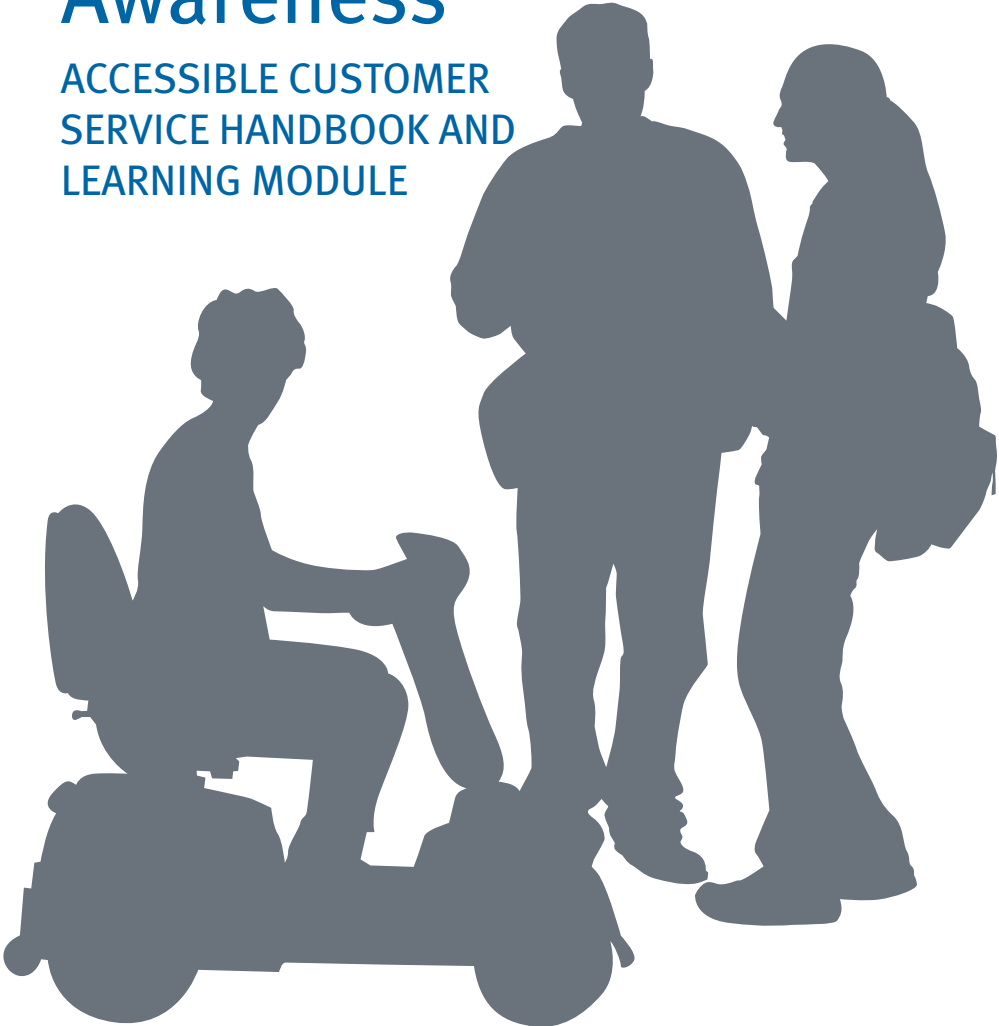




University
of Windsor

Accessibility Awareness

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER
SERVICE HANDBOOK AND
LEARNING MODULE



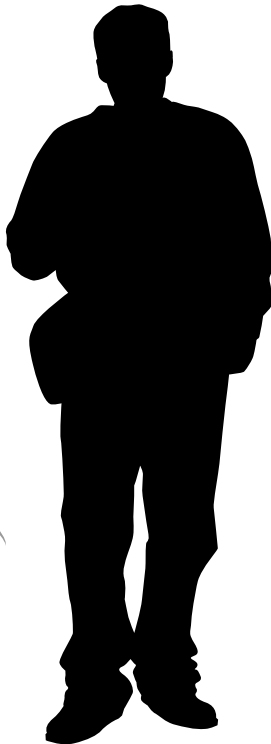
A Guide for Faculty/Staff, Student Employees,
Volunteers and Third-party Service Providers

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Sometimes the worst thing about having a disability is that people meet it before they meet you.



Accessible Customer Service

This guide was created to assist faculty/staff, student employees, volunteers and third-party contractors when interacting with persons with various types of disabilities.

