Accessible Customer Service

Land Acknowledgment

"To begin, let us acknowledge that Queen's is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. We are grateful to be able to live, learn and play on these lands."

In acknowledging the land that Queen's University is situated upon, it is important for all of us to consider our own positionality and relationship to the land. It is also important to pause and reflect on what reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization look like for each of us.

To learn more about the significance and importance of land acknowledgments please view the following video.

[Meaningful Land Acknowledgements](#)

Additional supporting links:

- [Office of Indigenous Initiatives (Land Acknowledgement)](#)
- [Decolonizing and Indigenizing Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Find out more about local Indigenous territories and languages.](#)

Disability and Accessibility at Queen's

Disability and accessibility is important and relevant to the lives of all Queen's community members. Whether you have a disability yourself or are continuing your (un)learning about disability and accessibility, this training is a critical step to understanding our collective responsibilities and rights to accessibility. This training will help you learn more about the accessibility legislation you need to know to self-advocate, and/or provide

the best support possible to your colleagues, peers, customers, clients, friends, and family with disabilities here at Queen's University.

- Thinking about your "why" for completing this AODA: Customer Service Training is a great place to start.
- What perspective are you approaching training from and in what ways can you expand your learning?
- What impact could learning more about people with disabilities have on your life, the lives of others, and the Queen's community?
- What impact will you have on accessibility at Queen's by putting this important knowledge into everyday practice?

Activity: Self Reflection

1. What is your unique motivation for learning about Accessible Customer Service?
2. Self-reflect and respond on why providing accessible service, support, and interactions is important to you, your role, and your relationship to disability and accessibility?

Disability in greater context

In Ontario, approximately 2.6 million people or one in four people have a recorded disability.[1] This statistic is potentially much higher as the recorded number of disabilities only tells us the number of people with disabilities who have interacted with processes, institutions, and documentation that record, collect, and formalize statistics on disability. Many people with disabilities do not interact with these processes due to inaccessibility or choice.

This number is expected to increase as the population ages, and with it the need for greater accessibility in our communities. It is also likely the number of Ontarians living with a disability has already increased due to

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[1] Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Annual Report 2019." ontario.ca. https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontarians-disabilities-act-annual-report-2019.

the growing number of mental health and chronic pain-related disabilities that have developed during the Covid-19 pandemic.[2]

It is important to know that statistics around disability do not give us the whole picture. Not to mention people with disabilities are not a homogenous group. People with disabilities hold a variety of experiences and perspectives, accessibility needs, impact of disability, and therefore barriers to access. These diverse experiences are greatly impacted by the various other aspects of our identity, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality to name a few.

All in all, disability is a common and normal part of human diversity. People with disabilities make up a substantial and important part of the provincial population and local community here at Queen's.

A Note on AODA "Accessible Customer Service" Training

The training you are about to complete focuses on accessible customer service, which can be understood broadly as any work that involves supporting and interacting with the Queen's community. This training is just one component of the larger AODA (the Accessible Training for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) training suite. If you haven't already, be sure to continue your learning with AccessForward. It looks more closely at legislative requirements, information and communications, employment, design of public space, and transportation.

Learning, practicing, and meeting accessible standards of how to best support and provide "Accessible Customer Service" to people with disability is mandated by AODA (the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act). In fact, it is a requirement of customer service standards that those working or volunteering at Queen's University complete this training and know what

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[2] Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. "Survey on Covid-19 and Mental Health, February to May 2021." https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210927/dq210927a-eng.htm.

to do when interacting with people with disabilities who are having or anticipating difficulties accessing services or goods on campus.

AODA training will not make you an expert. Rather, it is about starting, continuing, or enhancing your learning about disability and accessibility. This training is about becoming more aware of the barriers that people with disabilities and/or people with disabilities different than your own have when accessing our campus, thinking critically about those barriers, and what we can do to create a truly accessible campus. We hope you will reflect specifically on how this training relates to you, your experience, and your role here at Queen's. Remember, sometimes it is as simple as asking "How can I help?"

