

## ONTARIO REGULATION 429/07

made under the

### ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005

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### ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

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#### **Purpose and application**

1. (1) This Regulation establishes accessibility standards for customer service and it applies to every designated public sector organization and to every other person or organization that provides goods or services to members of the public or other third parties and that has at least one employee in Ontario.

(2) In this Regulation,

“designated public sector organization” means the Legislative Assembly and the offices of persons appointed on the address of the Assembly, every ministry of the Government of Ontario, every municipality and every person or organization listed in Schedule 1 or described in Schedule 2 to this Regulation; (“organisation désignée du secteur public”)

“provider of goods or services” means a person or organization to whom this Regulation applies. (“fournisseur de biens ou de services”)

## **Effective dates**

2. The accessibility standards for customer service apply to the designated public sector organizations on and after January 1, 2010 and to other providers of goods or services on and after January 1, 2012.

## **Establishment of policies, practices and procedures**

3. (1) Every provider of goods or services shall establish policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities.

(2) The provider shall use reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the following principles:

1. The goods or services must be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

2. The provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities and others must be integrated unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services.

3. Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from the goods or services.

(3) Without limiting subsections (1) and (2), the policies must deal with the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities to obtain, use or benefit from the provider's goods or services or the availability, if any, of other measures which enable them to do so.

(4) When communicating with a person with a disability, a provider shall do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

(5) Every designated public sector organization and every other provider of goods or services that has at least 20 employees in Ontario shall prepare one or more documents describing its policies, practices and procedures and, upon request, shall give a copy of a document to any person.

## **Use of service animals and support persons**

4. (1) This section applies if goods or services are provided to members of the public or other third parties at premises owned or operated by the provider of the goods or services and if the public or third parties have access to the premises.

(2) If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that the person is permitted to enter the

premises with the animal and to keep the animal with him or her unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises.

(3) If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the provider's goods or services.

(4) If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises.

(5) The provider of goods or services may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises, but only if 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.

(6) If an amount is payable by a person for admission to the premises or in connection with a person's presence at the premises, the provider of goods or services shall ensure that notice is given in advance about the amount, if any, payable in respect of the support person.

(7) Every designated public sector organization and every other provider of goods or services that has at least 20 employees in Ontario shall prepare one or more documents describing its policies, practices and procedures with respect to the matters governed by this section and, upon request, shall give a copy of a document to any person.

(8) In this section,

“guide dog” means a guide dog as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons Rights' Act*; (“chien-guide”)

“service animal” means an animal described in subsection (9); (“animal d'assistance”)

“support person” means, in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services. (“personne de soutien”)

(9) For the purposes of this section, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,

(a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or

(b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

## **Notice of temporary disruptions**

**5.** (1) If, in order to obtain, use or benefit from a provider's goods or services, persons with disabilities usually use particular facilities or services of the provider and if there is a temporary disruption in those facilities or services in whole or in part, the provider shall give notice of the disruption to the public.

(2) Notice of the disruption must include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.

(3) Notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the provider of goods or services, by posting it on the provider's website, if any, or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

(4) Every designated public sector organization and every other provider of goods or services that has at least 20 employees in Ontario shall prepare a document that sets out the steps to be taken in connection with a temporary disruption and, upon request, shall give a copy of the document to any person.

## **Training for staff, etc.**

**6.** (1) Every provider of goods or services shall ensure that the following persons receive training about the provision of its goods or services to persons with disabilities:

1. Every person who deals with members of the public or other third parties on behalf of the provider, whether the person does so as an employee, agent, volunteer or otherwise.

2. Every person who participates in developing the provider's policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to members of the public or other third parties.

(2) The training must include a review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of this Regulation and instruction about the following matters:

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.

2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.

3. How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.

4. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods or services.

(3) The training must be provided to each person as soon as practicable after he or she is assigned the applicable duties.

(4) Training must also be provided on an ongoing basis in connection with changes to the policies, practices and procedures governing the provision of goods or services to persons with disabilities.

(5) Every designated public sector organization and every other provider of goods or services that has at least 20 employees in Ontario shall prepare a document describing its training policy, and the document must include a summary of the contents of the training and details of when the training is to be provided.

(6) Every designated public sector organization and every other provider of goods or services that has at least 20 employees in Ontario shall keep records of the training provided under this section, including the dates on which the training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided.