Did you know:

- In 2007 there were 4.4 million (14.3%) Canadians with disabilities
- 1.85 million (15.5%) of those people live in Ontario
- By 2025, one in five Ontarians (20%) will be aged 65 and older
- It is believed that 40% of those people aged 65 and older will have a disability of one form or another

Why Do You Need This Training?

In 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was passed by the provincial government. Under this Act, and the Integrated Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 191/11, all faculty/staff, student employees, volunteers and third-party contractors who interact with the public, must receive this training. Once you have read this booklet, you must complete the quiz attached. Upon completion of the quiz, please ensure you keep the completed quiz on file.

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.

The Four Principles of Accessible Customer Service

1. Dignity
2. Independence
3. Integration
4. Equality of Opportunity

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, for example doorknobs, workstations, playgrounds

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

Information and communication: inadequate signage, printed materials, computer screens, fax transmissions that are difficult to read

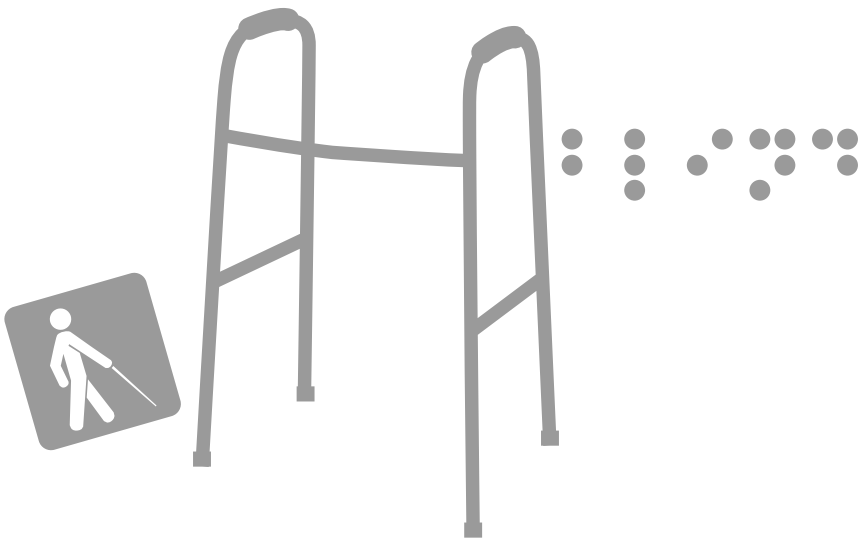
Policy (Systemic): rules, regulations, and protocols that prevent a person from doing their job as well as possible or that restrict public participation

Attitude: discriminatory behaviours; lack of knowledge

Technology: computers, photocopiers, telephones

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.



Respectful Language & Images

Language

Language is a powerful and important tool in shaping ideas, perceptions and ultimately, public attitudes. Words are a mirror of society's attitudes and perceptions. Attitudes can be the most difficult barriers persons with disabilities face in achieving full integration, acceptance and participation in society.

Everyday Terminology

Persons with disabilities are comfortable with terminology used to describe daily living activities. Do not be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as “See you later” or “Got to be running along” that seem to relate to the person's disability. Persons who use wheelchairs go for “walks,” people with visual impairments “see” what you mean, etc. A disability may just mean that some things must be done in a different manner; however, that does not mean the words used to describe the activity must be different.

Accessible Washrooms and Parking Spots

Washrooms and parking spots that are designed to provide access to persons with disabilities are called accessible washrooms and accessible parking spots. Historically, washrooms and parking spots that were designed to accommodate persons with disabilities were called ‘handicapped’, but that term is outdated and should not be used when describing accessible features used by persons with disabilities.

