

AODA Training Script – Scouts Canada



Opening

Welcome to Scouts Canada's Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) Customer Service Training Program which was designed to review the legislative requirements. Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass such legislation and is leading the way to develop, implement and enforce standards to make Ontario more accessible for everyone, especially person with disabilities.

Course Details

This training session should run approximately 45 minutes. Upon successful completion, Scouts Canada will be notified that you have completed the program.

Learning Objectives

This training program has been designed to:

- Review of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005,
- Review of the requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.
- Provide you instructions on how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- Provide you instructions on how to interact with people with disabilities who: use assistive devices; require the use of a service dog or other service animal; or require a support person; and finally,
- Provide you instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our programs and services.

Overview of AODA Legislation

The purpose of the AODA is to break down barriers and obstacles that keep people with disabilities from easily managing basic activities such as getting groceries, traveling and integrating into the workforce. The legislation includes:

- achieving a fully accessible Ontario by 2025
- developing accessibility standards
- enforcing the standards
- covering both the public and private sectors

The 5 Stages

The AODA is comprised of 5 standards that will be rolled out in three stages to cover the following key areas:

- **Stage One is Accessible Customer Service** – This standard will address and remove barriers to accessing services, programs and goods.
- **Stage Two is the Integrated Accessibility Standards which includes:**

- **Information and Communication** – This standard will look at information being provided in person, through print, a website and other means.
- **Transportation** – This standard will focus on reducing the barriers to public transportation.
- **Employment** – This standard will look at recruitment, hiring and retention.
- **Stage Three is the Built Environment** – This standard will reduce barriers within buildings and outdoor spaces by building on Ontario's Building Code.

Customer Service Standards

The first accessibility standard, Customer Service, came into effect on January 1, 2008. The intent of this standard is to provide easy access for persons with disabilities to access goods and services through increased awareness. Employers and employees must understand that customers with disabilities may have different needs and business practices must recognize ways to make goods and services available to all customers, including those with disabilities.

What Does This Really Mean?

Organizations and individuals are expected to meet the new standard of actively practicing Accessible Customer Service with all customers. There are stiff penalties for not complying with these laws. . Besides being simply the 'right' thing to do and upholding organizational values, this training is designed to help us get better at enriching the service we provide to all people, including those with disabilities.

What is a disability?

The Human Rights Code and AODA defines disability* as:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- 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")'.

Customer Service Standards Requirements

The AODA Customer Service Accessibility Standard requires that an employer:

- create and maintain accessible Customer Service policies, procedures and practices,
- provide staff/volunteer training,
- create a feedback method,
- arrange for alternate communication methods, and
- provide appropriate notice of service disruptions.

Accessible Customer Service

Accessible Customer Service, under AODA, means creating a positive customer service atmosphere for people with disabilities by:

- Respecting their dignity and independence
- Ensuring customers with disabilities have an equal opportunity to obtain and use goods and services
- Allowing persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way to other customers

Defining Customers

Typically when we think of the word "Customers" we immediately consider it a person wishing to purchase goods or services from another person or business. However, customers can come in many different forms and could be considered: guests of the establishment, members of a club or group, participants in a program, vendors of a company, students of a school and/or clients of a business.

Customer Service Principles

Under the Accessible Customer Service Standard, employees, volunteers and organizations must constantly and consistently apply four principles: Dignity, Independence, Integration and Equal Opportunity. These principles align directly with our values and should be considered a basic requirement and should be reflected in everything that we do.

Let's review each principle statement in more detail.

Dignity

Every customer shall be treated with respect and will receive the same level of goods, service, and attention.

Independence

Providing independence to all customers will mean that each customer is given the freedom to do things on his/her own without offering unnecessary help or interference to expedite the process.

Integration

Incorporating integration will mean that all customers are able to access our goods and services in the same way - free from separation and barriers.

Equal Opportunity

Employees will ensure that each customer is provided the same opportunities. This does not necessarily mean that all customers will be given the exact same service every single time but rather that employees will recognize and adapt their approach to ensure each customer receives

the same value and quality.

Terminology

Based on the principles reviewed on the previous slides, it is important to use respectful terminology when referring to individuals with disabilities and when discussing types of disabilities. When referring to someone with a disability, it is extremely important that you put the person first and not address or identify him/her by the disability. For example:

- Say “a person with a disability” rather than a “disabled person”
- Say “a person with a physical disability” rather than a “handicapped person”
- Say “a person with vision loss” rather than a “blind person”

Always show respect for the person first when addressing a person with a disability.