### **Feedback process for providers of goods or services**

7. (1) Every provider of goods or services shall establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the manner in which it provides goods or services to persons with disabilities and shall make information about the process readily available to the public.

(2) The feedback process must permit persons to provide their feedback in person, by telephone, in writing, or by delivering an electronic text by email or on diskette or otherwise.

(3) The feedback process must specify the actions that the provider of goods or services is required to take if a complaint is received.

(4) Every designated public sector organization and every other provider of goods or services that has at least 20 employees in Ontario shall prepare a document describing its feedback process and, upon request, shall give a copy of the document to any person.

### **Notice of availability of documents**

8. (1) Every designated public sector organization and every other provider of goods or services that has at least 20 employees in Ontario shall notify persons to whom it provides goods or services that the documents required by this Regulation are available upon request.

(2) The notice may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the provider, by posting it on the provider's website, if any, or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances.

## **Format of documents**

9. (1) If a provider of goods or services is required by this Regulation to give a copy of a document to a person with a disability, the provider shall give the person the document, or the information contained in the document, in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

(2) The provider of goods or services and the person with a disability may agree upon the format to be used for the document or information.

## **Commencement**

**10. This Regulation comes into force on January 1, 2008.**

### SCHEDULE 1

#### BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AUTHORITIES AND AGENCIES

1. Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal.
2. Agricorp.
3. Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.
4. Algonquin Forestry Authority.
5. Assessment Review Board.
6. Board of negotiation continued under subsection 27 (1) of the *Expropriations Act*.
7. Cancer Care Ontario.
8. The Centennial Centre of Science and Technology.
9. Child and Family Services Review Board.
10. College Compensation and Appointments Council.
11. Each community care access corporation as defined in section 1 of the *Community Care Access Corporations Act, 2001*.
12. Consent and Capacity Board.
13. Conservation Review Board.
14. Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

15. Crown Employees Grievance Settlement Board.
16. Custody Review Board.
17. Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario.
18. Echo: Improving Women's Health in Ontario.
19. Education Quality and Accountability Office.
20. Environmental Review Tribunal.
21. Financial Services Commission of Ontario.
22. Financial Services Tribunal.
23. Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council.
24. Fire Safety Commission.
25. Greater Toronto Transit Authority.
26. Greater Toronto Transportation Authority.
27. Health Professions Appeal and Review Board.
28. Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council.
29. Health Services Appeal and Review Board.
30. Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.
31. Landlord and Tenant Board.
32. Legal Aid Ontario.
33. Licence Appeal Tribunal.
34. Liquor Control Board of Ontario.
35. Each local health integration network as defined under section 2 of the *Local Health System Integration Act, 2006*.
36. McMichael Canadian Art Collection.
37. Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre Corporation.

38. Niagara Escarpment Commission.
39. Niagara Parks Commission.
40. Normal Farm Practices Protection Board.
41. Office of the Employer Adviser.
42. Office of the Worker Adviser.
43. Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services.
44. Ontario Clean Water Agency.
45. Ontario Educational Communications Authority.
46. Ontario Electricity Financial Corporation.
47. Ontario Energy Board.
48. Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission.
49. Ontario Film Review Board.
50. Ontario Financing Authority.
51. Ontario Food Terminal Board.
52. Ontario French-language Educational Communications Authority.
53. Ontario Health Quality Council.
54. Ontario Heritage Trust.
55. Ontario Highway Transportation Board.
56. Ontario Human Rights Commission.
57. Ontario Infrastructure Project Corporation.
58. Ontario Labour Relations Board.
59. Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation.
60. Ontario Media Development Corporation.



61. Ontario Mental Health Foundation.
62. Ontario Municipal Board.
63. Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.
64. Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board.
65. Ontario Pension Board.
66. Ontario Place Corporation.
67. Ontario Police Arbitration Commission.
68. Ontario Racing Commission.
69. Ontario Realty Corporation.
70. Ontario Review Board.
71. Ontario Securities Commission.
72. Ontario Special Education Tribunal (English).
73. Ontario Special Education Tribunal (French).
74. Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation.
75. Ontario Trillium Foundation.
76. Ottawa Congress Centre.
77. Owen Sound Transportation Company.
78. Pay Equity Hearings Tribunal.
79. Pay Equity Office.
80. Province of Ontario Council for the Arts.
81. Public Service Grievance Board.
82. Royal Ontario Museum.
83. St. Lawrence Parks Commission.