Learning Outcomes

In this module you will learn about:

- Purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005
- Overview of the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
- How to interact with people with a variety of disabilities and experiences
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing services or facilities at Queen's University

Activity: KWL Knowledge Check (optional); Answer these questions on a separate sheet of paper

1. What is something that you think you know about accessibility and people with disabilities?
2. Where did you learn this from and how did it influence your beliefs

Defining Disability

Sometimes when people think about people with disabilities they imagine "visible disabilities" such as people who have some physical disabilities or

use wheelchairs. However, many disabilities are non-visible or what is sometimes called "invisible disability". The point is - We can't always tell who has a disability and how it affects them. A disability can be temporary, permanent, or episodic. In fact, many of us will experience a disability at some point in our lives.

Because of the diversity of experience and perspective amongst people with disabilities, self-identifications with disability and accessibility-related language and definitions are also unique. Further, definitions and language are always evolving and therefore best practices and people's relationship to language change.

Watch Disability Isn't a dirty word to learn more about how language has evolved[3]

For some people with disabilities the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) definition most accurately reflects their feelings about disability. The Ontario Human Rights Code definition is also used by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

The Ontario Human Rights Section 10 Code defines "Disability" as, For some people with disabilities the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) definition most accurately reflects their feelings about disability. The Ontario Human Rights Code definition is also used by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

The Ontario Human Rights Section 10 Code defines "Disability" as,

- 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

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[3] Amy Hasset | Masterclass in Minutes: Disability Isn't a Dirty Word. YouTube. UCD Festival, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIrStNkmruA&ab_channel=UCDFestival.

physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act 1997.
- per Section 10 (1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990

While the OHRC definition is important to know, many people with disabilities relate to the "social model" of disability. The social model of disability reconsiders the ways disability has been framed in culture as limits. The Social model of disability contrasts with the Medical Model of disability which says people are disabled by their own bodies and minds, seeing people with disabilities as the problem and disability as a barrier itself.

Rather than seeing disabilities as a deficit, the social model of disabilities looks at how one's environment and society presents barriers. Barriers to access include structural barriers like stairs, doorways, or materials as well as processes and policies that fail to affirm the independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity of people with disability. In this sense, inaccessibility is the result of social and environmental barriers rather than a person's disability. Further, in a social model of disability, environment and culture can be thought of as "producing disability".

Therefore, in a social model of disability to remove barriers to accessibility involves changing structures, attitudes, policies, and procedures rather than suggesting people with disabilities change to fit the inaccessible status quo.

Watch the video – [The Social Model of Disability](#)[4]

The Medical Model of Disability

Impairments and chronic illness often pose real difficulties, but they are not the main problem.

Traditional View

Disability is caused by:

- Physical
- Sensory
- Mental
- Impairment

The individual:

- Is impaired and is the problem

Focus of the medical profession:

- 'Cure'
- Impairment
- Alleviate the Effect

The Social Model

Social Barriers

- Environment:
- Inaccessible
- Buildings
- Services
- Language

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[4] The Social Model of Disability . YouTube. WhizzKidsUK, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-rEnKcZ5w0&ab_channel=WhizzKidzUK.

- Communication

Attitudes:

- Prejudice
- Stereotyping
- Discrimination

Organizations:

- Inflexible procedure and practices

A Review of the AODA Legislation

Now that we know more about disability and accessibility let's briefly review the AODA legislation and what it involves. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed in 2005 with the goal of creating an accessible Ontario by 2025. This legislation is unique because it:

- Applies to both public and private organizations
- Requires obliged organizations to be proactive in identifying, preventing and removing barriers to accessibility
- Shifts the focus from the individual who requires an accommodation to the obligation of organizations to remove barriers

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005, S.O. 2005, c.11. is implemented on an ongoing basis through Accessibility Standards that have been developed to designate areas, create rules, and provide timelines around enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities in Ontario. The Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR) is comprised of five Customer Service standards. These include:

- Information & Communication Standard
- Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment Standard)
- Employment standard
- Transportation Standard

The AODA requires that the province review the standards every five years. The aim of this review is to determine if the standards need to be updated.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Requirements

80.49 (1) In addition to the requirements in section 7, every provider shall ensure that the following persons receive training about the provision of the provider's goods, services or facilities, as the case may be, to persons with disabilities:

1. Every person who is an employee of, or a volunteer with, the provider.
2. Every person who participates in developing the provider's policies.
3. Every other person who provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of the provider. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

(2) The training must include a review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of this Part and instruction about the following matters:

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability
2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.
3. How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods, services or facilities to a person with a disability.
4. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods, services or facilities. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

(3) Every person referred to in subsection (1) shall be trained as soon as practicable. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

(4) Every provider shall also provide training on an ongoing basis in respect of any changes to the policies described in section 80.46. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

(5) Every provider, other than a small organization, shall keep records of the training provided under this section, including the dates on which the training is provided and the number of individuals to whom it is provided. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

(6) Every provider, other than a small organization, shall,

a. prepare a document that describes its training policy, summarizes the content of the training and specifies when the training is to be provided; and
b. on request, give a copy of the document to any person. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

(7) Every provider, other than a small organization, shall notify persons to whom it provides goods, services or facilities that the document required by subsection (6) is available on request. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

(8) The notice required by subsection (7) may be given by posting the information at a conspicuous place on premises owned or operated by the provider, by posting it on the provider's website, if any, or by such other method as is reasonable in the circumstances. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.

AODA Legislation and Accessibility

The goal of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) is to make Ontario accessible by 2025. On July 1, 2011, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) was enacted into law. The compliance dates of this Regulation are staggered, allowing for a gradual implementation over several years. The IASR sets standards in the following five areas:

1. Information & Communications Standard
2. Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment) Standard
3. Customer Service

4. Employment Standard
5. Transportation Standard

New standards for Health Care and Education (one for K-12 and another for Post Secondary Education). Accessibility is as much about anticipating and preventing barriers as it is about identifying and removing existing barriers. You could say that the AODA reflects an attitudinal shift about the right of persons with disabilities to full participation in our society.

Barriers are not acceptable since now we know that much of what "disables" people is not a disability but rather an inaccessible environment.

Who Must be Trained and When

The Customer Service Standard requires training for organizations and businesses on providing accessible customer service and how to interact with people with disabilities. It requires that "every person who interacts with the public on behalf of the organization and those involved in developing the organization's policies, procedures and practices" receive training about the AODA and accessible customer service. However, because of the nature of your work, you may not necessarily think of yourself as a "service provider". As mentioned earlier, if you teach a course, supervise a thesis or mark a paper, you are providing educational services to a specific public: your students. The following people must be trained on serving customers with disabilities:

- faculty, staff, managers, directors, department heads, senior administrators, volunteers and student leaders. (paid and unpaid, full-time, part-time and contract positions)
- anyone involved in developing your organization's policies (including managers, senior leaders, directors, board members and owners)
- anyone who provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of Queen's (such as external contact centres or facilities management companies)

Training must be completed as soon as possible after an employee or volunteer joins your team or department here at Queen's.

Important Terminology

As mentioned in the introduction, language, definitions, and perspectives around disability is ever evolving and never universal. Because of this it is important to question the language and beliefs we come up against and keep up to date with best practices on language. Terminology and definitions that describe people and/or their identities are especially impactful and important to people's experience. While creating an affirming and supportive community starts with shifting our perspective toward disability, the right language and terminology is an important next step in ensuring we maintain our commitments to providing accessible service to people with disability on Queen's Campus.

Below are some key terms that you will encounter throughout the training and on Queen's campus. These terms range from accessibility-specific terminology to broader concepts, perspectives, and systems.

