



The Town of Fort Erie

Our Focus: Your Future



**ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE
E-MODULE TRAINING**

Accessible Customer Service

- Why we're here
- Before we start, I want you to think of someone you know with a disability



Agenda

- Background
- Legislated responsibilities
- What is customer service?
- Accessible Customer Service and customer service tips
- Small group exercise
- Assistive Devices/Alternative Formats
- Role at Work
- Concluding remarks

People with Disabilities

- Approximately 1.8 million Ontarians (15.5%)
- Fort Erie's population is 30,000 – that means 4,650 residents have some form of disability
- Increasing as the population gets older
- In 2026 approximately 16% of people in Canada will have a disability
- Spending power of \$21 to \$25 billion a year in Canada

General Types of Disabilities

- Physical
- Hearing
- Vision
- Deaf-Blind
- Speech
- Mental Health
- Learning

Other Disabilities

- Intellectual
- Sensory: Taste, Smell, Touch
- Other conditions: cancer, diabetes, asthma
- Temporary Disabilities



SENSORY



DIABETES



ASTHMA

Legislative Background

- **Human Rights Code** – Duty to accommodate
- **Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)**

Purpose: *To improve opportunities for people with disabilities by identifying and removing barriers to full participation.*

Under the ODA a municipality must:

- Develop an annual accessibility plan
- Consult with people with disabilities to develop a plan
- Make plans available to the public
- Have an Accessibility Advisory Committee

Barrier Free Policy Statement and Goals

The Town of Fort Erie Accessibility Plan adopted a Barrier Free Policy Statement and Goals, all of which are still applicable today.

Barrier Free Statement:

The Town of Fort Erie is a progressive, caring community and is committed to being responsive to the needs of its citizens. We pride ourselves on our sense of community, our many charitable organizations and high standard of public service. We are cognizant of the diverse needs of our residents and strive to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all.

Our vision of the Town of Fort Erie is that of a well designed community that is safe, convenient and comfortable to the benefit of all persons with or without disabilities.

Accessibility Advisory Committee (A.A.C).

The present AAC members are:

Joe Pantano, Chair

Kathi Keller

Diann Krieger

Dennis Hernandez-Galeano

Barbara McLeod

Clem Gagnon

Alvin Guy

Rob Parker

and Councillor Noyes as the Council representative.

Staff is represented by Bob Romanuk, Chief Building Official; Sean Hutton, Facilities Manager and Bev Bradnam, Executive Assistant to the CAO and Policy Analyst.

Our Vision is a community that is accessible for all persons.

Our Mission is to promote and encourage the removal of barriers, including physical and architectural barriers, information and communication barriers, attitudinal and technological barriers and policy or practice barriers, for the benefits of all.

Our Goals are:

- to share strategies with the community to overcome barriers;
- to promote public awareness of barriers that prohibit accessibility to all.

Legislative Background

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Purpose: To achieve a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

How is this achieved?

- By developing accessibility standards
- Enforcing the standards
- Applies to public, broader public and private sectors

AODA Standards

Five Standards

1. Customer Service
2. Built Environment
3. Employment
4. Information and Communication
5. Transportation

Customer Service Standard

Ontario Regulation 429/07 was approved July 2007

Municipalities must comply by January 1, 2010

Requires:

- ✓ Accessible customer service policy, procedures and practices
- ✓ Staff training
- ✓ A feedback method
- ✓ Alternate communication methods
- ✓ Notice of service disruption

AODA Compliance and Enforcement

- All sectors must comply with the standards specified within time frames. For municipalities the date of compliance is January 1, 2010. For private sector it is January 1, 2012.
- Some concern with ensuring your contractors are in compliance (similar wording to RFP Tender documents for OH & S will need to be created)
- Accessibility Reports will be required
- Inspectors may be appointed to verify compliance
- Penalties for non-compliance

What is Accessible Customer Service?

- **Flexible service** that meets the needs of an individual customer
- Putting the **person** first
- Understanding that some methods of service may **not work for all people**
- Allowing for **comments and suggestions** on how to improve accessible customer service
- Providing as much **notice** as possible if there is a **disruption** in service

Principles of Accessible Customer Service

- Dignity
- Independence
- Integration
- Equal Opportunity
- The Town recently passed an Accessible Customer Service Standard Policy and included:
 - sensitive,
 - responsive, and
 - inclusive to the key principles when dealing with ALL customers.

***When interacting with a person with a disability,
remember the T.A.L.K. principle:***

T = Take the time to ask “May I help you?”

A = Ask – don’t assume. Never assist unless asked

L = Listen attentively and speak directly to the customer.

K = Know the accommodations and special services that are available.