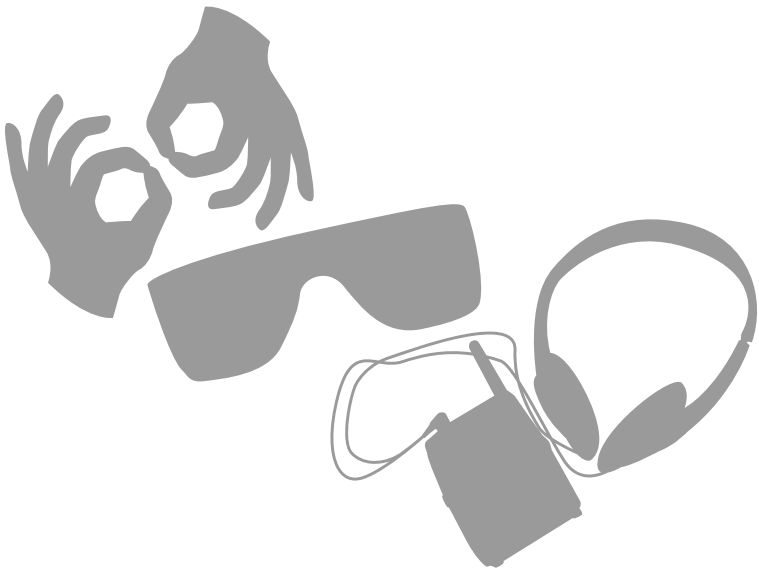
Disruptions in Service

It is possible from time to time that there will be disruptions in service, such as an elevator under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, or technology that is temporarily unavailable. It is important to provide reasonable notice if a disruption in service is planned or expected. People with disabilities often go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transit or arranging a ride. By providing notice, you can save that person an unnecessary trip. Notice can be given using the University's website, by telephone, or in writing. Provide notice in a variety of ways, as quickly as possible and offer alternative methods of service.

Terminology Guide Concerning Persons with Disabilities

The terminology used to articulate disabilities has changed over the years. When describing persons with disabilities, it is important to remember to use the term “person with” prior to the disability; persons with disabilities are people first. The following are terms that are currently used:

Type of Disability	Terminology
Blind, Low Vision	Person who is blind, person with a visual impairment
Hearing Impairment	Person who is hard of hearing, person who has a hearing impairment, person who is deaf. While culturally linguistically deaf people (that is, sign language users) are properly identified as “the Deaf” (upper case “D”), people who do not use sign language are properly referred to as “the deaf” (lower case “d”) or people who are deaf.
Intellectual	Person with an intellectual disability. One can say “a person with Down’s Syndrome” only if relevant to the situation.
Learning	Person with a learning disability, person with dyslexia
Mental Health	Person with a mental health disability, person who has schizophrenia, person who has depression
Mobility	Person with a disability, person who uses a wheelchair, person with a mobility impairment



Respectful Customer Service

When providing customer service, here are some best practices for you to follow to ensure you are providing respectful and accessible service:

- Be polite, introduce yourself, and ask how you can help.
- Relax – no need for nervousness – people with disabilities are just people.
- Anyone can make mistakes, so just do your best. Offer an apology if you forget some courtesy, and ask for help if you need it.
- Take the time to get to know your customers as some disabilities are not visible.
- Ask before you offer to help. Customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it. Wait until your offer is accepted before trying to assist.
- Be considerate of the extra time it may take some customers to do or say some things: patience, optimism, and willingness are your best communication tools.
- Schedule adequate time for activities, discussion, or meetings, and if necessary, take breaks at suitable intervals.
- Focus on the person’s needs and what service you can offer to meet those needs.
- Don’t make assumptions about a person’s disability.
- Don’t patronize or talk down to a person with disability, or assume that they won’t understand you. Some kinds of disabilities may cause customers to take longer to understand and respond.
- Don’t shout, use big hand gestures, or speak extra slowly to someone who is hard of hearing or has difficulty understanding, just speak clearly.
- Don’t assume an intellectual disability when you are communicating with someone who has a disability.
- Treat assistive devices as part of one’s personal space.
- Ask permission before touching an assistive device such as a wheelchair, walker or service animal.
- Don’t push a person’s wheelchair if you haven’t been asked.
- Never lean on or hang things from a person’s wheelchair.

T Take time to ask “How may I help you?”
A Ask – don’t assume
L Listen and speak directly to a person with a disability
K Know how to accommodate

Providing respectful customer service is the cornerstone of accessible customer service. All customers, including persons with or without disabilities, want to be treated with respect; this culture of respect helps to facilitate a welcoming environment to all persons.

Respectful Communication

- Speak directly to the customer, even when they are accompanied by an interpreter or assistant.
- Ask the individual what their communication preference is (i.e. writing, speech-reading, interpreter, etc.)
- Be aware that some people may require written information to be provided in different formats, such as electronic, large font, Braille or audio. Verbal instructions can also be very helpful.

Listening with Respect:

- Allow the person with a disability time to explain the problem/concern in his/her own words.
- Pay attention to all non-verbal behaviour. If a person seems disoriented or distressed, ask what you can do to help.

Speaking with Respect:

- Ask clarifying questions to get a full and clear understanding, or ask for clarity if you are not sure what someone wants.
- Look at your customer, but don’t stare.
- Use plain language and speak with short basic sentences using a limited but appropriate vocabulary.
- When giving instructions or directions be precise, and break down into individual steps by supplying one piece of information at a time.
- Be prepared to repeat and rephrase if not understood.

- If you can't understand what someone is saying, politely ask again or try another means of communication, like writing notes or simply following and reading body language (hand or facial expressions).
- If you are unable to communicate with a person due to their disability, contact someone in the department or on campus who can help you find a solution.



