



# Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities

Customer Service Training

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**KUBES** STEEL

# Objectives of Course

1. Barriers to Accessibility
2. How to Welcome People with Disabilities
3. Assistive Devices
4. Service Animals and Support Persons



# Section 1

## Barriers to Accessibility

All staff and any others  
who interact with the  
public...

# What does the law require?

- *The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* calls on us to make Ontario accessible by breaking down barriers by developing and implementing accessibility standards at work

• About 1.85 million people in Ontario have disabilities, or 15.5% of Ontario's population



# What are accessibility standards?

- Accessibility standards are the rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario will have to follow to:
- Identify
- Remove
- Prevent barriers to accessibility

•About 4.4 million people in Canada have disabilities, or 14.3% of Canada's population





# What are barriers to accessibility?

- Obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from doing the kinds of things many of us do without thinking - like catching a bus, going to work or school, buying groceries or golfing

**•Due to the aging population, about 16% of people in Canada will have a disability by the year 2026**



# Physical Barriers

- ❑ Hallways and doorways that are too narrow for a person using a wheelchair or scooter
- ❑ Poor lighting for people with low vision
- ❑ Parking spaces too narrow for a wheelchair
- ❑ Doorknobs that are difficult for people with arthritis to grasp
- ❑ Telephone not equipped with telecommunication devices for the deaf



# Communication Barriers

- ❑ Print is too small to read
- ❑ Websites that can't be accessed by people who are not able to use a mouse
- ❑ Websites that don't support screen reading software
- ❑ Signs that are not clear or easily understood





# Attitudinal Barriers

- ❑ Thinking that people with disabilities are inferior
- ❑ Assuming that a person who has a speech impairment can't understand you





## Section 2

How to Welcome and Help  
People With Disabilities

# Vision Disabilities

- ❑ May have low vision or total blindness
- ❑ 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

# How to welcome people with vision disabilities

- ❑ Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them - speak normally
- ❑ Never touch the person without asking first
- ❑ Offer your elbow to guide the person, walk slowly
- ❑ Don't touch or address service animals — they are working and have to pay attention at all times
- ❑ If you're giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear
- ❑ Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them



# Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- ❑ **Hearing impaired** – severe to profound hearing loss, hears poorly or not all
- ❑ **Hard of Hearing** – person who uses their residual hearing and speech to communicate
- ❑ Can cause problems in distinguishing certain frequencies, sounds or words
- ❑ Difficulty using a telephone
- ❑ Difficulty understanding speech in a noisy environments
- ❑ Difficulty pronouncing words clearly enough to be understood by strangers

# How to welcome people who are Deaf or hard of hearing

- ❑ Attract the person's attention before speaking such as a gentle touch on the shoulder or hand
- ❑ Use pen and paper to communicate if easier
- ❑ Don't put hands on your face when speaking
- ❑ Personal matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing
- ❑ Be patient communicating with people who are deaf as their first language may not be English
- ❑ If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in a quiet area to avoid background noise

# Physical Disabilities

- ❑ Difficulty performing manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key or gripping a door knob
- ❑ Difficulty moving around independently
- ❑ Difficulty controlling the speed or coordination of movements
- ❑ Difficulty reaching, pulling or manipulating objects
- ❑ Low strength or endurance

# How to welcome people with physical disabilities

- ❑ Speak normally and directly to your customer, not to the person who is with them
- ❑ People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things - Ask before you help
- ❑ Don't touch assistive devices except in an emergency
- ❑ Provide the person information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.)
- ❑ Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to give them clear passage



# Speech Disabilities

- ❑ Partial or total loss of the ability to speak
- ❑ Pronunciation difficult to understand
- ❑ Pitch and loudness
- ❑ Hoarseness or breathiness
- ❑ Stuttering or slurring

# How to welcome people with speech/language impairment

- ❑ Just because a person has one disability doesn't mean they have another - For example, if a person has difficulty speaking, don't assume they have an intellectual or developmental disability
- ❑ If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat
- ❑ If you are able, ask questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'
- ❑ Be patient and polite, and give the person whatever time they need to get their point across
- ❑ Don't interrupt or finish the person's sentences