When interacting with a person with a disability, remember

- ✓ If you notice a person is having difficulty accessing our goods and services, a good starting point is to simply ask how you can best help.
- ✓ Be patient and remember, your customers are your best source of information about their needs. The solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.
- ✓ Being able to interact and communicate with people with disabilities is a big part of providing accessible customer service. Sometimes the best approach is to ask a person with a disability how you can best communicate with them.
- ✓ The next several slides will provide insight into the different types of disabilities and provide some helpful customer service tips.



Physical Disability

Physical disabilities include a range of functional limitations from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through muscle weakness, tremors, and paralysis. Physical disabilities can be congenital such as Muscular Dystrophy; or acquired, such as tendonitis. A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to:

- perform manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key or gripping a door knob
- move around independently
- control the speed or coordination of movements
- reach, pull or manipulate objects
- have strength or endurance



Tips for Customer Service:

- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space, don't touch, move or lean on them. If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level.
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter.
- If a counter is too high or wide, step around it to provide service.
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.



Hearing

Hearing loss can cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words. A person who is deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing may be unable to:

- use a public telephone
- understand speech in noisy environments
- pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers



Tips for Customer Service:

- Attract the customer's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- Make sure you are in a well-lit area where your customer can see your face and read your lips.
- If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- Deaf people may use a sign language interpreter to communicate. Always direct your attention to the Deaf person not the Interpreter.
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- Don't shout – speak clearly



Vision

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not. Vision disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity to total blindness. Vision loss can result in:

- Difficulty reading or seeing faces
- Difficulty maneuvering in unfamiliar places
- Inability to differentiate colours or distances
- A narrow field of vision
- The need for bright light or contrast
- Night blindness



Tips for Customer Service:

- Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to them.
- Don't assume the individual can't see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight
- If the person uses a service animal do not touch or approach the animal, it is working.
- Verbally describe the setting, form, and location as necessary – be precise and descriptive.
- Offer your elbow to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.

Speech or Language Impairments

Speech disabilities involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical disabilities include problems with:

- Pronunciation
- Pitch and loudness
- Hoarseness or breathiness
- Stuttering or slurring



Tips for Customer Service:

- Don't assume that a person with a speech impairment has another disability.
- If possible communicate in a quiet environment.
- Give the person your full attention. Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no".
- Ask them to repeat as necessary or to write their message.
- Verify your understanding



Deaf-Blindness

Deaf-Blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss. The result for a person who is deaf-blind is significant difficulty accessing information and performing daily activities.

Deaf-blindness interferes with communication, learning, orientation and mobility. People who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, Braille, telephone devices, communication boards and any combination thereof.

Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an Intervener who relay information and facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides. The Intervener will sign on the individual's hand.



Tips for Customer Service:

- Direct your attention to your customer, not the Intervener.
- A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or note.
- Understand that communication can take some time, please be patient.

Mental Health

Mental Health issues can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. Mental health disabilities include a range of disorders that can differ in severity. For example, some customers may experience anxiety due to hallucinations, mood swings, phobias or panic disorder. There are three main types of mental health disability:

- Anxiety
- Mood
- Behavioral



People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated; act aggressively; be perceived as pushy or abrupt; be unable to make a decision; start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Tips for Customer Service:

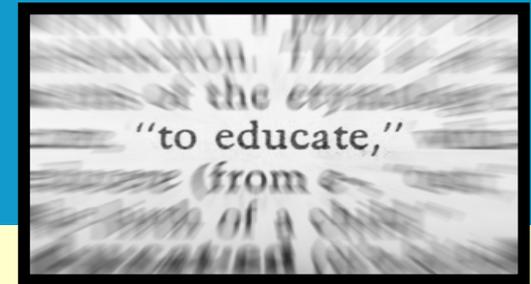
- Treat each person as an individual, with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else. Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.
- Be confident, calm and reassuring. Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations. Stay calm and courteous, even if the customer exhibits unusual behavior, focus on the service they need and ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- Take the client away from the situation, noise and distractions to facilitate one on one service.



Learning

Learning disabilities include a variety of disorders that affect how a person takes in or retains information and how they understand and process the information.

Learning disabilities can result in difficulties in reading, problem solving, time management, way finding and processing information. This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.



Tips for Customer Service:

- Learning disabilities are generally invisible and ability to function varies greatly. Respond to any requests for verbal information, assistance in filling in forms and so on with courtesy.
- Be patient – people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond. Allow extra time to complete tasks if necessary.
- Try to provide information in a way that takes into account the customer's disability. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math.

Intellectual/Developmental

Intellectual or developmental disabilities can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do everyday physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

It may be caused by genetic factors such as Downs Syndrome, exposure to environmental toxins, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disorders.