Ableism

A set of beliefs that result in discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities. It is based on the assumption that typical or conventional abilities are the standard, and therefore superior. It is rooted in the idea that disabled people need to be 'fixed' or 'protected.' Ableism is a system of oppression that assigns values to bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, intelligence, excellence, and fitness.[5]

"A person who represents constructed ideas of normalcy, fitness, and achievement."

Ableism is deeply rooted in discrimination, oppression, and violence more broadly and as such is connected to racism, colonialism, sexism, and classism, to name a few.

The view that disability is an abnormality has been used to rationalize the exclusion, neglect, abuse and exploitation of people with disabilities in

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[5] "Glossary and Resources." Disability Justice Network Ontario (DJNO). https://www.djno.ca/glossary.

various different contexts. It may also inform paternalistic and patronizing behaviour toward people with disabilities.[6]

Discrimination against people with disabilities is rooted in ableism. The OHRC says ableism appears in:

"prejudicial attitudes, negative stereotyping, and the overall stigma surrounding disability".[7]

The OHRC also points out that all of these concepts are interrelated and complex. For example, stereotyping, prejudice and stigma can lead to discrimination. The stigma surrounding disability can also be an effect of discrimination, ignorance, stereotyping and prejudice. Ableism cannot be separated from other injustices which also play a substantial factor to how someone experiences ableism. Please refer below to the term " Intersectionality" to learn more.

To learn more about ableism and how it relates to other means of oppression read ahead to the Intersectionality definition and the Queen's Ableism module.

Accessibility

The degree to which people with disabilities can access a device, service or environment without barriers. Accessibility is also a process - it is the proactive and ongoing identification, removal and prevention of barriers to people with disability. This language is used throughout the AODA Standards and Regulation.

Accommodation

Accommodation is different from accessibility. It is a reactive and individualized adaptation or adjustment made to provide a person with a disability equitable and non-discriminatory opportunities for participation. It

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[6] Lewis, Talila A. "Working Definition of Ableism - January 2022 Update." TALILA A. LEWIS. https://www.talilalewis.com/blog/working-definition-of-ableism-january-2022-update.

[7] "What is Disability?" Ontario Human Rights Commission. https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-ableism-and-discrimination-based-disability/.

has its basis in anti-discrimination laws. This language is used throughout the AODA Standards and Regulation.

Duty to accommodate

Duty to accommodate means accommodation must be provided in a manner that respects general principles such as dignity of the person, individualization, integration and full participation. This language is used throughout the AODA Standards and Regulation.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a useful and relevant concept coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 that recognizes the ways race, gender, sexuality, income or "class", place of birth or where you live, age, religion, immigration status, language, education, and disability (amongst other identities) impact our experience in the world, how we interact with each other, systems, and our communities. Intersectionality can be used as a framework to understand how organizations, systems, and barriers disadvantage, exclude, or oppress people uniquely. The OHRC says,

An intersectional approach takes into account the historical, social and political context and recognizes the unique experience of the individual based on the intersection of all relevant grounds". The overlapping effect of "Intersectional oppression [that] arises out of the combination of various oppressions which, together, produce something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone"[8]

Watch the video [there is no justice without disability](#)[9]

Person first language and Identity first language:

People with disabilities, persons with disability, and people with disability are three examples of "people first language". Person-first language puts

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[8] An Introduction to the Intersectional Approach." An introduction to the intersectional approach. Ontario Human Rights Commission. https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/intersectional-approach-discrimination-addressing-multiple-grounds-human-rights-claims/introduction-intersectional-approach#fn6.

[9] There Is No Justice without Disability #DisabailityDemandsJustice. YouTube. Ford Foundation, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3L1dUJIhexg&ab_channel=FordFoundation.

the word person before the word disability to recognize one's personhood before disability. Person first language is used primarily throughout this training, across AODA regulation, and Queen's University. Other examples of a person's first language include a person with autism or a person in a wheelchair. This use of language is considered best practice most widely however it is not without critique.

"People with visible and invisible disabilities."