Barriers

The purpose of the legislation is to remove barriers. Barriers are obstacles that make it difficult for individuals with disabilities to carry out everyday activities. Barriers can be:

- **Physical or Architectural** – such as aisles that are too tight or cluttered for a person in a wheelchair or with an assistive device to maneuver or poor lighting that makes it difficult for a person with limited vision to see
- **Information/Communication** – such as reading signs and written documents
- **Attitudinal** – such as preconceived thoughts or attitudes such as feeling sad or assuming that a person with a disability cannot do something,
- **Technological** – such as telephones and the internet, and
- **Organizational** – such as no pet policies that are discriminatory to individuals who have a service animal

Responsibilities

Individuals with disabilities may have different needs. It is important to determine those needs in a way that allows all customers to keep their independence and dignity intact. Don't assume what is needed, but ask how you can help and wait patiently for the person to tell you.

Understanding Disabilities

As you might imagine, living with a disability can pose some challenges. However, many people with a disability do not see their situation as limited or even consider themselves disabled. A famous quote by Robert Hensel states; "I choose not to place a "dis" in my ability." In fact, it is society that creates and causes barriers or perceptions that do not need to exist. Due to these barriers, seemingly ordinary, everyday activities such as traveling to familiar and unfamiliar places, grocery shopping, interacting with others, reading, getting dressed and asking for assistance can all present challenges.

For example, think about the aging population. While older people may not see themselves as disabled, it is possible that they may need extra support or time. Perhaps they have trouble with their hearing or eyesight. Perhaps they have encountered a health problem such as stroke which

makes speech or communication more difficult. It is important for us to do everything we can to learn about how to best serve all people.

Types of Disabilities

When most people hear the word disability they think of physical disabilities such as an individual who uses a wheelchair. In fact, there are numerous other disabilities including many that are invisible or episodic and disabilities can vary in degree and seriousness. Regardless of the severity of the disability, the many types can be summarized in this list:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Physical
- Intellectual
- Developmental
- Learning
- Mental health
- Speech or language, and
- Deaf-blind

Vision Disabilities

There are different types of vision disabilities and different levels of severity. Vision loss reduces a person's ability to see clearly; however, very few people with vision loss are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some people can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.

Vision loss can affect a person's ability to read or navigate and can cause trouble with depth-perception. Sometimes it may be difficult to tell if a person has vision loss. Individuals with vision disabilities may face barriers that include not being able to maneuver tight spaces or stairwells; additional time to recognize changes to the environment and difficulties understanding pointing or motioning in a general direction.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting people with vision disabilities:

- Identify yourself so the person knows who is talking, offer assistance, but wait until the person accepts your offer or makes a request.
- When providing written material, offer to read or summarize it.
- If you need to leave the person to get something, let them know where you are going and when you will return.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, e.g. two steps behind you, to your right and so forth.
- Before opening the door, ask if they want you to open it. Indicate whether the doors open to the left or right and if it is pulled or pushed.

- If a person requests assistance with guiding or mobility:
 - Offer your arm, asking which arm is better and ask for further directions on how to proceed.
 - Walk at a pace that works for the person and verbally advise of obstacles and the environment such as; announcing handrails, doors, stairs and describing the surrounding areas.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Similar to other disabilities, there are varying degrees of hearing loss ranging from missing certain words, sounds or frequencies to complete hearing loss. People who identify as “Deaf” use sign language to communicate and identify as a cultural minority, rather than seeing themselves as disabled. They are bi-lingual with sign language as their native language and the spoken language as their second language. Deaf people are proud of their language and culture and signal it with a capital “D.”

