**

- 1) Eliminate as many distractions as possible.
- 2) Be patient and supportive.
- 3) Maintain eye contact.
- 4) If the person is in crisis, ask him or her for the best way you can help.
- 5) Provide written checklists.
- 6) If the person uses a service animal, do not touch or speak to the animal.
- 7) If the person is accompanied by a support person, identify yourself to the support person, but then speak directly to the person.

### **How to interact and communicate with persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities:**

- 1) Be patient and supportive.
  - 2) Ask the person if they can read any written information you give them. If not, ask them if you can read it to them.
  - 3) If the person needs to remember any information you give them, provide checklists or to-do lists.
  - 4) If the person uses a service animal, do not touch or speak to the animal.
  - 5) If the person is accompanied by a support person, identify yourself to the support person, but then speak directly to the person.
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**Working Together: The Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA):** Learn about your rights and responsibilities under the Code and the AODA and how they affect you at work, in services and in housing.

The Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) are laws we must be aware of and follow to help create an inclusive and respectful environment for those with disabilities in Ontario.

The code says that people with disabilities must be free from discrimination where they work, live and receive services.

Under the code employers, landlords and service providers **MUST** accommodate people with disabilities to the point of undue hardship.

Every attempt must be made to **eliminate barriers** to ensure those with disabilities have equal opportunities and can fully contribute. The code promotes education within organizations to prevent discrimination and harassment.

In the code disabilities can include: Physical limitations, mental health, cognitive or intellectual development, learning, hearing, or vision. It can also include epilepsy, substance addictions, environmental sensitivities and workplace injuries.

When implementing the AODA standards we must ensure we are mindful of the Human Rights Principles outlined in the code.

We must keep the following points in mind: don't create new barriers within the organization; design inclusively; favour integration over segregation; involve those who need accommodation in exploring solutions; spread out accessibility costs (should be factored in as a part of doing business).

While disability itself is not a barrier, barriers exist that can exclude people with disabilities. These include:

- \* **Physical barriers**—such as having stairs with no ramps or elevators,
- \* **Information and Communication Barriers** —such as using unclear language or print that is too small in printed materials,
- \* **Systemic Barriers** —established practices such as inflexible work hours that do not correspond with para-transit bus schedules,
- \* **Attitudinal Barriers** —“abilism”- the tendency to see those with disabilities as less worthy, underestimating their potential or excluding them from decisions that affect them.

There is no set formula for accommodating those with disabilities as what works for one person may not work for others. Individual needs must be considered each time a person asks to be accommodated.

Most accommodations can be made easily and inexpensively, such as:

- \* Providing printed materials in large print, electronically or Braille,
- \* Providing sign language interpreters or real time captioning for people who are deaf or hard of hearing,
- \* Offering flexible hours and break times,
- \* Modifying job duties, retraining or offering alternative work.

If the accommodation is costly to the point of undue hardship, we must find the next best step. Organizations can be held liable for not accommodating those with disabilities.

Undue hardship is defined as when the severe negative effects to the organization outweighs the benefits of accommodation.

The organization must provide clear evidence of undue hardship.

## **Ontario's Human Rights System:**

Ontario Human Rights Commission: provides policies, guidelines and other information and takes legal action on disability and the duty to accommodate.



Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario: hears discrimination claims from individuals who believe an organization or person has failed to accommodate disability-related needs.

Human Rights Legal Support Centre: helps people through the human rights process such as completing an application or claim to the Tribunal.

Accessibility Directorate: Works with organizations having trouble meeting the standards in order to bring them into compliance.