84. Science North.
85. Smart Systems for Health Agency.
86. Social Assistance Review Board.
87. Social Benefits Tribunal.
88. Soldiers' Aid Commission.
89. Trillium Gift of Life Network.
90. Walkerton Clean Water Centre.
91. Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal.
92. Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

SCHEDULE 2  
BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR

1. Every district school board as defined in section 1 of the *Education Act*.
2. Every hospital as defined in section 1 of the *Public Hospitals Act*.
3. Every college of applied arts and technology established under the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002*.
4. Every university in Ontario, including its affiliated and federated colleges, that receives operating grants from the Government of Ontario.
5. Every public transportation organization in Ontario, including any municipally operated transportation services for persons with disabilities, that provides services for which a fare is charged for transporting the public by vehicles that are operated,
  - i. by, for or on behalf of the Government of Ontario, a municipality, a local board of a municipality or a transit or transportation commission or authority,
  - ii. under an agreement between the Government of Ontario and a person, firm, corporation, or transit or transportation commission or authority, or
  - iii. under an agreement between a municipality and a person, firm, corporation or transit or transportation commission or authority.

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### **EXEMPTION FROM REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Re accessibility standards for customer service**

1. (1) Every provider of goods or services that has fewer than 20 employees, other than a designated public sector organization, is exempted from the requirement to file accessibility reports under section 14 of the Act with respect to the accessibility standards for customer service established by Ontario Regulation 429/07 (Accessibility Standards for Customer Service) made under the Act.

(2) The following are the reasons for this exemption:

1. It is consistent with a phased approach to implementing the Act.

2. It allows the exempted providers of goods or services to focus their efforts and resources on complying with those accessibility standards.

(3) In this section, “designated public sector organization” and “provider of goods or services” have the same meaning as in Ontario Regulation 429/07.

#### **Commencement**

**2. This Regulation comes into force on January 1, 2008.**

## Understanding Barriers to Access

Barriers are obstacles — things that stand in the way of people with disabilities doing many of the day-to-day activities that most of us take for granted. Barriers make shopping, working, going to a movie or taking public transit difficult, sometimes impossible, for people with disabilities.

There are many kinds of barriers:

**Architectural** and **physical** barriers are features of buildings or spaces that cause problems for people with disabilities. Examples are:

- hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair, electric scooter or walker
- counters that are too high for a person of short stature
- poor lighting for people with low vision
- doorknobs that are difficult for people with arthritis to grasp
- parking spaces that are too narrow for a driver who uses a wheelchair
- telephones that are not equipped with telecommunications devices for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing

**Information** or **communications** barriers happen when a person can't easily understand information. Examples are:

- print is too small to read
- websites that don't support screen-reading software
- signs that are not clear or easily understood

**Attitudinal** barriers are those that discriminate against people with disabilities. Examples are:

- thinking that people with disabilities are inferior
- assuming that a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you

**Technology** barriers occur when a technology can't be modified to support various assistive devices. An example is:

- a website that doesn't support screen-reading software

**Systemic** barriers are an organization's policies, practices or procedures that discriminate against people with disabilities. An example is:

- a hiring process that is not open to people with disabilities

People without disabilities often don't understand what it's like to live with a disability and the barriers that people with disabilities face daily.

Here are some of the common myths about people with disabilities and the reality.

**Myth:** People with disabilities are inferior to "normal" people and their lives are very different.

**Reality:** What is "normal"? We all have different abilities, talents, interests and personalities — you name it! People with disabilities go to school, get married, work, have families, play, do laundry, go shopping, eat out, travel, volunteer, vote, pay taxes, laugh, cry, plan and dream — just like everyone else.

**Myth:** We need to feel sorry for people with disabilities.

**Reality:** That's patronizing. People with disabilities don't need pity. They need access to opportunities.

**Myth:** People with disabilities are brave and courageous.

**Reality:** Adjusting to a disability requires adapting to a lifestyle, not bravery and courage.

**Myth:** It's not a good idea to hire people with disabilities. They have a higher turnover rate and they take sick days more often.