The major difference between people who are Deaf and people who are hard of hearing is that Deaf people use their eyes and visual sense for communicating – generally sign language, while people who are hard of hearing still use their ears and their auditory sense. Some barriers that individuals with hearing disabilities might face include; not hearing others approaching them; not responding to alarms or other emergency situations and not understanding speech in a noisy environment.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing:

- People who are Deaf or hard of hearing may communicate in various ways such as sign language, speech, and writing. Follow the customer’s lead in communicating.
- If the person writes, respond in writing. Have paper and pen handy if the person gestures they want to write.
- If the person responds by talking and lip reading, look directly at them and enunciate clearly in a normal tone of voice. Keep your hands or any objects away from your mouth and face. Rephrase or substitute words rather than repeat yourself again and again.
- Avoid directly asking the person if they lip read as this is culturally offensive to many.
- Pointing is perfectly acceptable in the Deaf community. Feel free to point products or information.
- In emergency situations assist the individual in recognizing and responding to the emergency;
- Persons relying on the use of a hearing aid may find it difficult to hear in a noisy environment, suggest moving to a quieter location.

Deaf-Blind

Deaf-blind is a combination of hearing and vision loss that poses challenges with communication and getting around. Some people who are deaf-blind will have a little sight or hearing, while others will have neither, but rely on their other senses. People who are deaf-blind may communicate in a variety of ways including sign language, tactile sign language, Braille, communication devices, communication boards. Deaf-blindness affects access to information, it

does not signal a person's intelligence.

Some people who are deaf-blind have additional disabilities like a developmental disability. These individuals often use the services of an Intervener to relay information, facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides. The Intervener is trained in communication with people who are deaf-blind. Some barriers that individuals might face include; accessing information, maneuvering around tight spaces and communicating needs or questions.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting individuals who are deaf-blind include:

- Understand that communication can take some time and be patient;
- Ask what would make the person the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible;
- Avoid sudden movements or touching of the customer that may catch him/her off guard, unless it is an emergency.

Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities can also come in many forms and degrees of severity. The most visible would include persons using a wheelchair or persons with amputations. However, many physical disabilities are not visible or may even be episodic in nature. For example, persons who have heart disease, asthma or lung disease may not show visible signs most of the time but occasionally suffer from their disabilities. Some barriers individuals with physical disabilities might face include; not being able to reach high counters or products and not being able to stand for long periods of time or becoming light-headed without notice.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting people with physical disabilities:

- Always ask before touching or moving any assistive device;
- Ensure the environment is clear and free of obstacles;
- If you are providing one-to-one support, consider pulling up a chair and talking to the customer at their eye level.

Speech or Language Disabilities

An individual could have speech or language disabilities resulting from conditions such as cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or other conditions that make it difficult to clearly pronounce words or communicate with written or spoken language. They also may prevent the person from expressing themselves or prevent them from understanding written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting people with speech or language disabilities:

- If you don't understand, it is okay to ask the person to repeat the information;
- Consider asking closed-ended questions inviting a "yes" or "no" response;

- Be understanding and reassuring.

Mental Health Disabilities

Often times, you will not be aware that you are dealing with a person who has a mental health disability. However, you may encounter an individual who is in crisis or is struggling and you need to know how to assist. Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, as well as bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders. This may be noticed by: increased anxiety, panic attacks, sudden mood swings, hallucinations, inability to think clearly, difficulty remembering and poor concentration.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting individuals with mental health disabilities:

- Listening skills are important when dealing with such situations as you need to understand the real issue to know how you can offer help.
- Ask how you can help and try to work with the person to find a solution.
- Be confident, patient and reassuring.

Example

Anxiety is a symptom that we can all relate to. For example, public speaking, handling work and home pressures, having difficult conversations and doing things outside of our comfort zone can sometimes bring on uncomfortable feelings or stress but generally pass once we have completed the task.

Many individuals with mental health disorders generally deal with constant anxiety that is intense and produces strong feelings of fright, distress, worry, stress and confusion for no obvious reason, making daily tasks seem next to impossible. One in six Canadians have experienced mental health issues at some point in their life. Learning how to provide service that supports each individual and makes everyone feel valued and welcome is one way to assist in reducing anxiety.

Intellectual 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 the person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs. You may not know that someone has this type of disability unless you are told.

As much as possible, treat the person with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate that you treat them with respect. Some barriers that individuals with intellectual disabilities might face include; difficulties understanding written documents and confusion when large, quick amounts of information are shared.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting people with intellectual disabilities:

- Provide examples when sharing and providing information.
- Remember that the person can make his or her own decisions.
- Be patient and verify understanding.
- Provide information in smaller chunks.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are generally invisible and can vary greatly from person to person. Learning disabilities can affect verbal and non-verbal information acquisition, retention, understanding and processing. People with a learning disability have average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in difficulties with reading, counting money, problem solving, time management, way finding and processing information.

