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
**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.*

**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.mcss.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, 1977; (“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