

Excellent Customer Service

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, including customers with disabilities. By learning how to serve people with differing disabilities, you can attract more customers and improve your service to everyone.

Serving Customers who are Deaf-Blind

A person who is deaf-blind cannot see or hear to some extent. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional who helps with communicating that involves touching the person's hands.

- Speak directly to the customer
- Identify yourself to the support person
- Some people who are deaf-blind have partial sight or hearing, while others have neither
- The person will explain to you how to communicate with them, sometimes using an assistance card or a note
- Don't touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times
- Never suddenly touch a person who is deaf-blind or without permission unless it's an emergency

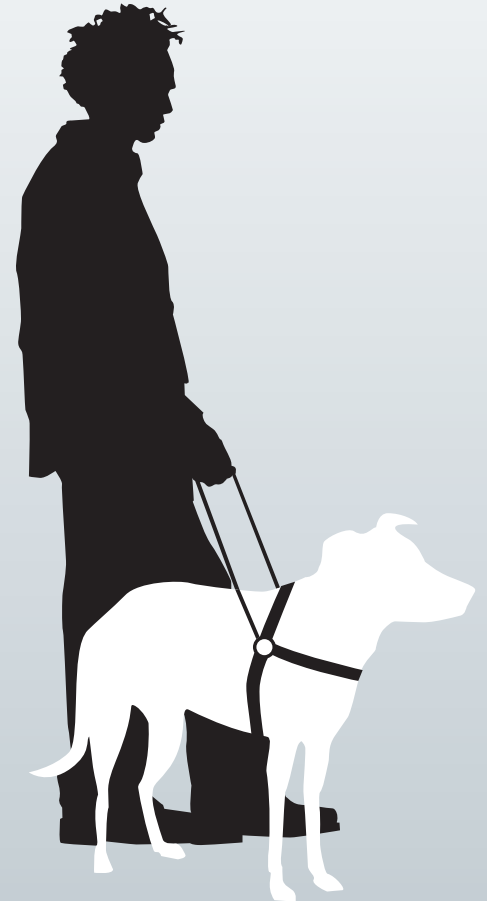


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Serving Customers with Vision or Hearing Impairments



Serving Customers who are Hearing Impaired over the Phone

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

- Speak normally, clearly and directly
- Concentrate on what’s being said
- Be patient, don’t interrupt and don’t finish your customer’s sentences
- Don’t try to guess what your customer is saying. If you don’t understand, don’t pretend. Just ask again
- If you’re not certain what was said, just repeat or rephrase what you’ve heard
- If a telephone customer is using an interpreter or a TTY line, just speak normally to the customer, not to the interpreter
- If your customer is having difficulty communicating, make arrangements to call back when it’s convenient to speak with someone else

Serving Customers who are Hearing Impaired

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss varies with individuals.

- Attract your customer’s attention before speaking – wave or gently touch the person on the shoulder or arm
- Always ask how you can help. Don’t shout.
- Let the person take the lead in establishing the communication mode, such as lip-reading, sign language, or writing notes
- Be prepared to use pen and paper if

required

- Remove as many noise distractions as possible
- Speak clearly and don’t cover your mouth or speak when your back is turned
- Always make sure you’re facing the customer when you speak to them, so that they can read your lips if they need to
- Avoid standing in front of a light source such as a window; otherwise your face will be shadowed and speech reading will be more difficult
- Reduce background noise if the person uses a hearing aid
- Have available and know how to use Bell Relay Service, and make sure assistive devices are properly installed
- Don’t touch or address service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times
- Any personal (e.g., financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing
- Be patient. Communication for people who are deaf may be different because their first language may not be English. It may even be American Sign Language (ASL)

Serving Customers who are Vision Impaired

Vision disabilities reduce or eliminate one’s ability to see clearly. Vision disabilities can restrict your customers’ abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane.

- When greeting the person, identify yourself and introduce others who may be present
- Speak directly to the customer
- Speak normally and clearly
- Answer all questions verbally. Non-verbal communication, such as a nod, may not be noticed
- Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it’s an emergency.
- Don’t distract service animals. They are working at all times. For example, do not pet or give food to a service animal
- Be precise and descriptive with information
- Describe the layout of the area, especially any obstacles like stairs or furniture
- Be specific when describing the location of objects. (Example: "There is a chair three feet from you at eleven o'clock.")
- Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location. Place the person’s hand on the back of the chair
- If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission
- When asked to guide someone with a sight disability, never push or pull the person
- Offer your elbow to guide, then walk slightly ahead at a slow pace
- Point out doors, stairs, curbs, or other landmarks as you approach them
- Do not leave the person without excusing yourself first

Continued on reverse.