Best Practice Tips

Best practice tips for assisting people with learning disabilities

- Respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in completing forms and tasks with courtesy.
- If necessary, allow extra time to complete tasks and projects.

Talking to People with Disabilities over the Phone

Service can take many forms - it can be in person, over the telephone or through the internet. Depending on the method of delivery, service may have to be adjusted and altered to address an individual's specific type of disability. When speaking with people by phone, you do not have the opportunity to visibly identify persons with disabilities although some types of disabilities may be apparent. Good service should apply to all individuals whether in person or over the phone.

Best Practice tips would include:

- Speak normally using clear plain language, don't shout, and listen carefully.
- Avoid interrupting or interjecting to finish sentences. Patiently wait while the person explains themselves.
- It is okay to politely ask the person to repeat information, if you do not understand.
- When using a TTY phone or message relay service, remember to speak as you would normally addressing the person and not the operator

Providing Service at the Customer's Home

Depending on our business and role sometimes you might be seeing customers at their home or another location. When visiting a customer's home it is important to be mindful of our actions. Customers that rely on the design or set up of their home might not notice if you move an object such as the coffee table to make more room or if you change locations, rather than creating unneeded barriers consider these best practice tips for when visiting customers at home.

Best Practice tips would include:

- Confirm when you will arrive in advance.
- Be patient, it may take the person longer to answer the door.

- Introduce yourself clearly including what company you are from.
- If you do need to move the person's items, ask permission, tell customer what you are doing and why and ensure that everything is returned to how it was when you arrived.

Customer Service Principles

Knowing what to say and how to act is the key to providing service under the core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. Increased service will allow individuals with disabilities to fully integrate into society as everyone will be treated fairly and equally. Over the next few slides, we are going to review some common scenarios and myths. Please reflect on each statement and select the response you believe to be accurate.

Scenario #1

When a person arrives with a support person, it is best practice to speak directly to the support person in order to offer assistance?

- True
- False

Scenario #1 Answer

False. You should always direct your conversation to the customer and not the support person. Acknowledge the support person, but speak directly to the customer.

Scenario #2

If a customer arrives with a white cane or guide dog, I should jump in and help them either by guiding them into the room, helping them get seated and/or bringing products to them.

- True
- False

Scenario #2 Answer

False. Assuming that a customer with a disability is incapable of accomplishing a task implies that he/she cannot do it on his/her own, and goes against the customer's right to independence. Some of the most successful people in the world are also considered disabled. It is okay to anticipate any customer's needs that may require additional support however ask and wait for the person to accept your offer.

Overview

If you answered any of the previous questions incorrectly, you aren't alone as many people struggle with finding the right way to serve individuals with disabilities. This training component was designed to walk you through various scenarios, provide you best practice tips and assist you in taking appropriate action when customers arrive with services animals, support

person or assistive devices.

Service Animals

A customer may arrive with a service animal. In the majority of cases this will be a dog; however, there have been cases of service animals that are monkeys, parrots and other animals that offer critical assistance to persons with disabilities.

How Service Animals Provide Assistance

Service animals offer a variety of types of assistance including:

- Autism assistance to prevent a child from running into danger and responding when sensory stimulus is heightened;
- Guiding by following the directions of owner, alerting owner of changes in elevation and of obstacles;
- Psychiatric services by retrieving and prompting person to take medicine, activating medical alert and leading the person out of crowds;
- Hearing by alerting the owner to sounds, leading them to the source of the sound and by using a special signal to alert the owner of fire alarms or emergency situations;
- Mobility by pulling wheelchairs, carrying objects, turning handles, activating push buttons and providing balance; and/or
- Seizure assistance by steering the owner away from danger during a seizure, activating medical alert and notifying the owner of an oncoming seizure.

General Rules for Handling Service Animals

General Rules for Handling Service Animals would include:

- Ensure the customer and their service animal are not separated
- Avoid touching, petting or talking to the animal – when the animal is out with the customer, it is working and should not be distracted
- Get permission before providing water or anything else to the animal

Over the next few slides, we will review some common questions about service animals and recommended actions to take in each situation.

Identifying a Service Animal

What if I cannot clearly identify that the animal is a service animal? (For example, no special harness.)

