

Accessible Customer Service

The University of Windsor 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 persons with disabilities to benefit from timely services, in the same place, and in a way similar to other customers.

Statistics

- In 2007, there were 4.4 million (14.3%) Canadians with disabilities
- In Ontario, the number of persons with disabilities was 1.85 million (15.5%) of the population
- While not everyone is born with a disability, or has an injury to cause a disability, as we age the likelihood of developing a disability increases:
- Of the 14.3% of Canadians with disabilities, 43.4% of them are age 65+
- These numbers will continue to climb. In 2001, one in eight people were 65+. By 2026, one in five will be 65+ (Canada's Aging Population, Health Canada, 2002)

Statistics Canada Participation & Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), Published December, 2007; Source: Adapted from the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario website



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Introduction to Accessible Customer Service

What is Accessible Customer Service?

“Customer” refers to a person seeking or receiving a service

Accessible Customer Service is providing service with the understanding that each individual may need a slightly different type of accommodation. For example, a person with a visual impairment may need to have information read aloud; an individual with a learning disability may need to have instructions written down; and someone who uses a wheelchair may need help finding an accessible route. Accessible customer service is good customer service -- courteous, helpful and prompt.

Taken from “May I Help You?: Understanding Accessible Customer Service”, City of Mississauga.

**Tolerance implies a respect
for another person,
not because he/she is wrong
or even because he/she is
right, but because
he/she is human.**

- John Cogley

Barriers to Accessibility

A barrier is anything that prevents a person from fully participating in all aspects of society, including, but not limited to:

Architecture: building design, shape of rooms, size of doorways

Physical Environment: objects added to the environment – doorknobs, workstations, playgrounds

Communication: difficulty receiving information in person, by telephone or by electronic communication

Information & Communication: inadequate signage; printed materials, computer screens, fax transmissions that are difficult to read

Policy (Systemic): rules, regulations, and protocols that prevent a person from doing their job as well as possible or that restrict public participation

Attitude: discriminatory behaviours; lack of knowledge

Technology: computers, photocopiers, telephones

Adapted from Ministry of Community & Social Services, “Understanding Barriers to Accessibility”, http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/topics/pop_ado_barriers.htm

Definition of Disability

Disability includes disabilities of differing severity, visible as well as non-visible. Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Regulation 429/07*,

the definition of “disability” is the same as the definition in the Ontario Human Rights Code**:

- (a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; (“handicap”)

Cross Disability: the Ontario Human Rights Commission recognizes a cross-disability approach and how disability intersects with various identities related to gender, race, age, sexual orientation and other Code grounds

Disability as universal: an expansive category used in inclusive design and barrier removal that addresses needs of people of all ages and abilities at all stages of life

* *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Regulation 429/07, http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws_src_regs_r07429_e.htm*

** *Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter H.19, Section 10(1)(a-e), Service Ontario e-Laws, 2006, 03 April 2009, http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm*

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