**Reality:** Many studies show that disabled employees are often more productive, dependable and loyal than their non-disabled co-workers and that staff retention is 72% higher among persons with disabilities. That adds up to savings of millions of dollars every year in hiring and training costs.

The experiences of large corporations such as DuPont and the Royal Bank of Canada show that when business hires people with disabilities:

- the pool of potential employees becomes larger
- staff retention rates increase
- absenteeism decreases

**Myth:** You have to be careful when you're talking to a person with a disability, because they are easily offended if you use the wrong word.

**Reality:** You just need to be as polite and respectful as you would when speaking to anyone.

If you're not sure what to say or do, it's okay to ask.

**Myth:** It's difficult serving customers with disabilities.

**Reality:** Customers with disabilities have the same preferences, perceptions, attitudes, habits, and needs as customers without disabilities, and they are looking for the same quality of products and services.

Everyone, regardless of ability, deserves to be treated with the same dignity and respect.

When you hear the word "disability", what pops into your mind?

Do you think of a person who uses a wheelchair? Or a person with a guide dog?

The fact is there are many kinds of disabilities. They can be visible, hidden, permanent or occur only at certain times.

Types of disabilities

- vision
- hearing
- physical
- intellectual
- developmental
- learning
- mental health
- speech or language
- deaf-blind

Disabilities vary. Being hard of hearing is different from being Deaf. Having low vision is different from being legally blind.

A disability can happen to any one at any time. Some people are born with a disability. For others, the disability happens because of an illness or an accident. Sometimes it's because the person is getting older. In fact as the population ages, many of us may eventually face some kind of limitation.

Did you know that just over 13.5% of Ontarians have a disability? That's 1 in every 7 Ontarians and as the population ages that number will grow.

People with disabilities travel, shop and do business in your community with their friends and families, just like everyone else. By providing service that welcomes people with disabilities, you can offer better service to everyone. Treating all your customers with

individual respect and courtesy is at the heart of excellent customer service.

You can broaden your customer base by welcoming everyone to your store, restaurant or services, including customers with disabilities. By learning how to serve people with disabilities, you can attract more customers and improve your service to everyone.

Here are some ways you can provide better service to your customers with disabilities

- Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Patience, optimism, and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Smile, relax, and keep in mind that people with disabilities are just people.
- Don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities a person has.
- Some disabilities are not visible. Take the time to get to know your customers' needs.
- Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "May I help you?"
- If you can't understand what someone is saying, just politely ask again.
- Ask before you offer to help — don't just jump in. Your customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- Find a good way to communicate. A good start is to listen carefully.
- Look at your customer, but don't stare. Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their interpreter or someone who is with them.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- Don't touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Ask permission before touching a wheelchair or a piece of equipment.
- Every business should have emergency procedures for customers with disabilities. Make sure you know what they are.

## **Why accessibility is good for your business**

### **Did you know?**

- About 1.5 million people in Ontario (that's 13.5% of the population) have a disability.

- 75% of people with disabilities in Canada, Europe and the United States are physically and financially able to travel.
- Nearly 40% of people over the age of 65 have disabilities. Seniors and people with disabilities will represent 20 to 25% of the Canadian recreation, retail, entertainment, workplace and housing marketplaces in the next ten years and beyond.

### **Are you missing potential customers?**

Predictions are that the number of people with disabilities will continue to grow as our population ages. Don't lose this major market group to your competitors!

You want to do business with this growing population of people with disabilities because they:

- live with, work with, and influence the rest of our population – on average, 5 or 6 other people, such as colleagues, family members, business owners and other service providers.
- are loyal customers and consumers – they'll recommend your quality product or service. As business owners and service providers, you have a common goal. You want happy, satisfied customers whose needs are met. You want customers to feel comfortable and welcome to come back time and time again. And, if you do your job well, you can expect these customers to refer their friends, co-workers and family members.

Loyal customers and their families and relatives are the best customers you can have and the ones you want to keep. As our population ages, think about the fact that more of your existing loyal customers and potential new customers will be people with disabilities, their families, their friends and their caregivers.

Smart businesses will recognize the need for accessibility and make sure that consumers who shop, work or do business with them are satisfied. They will ensure that the barriers that may prevent customers from enjoying access to products, services and employment are eliminated and removed.

In the United States, which is implementing standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the hospitality industry has increased annual revenue by 12%. People with disabilities also represent a wealth of untapped employment potential.