Disabled people or disabled persons are examples of identity-first language. Identity first language is something many disabled people use to self-identify. This language can be used to recognize or self-assert the importance of disability in one's identity.

Language is personal and contextual. People with disabilities may use a variety or mix of language to self-identify and express the role and relationship to disability in their life or use different language with different people or settings.[10] Respecting the ways people self-identify is a critical part of good customer service, ensuring accessibility, and building relationships. Modelling the language that people with disabilities ask you to use is important. However, the language that someone uses to self-identify their disabilities does not mean it is always the best language for you to use. If appropriate, seeking clarification on how someone would like to be referred can be helpful and affirming.

Undue hardship

Organizations are required to accommodate someone with a disability to the point of undue hardship. There are only three factors to consider in assessing undue hardship: cost, outside sources of funding and health and safety requirements, if any. This language is used throughout the AODA Standards and Regulation.

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[10] Liebowitz, Cara. "I Am Disabled: On Identity-First versus People-First Language." The Body Is Not An Apology. https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/i-am-disabled-on-identity-first-versus-people-first-language/.

Understanding Barriers

When talking about disability, it is important to both name and discuss barriers to access so we can work to change them. As we have reviewed in the previous terminology section, people with disabilities experience barriers uniquely due to various intersections of identity. Addressing and removing barriers is critical as inaccessible environments create barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating in the ways that feel affirming and would otherwise be possible.

Barriers are not distinct from greater context. In fact organization and systems of power and ableist attitudes can be seen as the root of financial, architectural, communication, and technology barriers. In fact, the barriers and inaccessibility one encounters can influence the other barriers people with disabilities face. For example, a barrier like inaccessible job recruiting processes that rely on software that is incompatible with e-readers may indicate ableist attitudes within hiring practices and lead into financial barriers if one cannot secure gainful employment.

Activity: Think

How does ableism show up in each of the barriers discussed below:

- Attitudinal
- Organizational or systemic
- Architectural or physical
- Information or communications
- Technological
- Financial
- Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers are behaviors, perceptions and assumptions that discriminate against people with disabilities. These barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, to judge, or

have misconceptions about people with disabilities. Attitudinal barriers can also be understood as ableism. Examples of attitudinal barriers include:

- Assuming people with disabilities are inferior or "inspiring" for simply engaging in their everyday activities.
- Forming ideas about a person because of stereotypes or a lack of knowledge.
- Making people with disabilities feel as though you are doing them a "special favour" by providing their accommodations.
- The myth that people with disabilities have an unfair advantage.

Organizational or Systemic Barriers

Organizational or systemic barriers are policies, procedures or practices that unfairly discriminate and can prevent individuals from participating fully in a situation. While organizational or systemic barriers are sometimes put into place unintentionally these barriers are impactful and are critical to change. Examples of organizational or systemic barriers include:

- A program that requires students to take a full course load.
- Office hours conducted in person only, or not allowing students to access their professors or administrators by phone, e-mail or other means of communication.
- Having poorly defined or unclear learning objectives such as workplace policies that unfairly assume certain abilities in requiring everyone to personally empty their own garbage can.
- Requiring students to express their understanding of course content in only one way.

Architectural or Physical Barriers

Architectural or physical barriers are elements of buildings or outdoor spaces that create barriers to people with disability. These barriers relate to elements such as the design of a building's stairs or doorways, the layout

of rooms, or the width of halls and sidewalks. Examples of architectural or physical barriers include:

- "Architectural or physical barriers."
- Sidewalks and doorways that are too narrow for a wheelchair, scooter or walker.
- Desks that are too high for a person who is using a wheelchair or other mobility device.
- Poor lighting that makes it difficult to see for a person with low vision or a person who lip-reads.
- Doorknobs that are difficult to grasp for a person with arthritis.

