

E-ORIENTATION



ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

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The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requires all service providers, including health care institutions, to remove barriers faced by individuals with disabilities when accessing their services. WRH is committed to providing accessible service for all patients, families and visitors in a manner that respects the individual's **dignity** and **independence** as well as ensuring **equal opportunity** to obtain, use or benefit from services provided within the organization.

What is a Disability?

- a) Any degree of physical infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect, or illness e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, brain injury, paralysis, amputation, visual/hearing/speech impediment, or physical reliance on a service animal/wheelchair/other device
- b) A condition of mental impairment or developmental disability e.g. Down's Syndrome
- c) A learning disability e.g. dyslexia
- d) A mental disorder e.g. anxiety
- e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997



Providing Customer Service to a Person with a Physical Disability

Give the person time to move or carry out tasks

Offer assistance in completing forms, arranging transportation, etc.

Consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level

Do not leave a person in a wheelchair in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of an open door

Don't touch items or equipment, such as personal canes or wheelchairs, without permission

Be open with the individual about accessible features e.g. ramps, washrooms, etc.

Providing Customer Service to a Person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

People with hearing loss may be Deaf, Oral Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing – These are terms used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost

Choose a well-lit area for communication to allow the person to clearly see your face

Get the person's attention before talking – Gently tap his/her shoulder or wave your hand

Eliminate background noise for someone who uses a hearing aid or who is hard of hearing

Eliminate visual distractions for someone who is Deaf e.g. avoid standing in front of a bright window, which minimizes the person's ability to lip-read

Keep your distance – Stand a meter or two from the person – important for hearing aid users, lip readers and signers

Maintain eye contact and always face the person you are talking to – Be aware that when you are looking away from a person or covering your mouth, your lips cannot be seen

Use open-ended questions – do not assume the message is understood by a nod of the person's head

Use alternate forms of communication, as needed e.g. pen and paper

Speak clearly, slowly and steadily – don't mumble, shout or exaggerate; it distorts your lip patterns

Speak clearly and directly to the person, NOT the interpreter or support person

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How to Schedule a Sign-Language Interpreter

During **normal business hours** (Mon-Thurs 8am to 8pm, Fri 8am to 5pm), contact the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) Scheduled Interpreting Services at 1-866-518-0000

After regular business hours, or on a **weekend** or **statutory holiday** (24 hours per day x7 days a week), call the CHS Emergency Interpreting Services at 1-866-518-0000 or 416-712-6637

Did you know? WRH has a *legal* obligation to follow-through and formally obtain a Sign Language Interpreter *any time* one is requested.

Providing Customer Service to a Person with a Visual Disability



- Introduce yourself and what you do when approaching the patient
- Tell the person if you are extending a handshake
- Use the person's name in the conversation – Speak directly to them
- Don't assume that the person can't see you – many people with low vision still have some sight
- Always talk directly to the person (not to his/her companion)
- Never touch a person without alerting them
- Avoid nodding and shaking your head when acknowledging; use a verbal response instead
- If you are speaking in a group, name the person that is speaking
- Inform the person when you are moving away from them or leaving the room
- To seat a person, gently place his/her hand on the back of the chair
- Watch for clutter, which may pose as a safety hazard in the person's environment
- Describe the surroundings to advise the person of their environment e.g. “there is a chair 1 metre to your right” or “step down”
- To guide a person, let him/her take your arm; Offer your elbow to guide the person, if needed
- Ask the patient if they would prefer printed materials read aloud to them

Providing Customer Service to a Person with a Speech or Language Impairment

- Pay attention to what the person is saying, not *how* s/he is saying it
- Do not interrupt or complete their sentences – Give the person time
- Ask questions that can be answered “yes/no”
- Be patient – Ask the person to repeat if you did not understand what was said
- Use pen and paper to communicate, if necessary
- Don't assume that the person with a speech impairment has another disability

Providing Customer Service to a Person who is Deafblind

- Do not make assumptions – Some people have some sight or hearing; some have neither
- Speak directly to the person, not the intervener
- Identify yourself to the support person when you approach the patient
- Never touch a person who is deafblind suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency or a dangerous situation
- A patient who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistive card or a note

I am Deaf or Hard of Hearing

I COMMUNICATE USING THESE METHODS

1. American Sign Language
2. Pen/paper/texting
3. Lipreading
4. Verbal communication

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP ME UNDERSTAND YOU

1. Try to **eliminate** background noise
2. **Do not cover** your mouth with hand or paper
3. **Do not shout**, use a normal tone
4. Speak **slowly and clearly**
5. **Do not shine** flashlight in eyes

The infographic also includes icons for: SPEED LIMIT MPH, STOP, traffic lights, PHONE, a car, Insurance Card, and Registration.