Is your business welcoming to customers and employee with disabilities? Take the [accessibility test](#) to find out how you rate.

ou may be able to make buildings, spaces, and products accessible using simple or low-cost solutions. The best solutions will follow the rules of universal design. This means designing products and environments that can be used by all people, as much as possible, without having to be modified.



## **Making Your Space Accessible**

When assessing your premises for physical accessibility, there are a number of things to consider in developing your action plan:

- Do you own or lease your premises? This may affect how, when and at what cost accessibility changes can be made.
- Can your building accommodate physical changes?
- Can any necessary renovation work be done under normal maintenance activities, or regular update work?
- Do you need to hire an architect or engineer, or can a contractor do the job?
- What are your priorities based on your assessment?
- What are the simpler, immediate, lower-cost things you can do to improve accessibility?
- Remember to make your premises accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities, including physical, sensory, learning, developmental and mental health. This means paying attention to more than just ramps and accessible washrooms. It also means:
  - o lighting;
  - o audible alarm systems;
  - o signage with high contrast lettering;
  - o easy-to-find directories; and
  - o accessible parking.

The following checklist items will help you develop a plan to make your premises accessible:

### **Entrances**

- entrances are accessible to persons using wheelchairs or scooters;
- canopies or other sheltering devices have adequate headroom;
- revolving door openings move slowly and safely to accommodate people using mobility aids;
- if there is no accessible revolving door, an adjacent accessible door opens automatically, has power assisted door operators or can be easily opened with one hand;
- mats are level with the floor and door thresholds are bevelled so they do not create a tripping hazard; and
- people can easily find information, a reception counter, an accessible call bell or information phone for persons requiring assistance.

### **Elevators**

- elevator doorways are wide enough and stay open long enough to allow persons using wheelchairs to pass through easily;

- in accessible elevators, Braille signage and controls can be easily reached and a two-way emergency call system or telephone provided; and
- audible signals announce floors and up/down direction of elevator cars.

## **Exteriors**

- accessible pedestrian route(s) or path(s) are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices;
- curb cuts or ramps are wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters, have a non-slip finish and are kept clear of snow and ice in winter weather;
- routes are not obstructed by poles, plants, bicycle racks, etc.;
- accessible entrances are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility;
- building and route signage is provided in large, high contrast lettering;
- accessible passenger loading zone accommodates taxis, buses, or accessible vehicles;
- awnings or canopies extending over exterior walkways have clear headroom;
- on exterior steps, forward edges are highly colour contrasted for easy visibility; and
- on both sides of ramps or exterior stairs, continuous handrails are a bright contrasting colour and have horizontal or vertical rails to prevent people from slipping through.

## **Fire and Life Safety**

- a fire policy and fire safety plan are in place for the evacuation of people with disabilities;
- main exit routes and exit doors are easily accessed and used by people using mobility aids;
- exit instructions are printed in large text, and mounted in an accessible, highly visible location; and
- fire alarms have both visual and audible signals.

## **General Layout and Services**

- queuing areas and serving aisles are wide enough for people using mobility aids including electric wheelchairs and scooters;
- cashier desks, service counters or counters/tables in eating areas are accessible to and useable by patrons using wheelchairs or scooters;
- public telephones, coat racks or display shelves are accessible to and useable by patrons with various disabilities e.g. wheelchair users, persons with low vision or hearing loss; and
- appropriate lighting is installed to ensure that people with vision disabilities may clearly identify colours, patterns and signage.

## **Interiors**

- floor finishes have non-slip surfaces under wet and dry conditions;
- open-concept, accessible routes are marked by bright colour or textural changes at floor level, to provide directional cues for people with vision disabilities;
- there are no protruding objects or tripping hazards in accessible routes, and if so, they are clearly marked with a bright colour, a cane-detectable floor finish, or a guard;
- where floors are carpeted, the carpet is of firm, dense construction and easy for a wheelchair user to roll over without difficulty; and
- thresholds are bevelled to accommodate different floor materials.

### **Parking Areas**

- accessible parking spaces are clearly marked with the International Symbol of Accessibility;
- in accessible underground parking areas, a call bell or two-way communication system is located near parking spaces reserved for persons who may require assistance;
- there is a safe, clearly marked, accessible pedestrian route from the designated parking area to an accessible building entrance or elevator lobby; and
- accessible pedestrian route is made of firm, level material.