Information or Communication Barriers

Information or communications barriers occur when sensory disabilities, such as hearing, seeing or learning disabilities, have not been considered. These barriers relate to both the sending and receiving of information. Examples of information or communications barriers include:

- Electronic documents that are not properly formatted and cannot be read by a screen reader.
- Lectures that are confusing and poorly organized.
- Language that is not clear.
- Print that is too small or in a font that is difficult to read.
- Videos that are not captioned and don't have transcriptions.

Technological Barriers

Technological barriers occur when a device or technological platform is not accessible to its intended audience and cannot be used with an assistive device. Technology can enhance the user experience, but it can also create unintentional barriers for some users. Technological barriers are often related to information and communications barriers. Examples of technological barriers include:

- Electronic documents without accessibility features, such as alternative text (Alt Text), which screen readers read to describe an image.
- Handouts or course material that is available only in hard copies.
- Requiring students to use a website that does not meet accessibility standards.
- Learning Management Systems or course websites that cannot be accessed using screen-reading software.

Financial Barriers

Financial barriers are limits to accessibility due to unaffordable cost or financial resources. Financial barriers are deeply connected to all other barriers as income and class access impact the technology, architecture, and space you may have access to or interact with.

Financial barriers for people with disabilities can impact access to health care not covered by universal health care such as extra-cost prescriptions, cost of diagnosis and types of accommodations, aids, service animals, supports, architectural changes such as necessary home renovations or furniture. According to Statistics Canada, 22 per cent of Canadians, or 6.2 million people, have at least one disability. At least 1.6 million are "unable to afford required aids, devices or prescription medications due to cost."

Financial barriers faced by people with disabilities can often be cumulative and have further impacts. With extra financial expenses and barriers impacting further financial access such as: access to housing, food security, or post-secondary schooling. For example, according to a 2011 study by Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario:

"Nearly half of all students with disabilities [within the study] expected to graduate with a total debt of more than $20,000 and 81 percent were concerned about the amount of debt they will incur by the time they

graduate. Nearly 40 percent of the students with disabilities were altering their postsecondary pursuits due to educational debt or financial barriers."[11]

As mentioned, all systems and barriers are connected. Financial barriers are impacted or worsened by attitudinal, organizational and systemic, information and communication, architectural and physical, and technological barriers. For example, the impact of various barriers can be seen in the lower employment rates of people with disabilities. According to a blog from University of Alberta, UofA Sociology professor Michelle Maroto says:

Canadians with disabilities have employment rates almost 40 per cent lower than the general population and are much more likely to experience poverty.[12]

In Ontario, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides social assistance through income and employment support to people with disabilities. The financial support provided through ODSP is very limited and does not reflect the cost of living. As of 2022, ODSP provides less financial support per year ($14,000) than what is considered the "poverty line" ($18,000).[13]

ODSP 2021

Average single adult receives:

- $672/month ($8064/year) of "Basic Need Coverage" if they own a home OR

[11] Tony Chambers and Melissa Bolton. "Assessment of Debt Load and Financial Barriers Affecting Students with Disabilities in Canadian Postsecondary Education, Ontario Report." Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. https://heqco.ca/pub/assessment-of-debt-load-and-financial-barriers-affecting-students-with-disabilities-in-canadian-postsecondary-education-ontario-report/.

[12] Mcmaster, Geoff. "Canadians with Disabilities Face Barriers to Financial Security, Researchers Find." Folio. University of Alberta, August 4, 2020. https://www.ualberta.ca/folio/2020/08/canadians-with-disabilities-face-barriers-to-financial-security-researchers-find.html.

[13] "Just the Facts - Basic Statistics about Poverty in Canada." Canada Without Poverty. Canada Without Poverty, July 29, 2020. https://cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/.

- $1,169/month ($14,028/year) if they rent[14]
- Can earn $200.00 a month in income, anything over clawed back at 50%
- ODSP coverage provides significantly less than the determined Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO) of $25,920.00. LICO represents the poverty line in urban areas of Canada (with a population of 500,000 or more). [15]

Queen's Policies and Procedures

Activity: KWL Knowledge Check (optional)

1. What is something you wonder about supporting people with disabilities and doing your part to ensure accessibility here at Queen's University
2. What additional information might you need to gather to support and make our cramps more accessible for people with disabilities

This next section gives you some of the information you need to answer questions regarding policies and procedures that support and reinforce accessibility for people with disabilities.