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Providing Customer Service to a Person with an Intellectual / Developmental Disability

Maintain a calm voice - Speaking louder does not improve clarity
Use simple, clear language e.g. use the word “big” instead of “enormous”
Provide one piece of information at a time
Interact with the patient, not the support person (if applicable)
Offer to assist with completing forms, carrying out tasks, etc.

Providing Customer Service to a Person with a Mental Health Disability

Be patient, calm and flexible
Treat the person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
If the person appears to be in crisis, remain calm and ask how you can help
Talk in a normal voice and tone
Do not draw attention to the person
Break up lengthy conversations into a series of shorter conversations

Providing Customer Service to a Person with a Learning Disability

Do not make assumptions about what the person is capable of doing
Be flexible – Allow adequate time to complete tasks
Use plain language: If necessary, repeat using words or visual cues; avoid jargon
Be patient – Some individuals may take a little longer to process information, to understand, and to respond
Offer to assist with completing forms or by reading questions aloud
Be aware that a person with a learning disability may lose eye contact, appear inattentive or distracted, or may take a little longer to understand and/or respond to you
Try to provide information in a way that takes into account the person's disability e.g. some individual's with a learning disability find written words difficult to understand while others may have problems with numbers and math

Service Animals

An animal is considered a service animal if:

- a) It wears a harness, vest or other visual indicator, OR
- b) The person with a disability provides documentation from a regulated health professional (simply confirms that the person needs the service animal for disability related reasons – does not need to identify *what* the disability is)

There are no restrictions on the “type” or service animal – It is not uncommon for cats, ferrets, guinea pigs, etc., to also be used as service animals for individuals with epilepsy, autism or anxiety disorders



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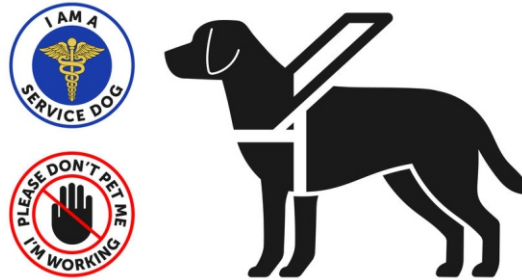
Providing Customer Service to a Person with a Service Animal

Remember that a service animal is not a pet – They have a job to do. Do not touch, feed or speak to the animal unless given permission to do so

The person with the disability is responsible for the supervision and care of the animal. If the animal is out of control, you may ask the person to remove the animal from the area

Service animals may accompany the person with a disability to any public area within the hospital, except where excluded by law. If excluded by law, you must provide alternate ways for accessing service, such as:

- Bringing services to the person in a part of the hospital where the animal is not restricted
- Offering a safe location where the service animal can wait (only if the person is able to be separated from the animal while obtaining services)
- Offering assistance to the person with a disability while they are separated from the service animal e.g. a person with a visual disability may require someone to guide him or her
- The Office of the Patient Representative can assist with facilitating a mutually agreeable solution where service animals may be excluded for Health & Safety reasons



Support Persons

A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods and services e.g. personal support worker (PSW), family member, volunteer, friend

Support Persons are allowed to accompany the person with a disability in any area open to the public

Providing Customer Service to Someone with a Support Person

Remember to speak directly to the patient, not the support person

If you're not sure which person is the patient, take your lead from the person using or requesting service, or simply ask

Discuss in advance whether the patient wishes to have the support person present for confidential discussions

Appropriate behavior is expected of a support person, just as it is for the person with the disability and all other persons within the hospital

In some situations, the support person may need to agree to requirements of service, just as the person with the disability does e.g. confidentiality agreements, etc.



Resources

Patient Representatives available at each campus (Met x52317 / Ouellette x34404)

Community Organizations e.g. Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), etc.

Policies on Accessibility, Service Animals and Support Persons available on the WRH Intranet

Staff can request a Sign Language Interpreter through the Canadian Hearing Society, in advance of a patient appointment or in real-time (e.g. emergency room visit) by calling 1-866-518-0000

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