### **Public Washrooms**

- an accessible stall is provided for each sex when integrated into regular washrooms or an accessible stand-alone unisex washroom is located nearby; and
- the following washroom features are accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities:
  - o grab bars;
  - o coat hooks;
  - o flush controls;
  - o wash basins;
  - o toilet paper dispenser;
  - o call button for emergencies;
  - o mounted automatic hand-dryers or paper towel holders; and
  - o lever-handled faucets or automatic faucet.

### **Signage and Information Systems**

- show the International Symbol of Accessibility;
- display universal hearing disability symbols where equipment is available, e.g. TTY;
- include Braille information;
- include appropriate pictograms, wherever possible (e.g. on washroom doors);
- include large high contrast text, clear, light-coloured lettering or symbols on a dark background, or dark characters on a light background; and

- are mounted at a convenient height for both wheelchair users and people with vision disabilities.

### **Wall Finishes**

- walls in busy areas, corridors, ramps or staircases are finished in smooth, non-glossy, non-abrasive finishes;
- colour of doors or door frames in hallways contrast with surrounding wall colours;
- fire exit doors are consistently coloured throughout the building, so that they are easily distinguishable from other doors;
- fire hose cabinets and fire extinguishers are in a highly contrasting colour;
- wall mirrors are limited in size, to prevent visual confusion; and
- mirrors that cover a wall (e.g. in a restaurant) are clearly marked for people with low vision.

### **Make Information Accessible**

Everyone has the right to access public information. If a person cannot access a public document because of a disability, they are being denied their right to access.

#### **What are alternate formats?**

Alternate formats are simply other ways of publishing information beyond traditional printing. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address specific user needs.

#### **Why do we need to provide information in other formats?**

Some people cannot read or use regular print because of their disability. This can include people who are blind, people who have low vision, an intellectual or other cognitive disability, and some people with physical disabilities who cannot hold publications or turn pages.

Other people cannot access or have difficulties accessing the Internet. Still others have difficulties watching or hearing video presentations.

Providing alternate formats will ensure that all clients can access your information. It's not only good for your business, it's required by law. The Ontario Human Rights Code establishes, in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the principle of access by persons with disabilities to goods, services, facilities and employment.

The Code prohibits not only overt discrimination, but also practices that are discriminatory in their effect. Under the Code, to refuse a request for information in an

accessible format could be considered a discriminatory practice and could make you liable for complaint.

Accessibility requirements are a component of good communications planning. It is important to consider the communication needs of your whole audience when preparing your materials. Advanced planning and preparation of materials in multiple formats can greatly reduce the time required to respond to individual requests. This results in improved customer service, and makes particular sense when producing print or multimedia materials that are targeted at a population that is likely to have multiple format needs, such as seniors. Many seniors favour material in large print, and people with a hearing loss benefit from captioning on video presentations or video streaming.

Think about all the forms that sending and receiving information can take. There's electronic, verbal, audio, or written to name a few. How can you improve accessibility in communicating with clients, suppliers and the public?

Here are some of the alternatives available to help make information more accessible:

### **Alternative Formats**

#### **Large Print**

An alternative format for people who have low vision. Large print materials should be prepared with a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger. This can be created in-house by using word processing software, or can be outsourced to a vendor.

#### **Electronic Text**

Used with computer synthetic voice technology (screen reading software) that enables people who are blind, have low vision (such as seniors) or who have learning disabilities to hear a spoken translation of what others see on the monitor. When an electronic form of a document is placed on a CD, it should be labelled in large, high-contrast print and Braille.

#### **Braille**

An alternative format for people who are blind or deaf-blind. It is a tactile system of raised dots representing letters or a combination of letters of the alphabet. Braille is produced using Braille transcription software.

#### **Audio Format**

An alternative format for people with a vision, intellectual or developmental, or learning disability, and are unable to read print. Labels should be prepared in large, high-contrast print and Braille.

## **Captioning**

Captioning translates the audio portion of a video presentation by way of subtitles, or captions, which usually appear on the bottom of the screen. Captioning may be closed or open. Closed captions can only be seen on a television screen that is equipped with a device called a closed caption decoder. Open captions are “burned on” a video and appear whenever the video is shown. Captioning makes television programs, films and other visual media with sound accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

## **Windowing**

Windowing enables people who are deaf to read by means of a sign language interpreter what others hear in a video presentation or broadcast. The interpreter appears in a corner or “window” in the screen translating spoken word to sign language. Windowing may include open or closed captioning.