A person with an intellectual disorder may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken and written information
- Conceptual information
- Perception of sensory information
- Memory

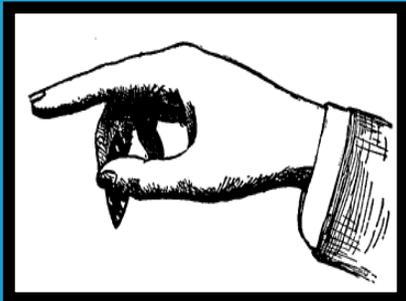


Tips for Customer Service:

- Do not make assumptions about what a person can do.
- Use clear, simple, plain language
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information
- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Be patient and verify your understanding

Sensory

Smell disabilities can involve the inability to sense smells or a hypersensitivity to odors and smells. A person with a smelling disability may have allergies to certain odors, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.



Touch disabilities can affect a person's ability to sense texture, temperature, vibration or pressure. Touch sensations may be reduced or heightened resulting in a hypersensitivity to touch, temperature, or the opposite, numbness and the inability to feel touch sensations

Taste disabilities can limit the experience of the four primary taste sensations; sweet, bitter, salty and sour. A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify spoiled food or noxious substances.



Other

Other disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses and diseases including ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDs, environmental sensitivities, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement.

Temporary

Temporary disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, seizure disorders, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement are a few examples.

How to interact with people who use assistive devices

An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities, such as moving, communicating or lifting. Personal assistive devices can include things like wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, braces, computer software programs, hearing aids, white canes or speech amplification devices.



Tips for Customer Service:

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.
- Don't move assistive devices or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your customer's reach.
- Let your customer know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (eg. elevators, accessible washrooms, etc.)

How to interact with people with disabilities who require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal

People with vision loss may use a guide dog, but there are other types of service animals as well. Hearing alert animals help people who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf or hard of hearing. Other service animals are trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure. Service animals are not always guide dogs and may be a cat, a snake or a ferret. Although these types of service animals are rare, they are often used for people with a mental health disability.

Under the accessible customer service standard, service animals are allowed on the parts of the premises that are open to the public or to other third parties, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law. You may ask a person for a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that their animal is required for reasons relating to their disability if it is not readily apparent.



Tips for Customer Service:

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal.
- Avoid touching or addressing service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Avoid making assumptions about the animal. If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.
- Provide the location of fresh water for the service animal and where service animals may be walked to relieve themselves.

How to interact with people with disabilities who require the assistance of a support person

Some people with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person, such as an intervenor. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help your customer with a variety of things from communicating, to helping with mobility, personal care or medical needs.

According to the accessible customer service standard and the Town's policy, a support person must be allowed to accompany an individual with a disability to any part of the premises that is open to the public or to third parties. If admission to an event is permitted and fees are payable to the Town, the support person is permitted at no cost. If the fees are payable to a third party, the support person is permitted to attend the event at their own cost. Please see the Standard Policy for further criteria regarding the safety of customers and when a support person may be necessary.

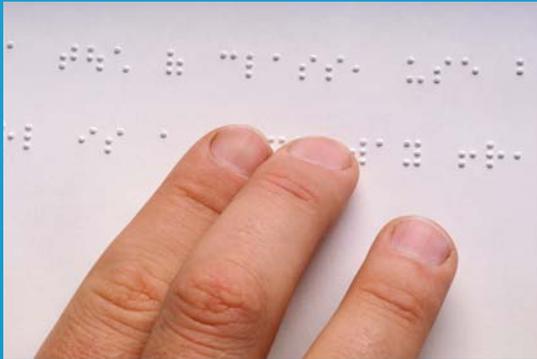


Tips for Customer Service:

- If you're not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting the goods or services, or simply ask.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person.

Alternative Formats

- Large print, electronic, Braille, sign language, closed caption, audio
- Read information aloud, write down instructions or draw a diagram



What is my role at work?

- Identify and **remove barriers** that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in the community.
- Take time to **understand** the needs of each customer.
- Ask how you can **help**.
- **Be open** to working with people with disabilities to find the best solution.

General Customer Service Tips

- Treat all customers with respect and give them your full attention.
- Ask how you can help
- Offer a variety of methods of communication.
- Understand the nature and the scope of the services you provide.
- Accept feedback.

Summary

- How does this information apply to your situation at work?
- Have you learned something about accessibility and people with disabilities? Take the Skills inventory.
- Other resources
- Thank You!



***We are all
the same
different people!***

Thank you and feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

Feedback is Valuable!

I hope that you enjoyed the session today and that you found it to be informative. Please take a moment to complete the following questions so that the program can be improved.

- 1) Was the legislation and requirements explained clearly? Yes or No
- 2) Do you feel confident that you can provide accessible customer service?
Yes or No
- 3) Is there any area that could have been explained more clearly? Yes or No
If Yes, please provide details _____
- 4) Was the on-line tutorial user friendly? Yes or No
- 5) In the future, would you prefer this type of training format? Yes or No

Other comments and suggestions are most welcome:

Thank you!