Queen's has a variety of policies and processes designed to enhance accessible customer service for the Queen's Community. These policies and processes have been designed with the following principles in mind:

- Independence
- Dignity
- Integration and
- Equality of opportunity.

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[14] "6.1 - Basic Needs Calculation: Ontario Disability Support Program Policy Directives for Income Support." ontario.ca. https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-disability-support-program-policy-directives-income-support/61-basic-needs.

[15] "Low Income Cut-Offs (Licos) before and after Tax by Community Size and Family Size, in Current Dollars." Low-income cut-offs (LICOs) before and after tax by community size and family size, in current dollars. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, March 23, 2022. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110024101.

Independence

Ensuring people are able to do things on their own without unnecessary help, or interference from others.

Dignity

A person with a disability is valued and deserving of effective and full service and not treated as an afterthought.

Integration

Integration means providing service in a way that allows the people with disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers.

Equal Opportunity

Equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others. In the case of services, it means that people with disabilities have the same opportunity as others to benefit from the way you provide goods or services.

Queen's Accessibility Policy

Queen's endeavors to be a leader in accessibility. We are a community that works together to create an environment where everyone has a full and enriching experience. Accordingly, the university will take steps to facilitate the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to people with disability to ensure access to Queen's University goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, and premises. This policy does not replace or change our legal obligations towards people with disability under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Procedures for Temporarily Unavailable Facilities and Services

Queen's University is required to provide notification of temporary disruptions in those facilities or services (in whole or in part) made available for people with disability so that they may obtain, use or benefit from the University's goods, services, or facilities.

Feedback Opportunities

Queen's University is committed to accessibility for people with disability. We do this through the provision of accessible service in the areas of information and communication, facilities, and customer service.

- Use our Accessibility Feedback Form to provide feedback on an accessibility-related issue.
- Queen's also ensures the feedback process is accessible by providing accessible formats or communication supports on request.
- Policies Regarding Accommodations, Assistive Devices, and Supports

Policies Regarding Accommodations, Assistive Devices, and Supports

Assistive Devices

Queen's University recognizes that some people with disabilities may use personal assistive devices while accessing goods, services, or facilities, except in circumstances where the use of a personal assistive device contravenes existing policies and/or legislation governing the delivery and/or use of particular goods, services, or facilities.

Service Animals

Service Animals are accommodated, subject to obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Support Persons

The Customer Service to Persons Who Use Support Persons Guidelines have been created to support the Queen's Accessibility Policy. These guidelines are intended to provide helpful information on the law and assist in providing a respectful, safe and welcoming environment for all people with disability who are accompanied by their support persons.

Policies Regarding Accommodations, Assistive Devices, and Supports

Alternate Formats

It is critical to ensure everyone has equal access to all of the information they need in their work, classes, extracurriculars, and day-to-day lives. Alternate formats are required under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). Alternate formats are simply ways of providing information in ways other than how it was originally produced.

It is critical to ensure everyone has equal access to all of the information they need in their work, classes, extracurriculars, and day to day lives. Alternate formats are required under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). Alternate formats are simply ways of providing information in ways other than how it was originally produced.

Why are alternate formats important for persons with disabilities?

Persons with disabilities receive, convey and make use of information in a wide variety of ways.

- Some persons with disabilities may not be able to read print but can access the information using other formats such as audio, Braille, enlarged text and screen-reading software.

- Closed captioning, CART (communication access real-time translation), sign language and text are all different types of alternate formats that people with hearing loss use to access information.
- Some people with physical disabilities (such as low upper body strength) may find it easier to access information using audio formats as the effort to hold a book or sheet of papers can be quickly tiring.
- Alternative formats are important and beneficial to all people not just people with disabilities requiring particular format accommodations.