## **Descriptive Video Service (DVS)**

DVS provides descriptive narration of key visual elements – such as the action, characters, locations, costumes and sets – without interfering with dialog or sound effects, making television programs, films, home videos and other visual media accessible for people with vision disabilities.

## **Assistive Technologies**

People with disabilities may use one or more of the following assistive technologies in communicating with others or in getting information:

- speech input and synthesized speech output;
- screen readers, screen magnifiers, screen projectors;
- audio recorded information;
- text telephones;
- adjustable signal level and tone on audio devices;
- volume control;
- hands-free data entry and response selection;
- intelligent word prediction software;
- alternative pointing devices, such as mouth sticks;
- keyboard controllers;
- book holders and page turners;
- touchscreens; and
- standardized icons.

## **Telecommunications**

Although many people who are deaf or hard of hearing use e-mail and pagers to give and receive information, TTY (teletypewriter), is still widely used. Those who use wireless

messaging pager systems can send and receive e-mail, TTY messages, faxes, text-to-speech and speech-to-text messages, and a text message to any one-way alphanumeric pager. More cellular phones are now compatible with TTY and hearing aids, and as they become less expensive and easier to use, their use will be more widespread.

Bell Canada Relay Service (BCRS) lets TTY users and hearing people talk to one another by phone with the help of specially trained BCRS operators. Users dictate to the operator the conversation, which is then relayed to the TTY phone. TTY conversation is then relayed to the regular phone user. This service is confidential and the only cost is any long-distance charges that would regularly apply. Local calls using this service are free.

## **The World Wide Web**

Providing easy access to information through accessible websites benefits everyone, including:

- people with disabilities;
- seniors;
- consumers living in areas that do not have access to high-speed Internet;
- people who have difficulty reading and writing;
- people who speak English as a Second Language; and
- tourists and people living in multilingual societies.

When you are designing your website, remember that some people use assistive technology to help them use the Internet.

The **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)** is an international organization. One of its primary goals is to develop standards, protocols and guidelines to ensure that the benefits of web-based information are accessible to all people, whatever their hardware, software, network infrastructure, native language, culture, geographical location, or physical or mental ability.

More information on guidelines and suggestions for making websites accessible, appears on the [World Wide Web Consortium's \(WC3\) website](#).

## **Website Testing**

Is your website accessible? You can find out by contacting a company that specializes in creating websites that meet accessibility guidelines, or that sell software that can maintain a website's accessibility. These companies often let organizations test a few sample pages of their website free of charge. If you would like to better understand the difficulties that an inaccessible website can pose, visit the website of [WebAIM](#) for various simulations.

People with disabilities have skills, abilities and experience that can add value in your workplace. By opening up your search for talented employees and making your workplace accessible, you create a win-win situation. You find the right person for the

job. You create a place where anyone can work and be productive — and you allow employees of all abilities to compete in the marketplace.

You may have to provide workplace accommodation for some employees. Many options available to you as an employer can be low-cost or no-cost. You may have to make some changes to workstations or provide an assistive device or assistive technology, but many changes are simple.

## **Make Your Workplace Accessible**

Here are some things to consider as you get ready to make your workplace accessible:

### **Job Advertisements**

- Clearly state that your organization has an equal opportunity policy.
- Use simple typeface that is easy and large enough to read.
- Provide the job ad in alternate formats such as large high contrast print, HTML and plain language.
- Consider using other methods of advertising such as web-based listings and radio ads.
- Look beyond mainstream sources for candidates. Contact agencies that provide employment support services to people with disabilities, local agencies and campus placement offices.
- Remember that people with disabilities may not have acquired formative work experience that employers seek, but they may have other valuable experience and skills that will make them productive employees.
- Focus on skills, abilities, expectations, and desired outcomes. Ask for credentials only when necessary to do the job such as a degree in law or medicine.

### **Job Descriptions and Requirements**

- Separately identify what skills and experience are needed to do the job and what desirable qualities the candidate can bring to the job.
- Make sure what you ask for is relevant to the job (e.g., a physical test).
- On application forms, ask for information that is relevant to the job.
- Make the application available in alternate formats.