Service Animals

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, University staff and faculty 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.

If you have questions about dealing with service animals, please refer to the “Policy on Presence of Service Animals on Campus” or contact the Office of Human Rights, Equity and Accessibility for Assistance.

Portraying Persons with Disabilities

When portraying persons with disabilities, there is no need to use images that isolate or call special attention to persons with disabilities, unless appropriate to the subject matter. One should use images that show persons with disabilities participating in society; use actors or models with disabilities to portray persons with disabilities and whenever possible, portray the typical individual who has a disability, not a ‘super-achieving’ individual.

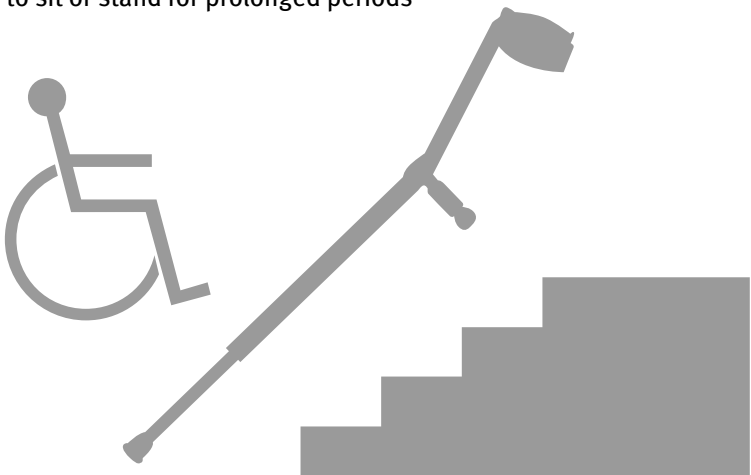
Content adapted from “A Way with Words & Images”, Social Development Canada, 2007.

How Physical Disabilities May Affect Mobility

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Physical disabilities can be present at birth, result from disease or injury, or be temporary in nature. They may restrict a person in the following ways:

- Control or speed of movements
- Coordination and balance
- Ability to grasp some objects
- Ability to walk long distances
- Ability to sit or stand for prolonged periods



Serving People with Physical Disabilities Who Use a Wheelchair

- Try to put yourself at eye level and speak directly to the person.
- If a counter is not low enough to be reached by a wheelchair user, come around to the front of the counter to talk to the person and offer a stable surface for them to write on if needed.
- Make sure the physical space in which you serve customers can accommodate wheelchairs and other assistive devices. e.g. walker.
- Know where accessible telephones, washrooms, water fountains, and eating areas are located.
- When giving directions to a person in a wheelchair, consider distance, weather conditions, and physical obstacles (ie. curbs, stairs, steep hills, etc.)
- Respect their personal space. Don't touch, lean on, hang things on, or push or pull their wheelchairs unnecessarily, unless it is an emergency.



Serving People with Disabilities Who Do Not Use a Wheelchair

- Speak directly to the person, not their support person.
- Ask before you help, as people with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
- Describe what you are going to do beforehand. e.g. “I’m going to hold your elbow to help you across the street”.
- Be patient. The individual will identify their needs to you
- Respect personal space.
- Don’t touch any assistive devices unnecessarily, unless it is an emergency
- Don’t move any of their items.
- Provide you’re the person with information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- Be mindful of furniture or equipment that may be an obstacle and re-arrange as necessary.
- Don’t leave anyone in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position.

Serving People with Disabilities that Affect Speech

Some people have problems communicating, which could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or an inability to express oneself or comprehend written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

- Don’t make assumptions.
- Just because a person has one disability doesn’t mean they have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking, don’t assume they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well
- Ask yes or no questions, if possible.
- Be prepared to use pen and paper if needed.
- Pay attention, be patient, and wait for the person to complete a word or thought. Give you’re the person whatever time he or she needs to get his or her point across. Do not finish sentences for the person.

- Ask the person to repeat what is said, if you do not understand. Tell the person what you heard and see if it is close to what he or she is saying.
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Be prepared for various devices or techniques used to enhance or augment speech. Don't be afraid to communicate with someone who uses an alphabet board or a computer with synthesized speech.
- Ask the person to repeat what is said, if you do not understand. Tell the person what you heard and see if it is close to what he or she is saying
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools
- Be prepared for various devices or techniques used to enhance or augment speech. Don't be afraid to communicate with someone who uses an alphabet board or a computer with synthesized speech

Serving People Who Have Disabilities Affecting Speech over the Phone

- Speak normally, clearly and directly.
- Concentrate on what's being said.
- Be patient, don't interrupt and don't finish a person's sentences.
- Don't try to guess what the person 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 person is using an interpreter or a TTY (telephone) line, just speak normally to the customer, not to the interpreter.
- If the person is having difficulty communicating, make arrangements to call back when it's convenient to speak with someone else.