# Mental Disabilities

- Range of disorders, however there are three main types:
  - Anxiety
  - Mood
  - Behavioral
- May seem edgy or irritated, act aggressively, be perceived as pushy or abrupt, get angry
- Unable to make a decision
- May start laughing for no apparent reason

# How to welcome people with mental health disabilities

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
- Be confident and reassuring - Listen carefully and work with the person to meet their needs
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help
- Provide one piece of information at a time
- Be supportive and patient



# How to talk to people with disabilities on the phone

- ❑ Speak normally, clearly and directly
- ❑ Don't worry about how their voice sounds - Concentrate on what's being said
- ❑ Be patient, don't interrupt and don't finish your customer's sentences
- ❑ If you don't understand, don't pretend - Just ask again
- ❑ If the person is using an interpreter or a TTY line, just speak normally to the person, not to the interpreter
- ❑ If the person has great difficulty communicating, make arrangements to call back when it's convenient to speak with someone else

# Some ideas for ways to help:

- ❑ Customer is deaf and does not have a sign language interpreter - Ask in writing, if using a pen and paper to communicate would be a good way to serve him
- ❑ Customer cannot see items on the counter from her scooter - Offer to hand her the product
- ❑ Literature cannot be read by your customer who has low vision - Offer to read it out to him
- ❑ If no automatic door openers - Open the door
- ❑ Ask customer what you can do to help them - They will likely appreciate your attention and consideration for their needs

# Choose the right word

- ❑ Use “disability” or “disabled,” not “handicap” or “handicapped”
- ❑ Don’t use terms such as “retarded,” “dumb,” “psycho,” or “crippled” - These words are disrespectful to people with disabilities
- ❑ Remember to put people first - Say “person with a disability,” rather than “disabled person”
- ❑ If you are not sure about a disability, wait until the individual describes their situation - Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong



# Section 3

## Assistive Devices



# What is an Assistive Device?

- 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
  - Some are personal assistive devices owned and brought along by the individual
  - Some may be provided by our company as a service to our customers

# People who have vision loss

- ❑ Digital audio player – enables people to listen to books, directions, art shows, etc.
- ❑ Magnifier – makes print and images larger and easier to read
- ❑ Portable global positioning systems (GPS) – helps orient people to get to specific destinations
- ❑ White cane – helps people find their way around obstacles



Audio Book Player

# People who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, hard of hearing

- FM transmitter system – boosts sound closest to the listener while reducing background noise
- Hearing aid – makes sound louder and clearer
- Teletypewriter (TTY) – helps people who are unable to speak or hear to communicate by phone - The person types their messages on the TTY keyboard to an operator (Bell Relay Service) who passes on the message



# People who have physical disabilities

- Mobility device (e.g., a wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches)
  - ▣ Helps people who have difficulty walking
- Personal oxygen tank
  - ▣ Helps people breathe



# People who have learning disabilities

- Electronic notebook or laptop computer
  - Used to take notes and to communicate
- Personal data managers
  - Stores, organizes and retrieves personal information
- Mini pocket recorders
  - Records information for future playback





# People who have developmental disabilities

- Communication boards (e.g., a Bliss board)
  - Used to pass on a message by pointing to symbols, words or pictures
- Speech generating devices
  - Used to pass on a message using a device that “speaks” when a symbol, word or picture is pressed





# Interacting with a customer who uses a wheelchair / scooter

- If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair remember to:
  - Wait for and follow the person's instructions
  - Confirm that your customer is ready to move
  - Describe what you are going to do before you do it
  - Try to avoid uneven ground and objects
  - Don't leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors



## Section 4

Service Animals and  
Support Persons

# Service Animal

- ❑ Usually apparent that it is a service animal if it is wearing a harness
- ❑ May not always be apparent by looking at the service animal
- ❑ Allowed anywhere customers normally have access (lobby, office with appointment)
- ❑ The customer is responsible for the care and supervision of the service animal
- ❑ Avoid talking to, touch or making eye contact with the animal

# Support Persons

- Person who accompanies the person with disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods or services
- Both persons are permitted to enter together
- May be a:
  - Paid professional
  - Volunteer
  - Family or friend

# Support Persons Continued

- ❑ The person with disability must not be prevented from having access to their support person while on the premises
- ❑ Consent is required if confidential information is going to be shared while a support person is present
- ❑ Speak directly to the person with disability – not to the support person