### **Recruitment and Selection**

- Make your selection process consistent for all applicants.
- This includes interviews, tests and other screening tools. By using the same criteria for everyone, you will be able to assess each person's skills and be able to make fair, informed decisions.
- When you contact candidates for an interview, ask if they have any accommodation needs. They may need to use a computer to do a test, materials in large high contrast print, or a sign language interpreter.



- Train front-line staff greeting job candidates on how to interact with people with disabilities.
- Be clear about what you can and cannot ask during an interview.
- The Ontario and Canadian human rights commissions can provide you with questions that can and cannot be asked, along with ways to phrase questions.
- Ask only questions that are job-related. For example, you cannot ask about health problems. However, you may ask about the person's physical abilities if they have to move heavy objects as part of their job.
- Ask how candidates will fulfill job requirements instead of asking if they can fulfill them.

### **Applicant Testing**

- Give tests that will show you if the candidate can do the job.
- Make sure you give the same test and clear instructions to all candidates.
- You may have to give the test verbally, or provide a computer for candidates to do the test.

### **Starting Work**

- Provide training for supervisors and managers so that they understand how to support employees to do their jobs well.
- Ask employees what job-related support they need and follow up later to see if something needs to be changed.
- Meet with staff, if needed, before a new employee with disabilities starts work. Your team may be worried if they don't know how to interact with colleagues with a disability.
- Assess your workplace to make sure it meets occupational health and safety rules.

### **Training**

- Allow enough time for carrying out training tasks.
- Train all employees in general accessibility awareness. You may want to consider more training for the workgroup the new employee is joining.

### **Doing the Job**

- Work with employees with disabilities to adapt tasks as needed.
- You may have to look at the workload and job tasks of the group to see if tasks need to be reassigned to or from employees in your group.

### **Keeping Matters Confidential**

- Let employees know that their personal matters will be kept confidential.
- Employees may choose not to disclose a disability. You should tell them that you are ready to work with them if they choose to tell you about it. You can help

reduce personal stress, and can look into other ways to support them in doing their job well.

### **Retaining Employees**

- Policies and practices should be the same for all your employees.
- Retain and promote staff using the same criteria for all employees.
- Make sure all employees have the chance for learning and personal development.
- You may have to change the work that employees do or how they do it. Anyone may acquire a disability during their lifetime, or a disability may become more limiting.
- Identify training needs when you regularly assess the work performance of all employees.
- Focus on achievements and how well someone does their job when you are assessing performance. Don't focus on any disabilities employees may have.
- Make sure all employees know about opportunities for transfers and promotions. Provide information in accessible formats. Avoid informal contacts so that you don't exclude anyone who may be interested.

### **Dismissal/Termination**

- Document your actions and make sure you can back them up, based on existing legislation.
- Keep records, have employees discuss concerns and document responses.
- Make sure you thought of all options in looking for ways to support employees.
- Consult with legal advisors to get information about laws that apply to you and your workplace.

### **Monitoring Results**

- Keep track of positive changes for making your workplace accessible. For example: people's attitudes – take surveys or ask a focus group; improved accessibility – conduct an accessibility audit and try to fill in any gaps; and access to job candidates – find out how your efforts to widen the search for candidates has paid off.

### **The Inclusive Workplace**

It is important that employees feel they can disclose information and ask for assistance. Here are ways you can create an open environment:

- respect employees' confidentiality;
- find creative ways to solve problems;
- learn from others;
- let people know they are included, valued and accepted; and
- use language that focuses on people, not on disabilities.

Listen to employees with disabilities – they're the experts in what they need. You should:

- listen to what employees tell you about their disabilities and what they think is needed;
- ask questions when you don't understand;
- get information to help you understand specific disability issues;
- be creative, flexible and look for new ways of doing things; and
- get your employees to test any special equipment or device before you purchase.

### **Workplace Accommodation**

Examples of accommodation include:

- voice input or speech recognition aids;
- voice synthesizer;
- TTY telephone service;
- computer screen magnifiers;
- flexible scheduling and reduced or part-time hours;
- quiet workspace;
- written instructions;
- self-paced workload;
- frequent breaks;
- alternate methods of communication (telephone, tape recorder, verbal instructions); and
- larger tasks divided into smaller ones.

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