A: If you are not sure if the animal is in fact a service animal, ask the customer. Verification may include:

- A letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- A valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or
- A certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

What if the animal becomes disruptive or out of control?

A: It is the owner's responsibility to maintain control. If the animal is becoming disruptive ask the person if you can do anything to assist them in regaining control – for example, offering them a private location to calm the animal. Remember that you should never touch the animal or have to clean up after it.

Are there locations or areas that the service animal should not be permitted?

A: The Health Protection and Promotion Act provides strict guidelines around animals and food. However, service dogs including guide dogs because of the nature of their work, are permitted in locations where food is served, sold and offered for sale. They still are not permitted in locations where food is manufactured, prepared or processed.

What if another person is severely allergic to the animal?

A: It is your duty to accommodate both people. You would need to devise an accommodation plan that will work for both individuals. Consider talking to both of them to determine if they can be in separate areas while still receiving the same service and access.

Support Persons

Some customers may require the assistance of a support person. A support person is an individual hired or chosen to accompany a person with a disability to provide service or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or to access services. Personal care needs may include, but are not limited to, assistance with eating or using the washroom. Medical needs might include: ensuring medication is taken on time, monitoring someone's health conditions and providing injections. A support person can be a paid worker, volunteer, family member or friend and does not necessarily require any special training or certification to offer support.

General Tips for Working with a Support Person

General tips for working with a support person:

- Introduce yourself to both the customer and support person
- Talk directly to the customer, even if the support person is responding
- Address the customer appropriately such as asking: "How can I help you today" as opposed to asking the support person "Can you find out what they need?"
- Don't try to have side conversations with the support person
- Provide any written materials to both the customer and the support person
- Ensure the customer and the support person are not separated
- Get permission from the customer prior to discussing confidential information

Assistive Devices

Some customers might also need assistive devices to assist them in accessing our goods or services. Assistive devices can enable them to do everyday tasks such as moving, communicating, reading or lifting. Here are a few examples of devices that could be used: white

canes, wheelchairs, walkers, listening devices, hearing aids, magnification devices, portable oxygen tanks, laptops with screen-reading software and communication programs, communication boards, smart phones and speech generating devices.

General Tips for Working with Assistive Devices

- Be open and willing to work with assistive devices
- Focus on the customer and not the device.
- Ensure the customer and assistive device have the appropriate amount of space
- Avoid blocking, knocking or bumping into assistive devices

Addressing Accessibility Concerns

In cases where accessibility might be an issue or where some assistive devices are hindered due to structure, the business will be required to look at and implement other measures in order to ensure the guest still has access to good and services. For example, accessibility might be an issue if your business has areas that are tight or do not support the use of particular assistive devices. If your business has stairs but not an elevator, guests requiring assistive devices to assist with mobility, will have problems accessing your goods and services. In these situations, businesses should look at alternative ways to offer their goods and services.

Service Disruptions

Service disruptions happen for many reasons and can cause serious upset, hardship and disappointment. Service disruptions can include: broken elevator, cancelled meeting, unplanned closures, construction barriers and inaccessible parking. Disruptions should be communicated, immediately and in a variety of methods. You should indicate when services will resume and suggest alternatives to be used during the disruption.

Tips for Notifying of Disruption in Service

- Posting at the main entrances and the source of the disruption
- Phone and/or email a notification to regular customers or customers with scheduled appointments
- Include the service disruption on the company's website

What should I do if the elevator stops working or another service disruption happens while I am working?

A: Any service disruption should take top priority. Ensure that no one is trapped or stuck because of the disruption. Notify the proper person, companies and potential customers of the disruption. Post visible and easy to read signs at all entrances and at the disruption site that notifies visitors of the issue.

Customer Feedback

The final piece of the customer service standard is accepting and responding to customer feedback. After all, customer comments can lead to improved service, increased clientele and a

reduction in complaints. Establishing a variety of methods to offer feedback such as in person, by phone or through email will mean that all customers will have the opportunity to supply their input into the organization.

Summary

By constantly applying the requirements under the AODA and the customer service standards we are furthering our commitment by ensuring that our doors are open to all people and that each customer is treated with dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. Together we will make a better Ontario!

Wrap Up

We have reached the end of our training and covered a lot of information in this course. I hope you have enjoyed our presentation and feel comfortable with delivering accessible customer service. Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this training