Serving People with Hearing Impairments

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

- Attract the person'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 person when you speak to them, so that they can read your lips if required.
- 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 People who are Hearing Impaired over the Phone

- Speak normally, clearly and directly.
- Concentrate on what's being said.
- Be patient, don't interrupt and don't finish someone's sentences.
- Don't try to guess what the person 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 the person is having difficulty communicating, make arrangements to call back when it's convenient to speak with someone else.

Serving People with Vision Impairments

Vision disabilities reduce or eliminate one's ability to see clearly. Vision disabilities can restrict you're a person's 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 person.
- Speak normally and clearly.
- Answer all questions verbally. Non-verbal communication, such as a nod, may not be noticed.
- Never touch a person 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 a person 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.
- Explain doors, stairs, curbs, or other landmarks as you approach them.
- Do not leave the person without excusing yourself first.

Serving People 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 intervener, a professional who helps with communicating that involves touching the person's hands.

- Speak directly to the person.
- 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.

Serving People with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn, communicate, do everyday activities, and live independently. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or use body language. As much as possible, treat people with intellectual or developmental disabilities like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.

- Speak directly to your person, not to their companion or attendant.
- Use plain language.
- Speak in short sentences.
- Take your time, be patient.
- If you can't understand what's being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- Ask "Do you understand?" after giving information
- Provide one piece of information at a time, step-by-step instructions.
- Offer information in simpler concepts.

Serving People Who Have Intellectual, Developmental or Learning Disabilities over the Phone

- Speak normally, clearly and directly.
- Concentrate on what's being said.
- Be patient, don't interrupt and don't finish a person's sentences.
- Don't try to guess what the person 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, just speak normally to the customer, not to the interpreter.
- If the person is having difficulty communicating, make arrangements to call back when it's convenient to speak with someone else.

Serving People with Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities can result in a host of different communication difficulties for people. You may not know that someone has one of these disabilities unless told, or you notice by the way a person acts, asks questions or use body language. Learning disabilities affect how a person acquires, interprets and retains information.

In many cases persons with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence. Learning disabilities may affect language-based learning, mathematics, writing and fine motor skills.

Tips:

- Demonstrate a willingness to assist and to find a way to communicate.
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- Speak normally, clearly and directly to the person.
- Take some time; people with some kinds of learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Provide information in a way that works for the individual (e.g. pen and paper).
- Be prepared to explain any materials you provide.

Serving Customers with Mental Health Disabilities

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You may not know that someone has a mental health disability unless informed. Usually it will not affect your customer service at all. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to provide assistance. Be calm and professional and let the person tell you how you can best help.

Mental health disabilities are defined as the absence of psychological well-being and satisfactory adjustment to society. Some common features of mental health disabilities include phobias, panic attacks, hallucinations, mood swings and Bipolar disorders (depression and manic phases).

Tips:

- Treat each individual with the same level of respect and consideration.
- Be confident and reassuring.
- Listen carefully and work with the person to meet their needs.
- Do not be confrontational.
- If the person is in a crisis, ask how best to help.
- Don't take things personally.

Serving People with Disabling Conditions

Some customers have disabilities that do not fall into the categories previously discussed.

Disabling conditions include:

- **SMELL:** inability to sense smells, or hypersensitivity to odours and smells.
- **TOUCH:** affects a person's ability to sense texture, temperature, vibration, or pressure, whether the ability is reduced or hypersensitive.
- **TASTE:** can limit the experience of the four taste sensations (sweet, bitter, salty, sour)
- Some disabilities may result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses and diseases, including asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke, and joint replacement.

Tips:

- Always ask courteously.
- Be patient.

The University of Windsor's Accessible Customer Service Policy

To fulfill the University's ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive campus, the Accessible Customer Service policy was approved in 2010.

The policy can be found online at:

www.uwindsor.ca/ohrea/sites/uwindsor.ca/ohreafiles/accessible_customer_service_policypdf.

By providing service that welcomes people with disabilities, you can offer better service to everyone. Treating all persons you encounter with individual respect and courtesy is at the heart of the accessible customer service policy. By learning how to serve people with differing disabilities, you can improve your service to everyone.

For more information please visit:

www.uwindsor.ca/ohrea/accessibility

*Please complete the
Accessibility Awareness Quiz online at:
www.uwindsor.ca/ohrea/57/accessibility_training*