It is best to plan and to prepare your information in an accessible manner to ensure equal access from the start. If you are interested in learning more, the Accessibility Hub has developed many tutorials to assist you in this process which will be linked at the end of training.

For faculty, it is important to determine early on what course material they will be using in the upcoming academic year. Students registered with the Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) may require these course materials in alternate format prepared by Library Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Adaptive Technology Centre (ATC) in Stauffer Library. Processes such as this may take time, either weeks or months, so proper planning and preparation can reduce the response time to individual requests.

Types of alternate formats:

Braille

A tactile system of cells and dots.

Closed Captioning

Captioning translates the audio portion of a video presentation by way of subtitles, or captions, which usually appear on the bottom of the screen. Captioning may be closed or open. Closed captions can only be seen on a television screen equipped with a closed caption decoder. Open captions are "burned on" a video and appear whenever the video is shown.

Captioning makes television programs, films and other visual media with sound accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Described Video:

With described video (also known as descriptive audio) all relevant action scenes and on-screen text (such as credits) in video, TV programming, Web-based multi-media or movies is described and read by a narrator.

Digital Audio:

Can be in MP3 format, with human voice, no navigational features or Daisy which stands for Digital Accessible Information System. The DAISY/NISO Standard is the Digital Talking Book (DTB) specification for accessible digital textbooks. This format includes ability to find and go to specific chapters and pages.

ePUB:

ePUB is an electronic book format that has become the industry standard, allowing eBooks that use this format to be read on a wide variety of e-Readers.

E-Text:

Electronic Text is a general term for any document that is read in digital form, but especially a document that is mainly text. The most common four file types of electronic formats used in the education setting are: Microsoft Word, Portable Document Format (PDF), PowerPoint, and Excel Spreadsheets.

Large Print:

Print enlargement on paper, minimum 18-point font size.

Service animals

There are various types of service animals that support people with various types of disabilities.

- A person with vision loss may use a guide dog.
- Hearing alert animals help people with hearing loss.

- Other service animals are trained to alert a person to an oncoming seizure, or to assist people with autism, mental health disabilities, physical disabilities and other disabilities.

Under the Customer Service Standard, there are no restrictions on what type of animal can be used as a service animal. An animal is considered a service animal if

- you can easily identify it's a service animal through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or vest,
- the person with a disability provides documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms they need the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Service animal tips

Don't touch or distract a service animal. It's not a pet, it's a working animal and has to pay attention at all times. Additionally, never make a request for the owner to leave the animal in a different location, such as outside of your office or classroom.

- If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer. You may ask to see their documentation from a regulated health professional.
- The customer is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. However, you can provide water for the animal if your customer requests it.
- The owner is responsible for maintaining control over the animal at all time. You are not responsible for cleaning up after it or feeding it. You may provide water if the owner requests it.

Are there any locations on campus where service animals are not permitted?

Under the standard, universities must permit service animals in all areas to which the public normally have access. There are only a few exceptions where a service animal would be excluded by law, as in these examples:

- The Health Protection and Promotion Act (1990) does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale. However, the Act does contain specific exemptions for service dogs only, allowing them to accompany their owners into areas where food is normally served, sold or offered for sale.
- In some unique situations where the presence of the animal presents a significant risk for another person, say for example in cases of severe allergies,the university is required to meet the needs of both persons in these situations and would have to devise an accommodation plan that enables both persons to access services and goods accordingly.
- Some municipal by-laws restrict certain breeds of animals or dogs from the municipality and these by-laws apply even if the animal is acting as a service animal.

If another person's health or safety could be seriously impacted by the presence of a service animal, such as a severe allergy:

Consider all options and try to find a solution that meets the needs of both people. For example:

- creating distance between the two people
- eliminating in-person contact
- changing the time the two receive service
- any other way that would allow the person to use their service animal on the premises

If you can't easily identify that it's a service animal:

- Don't make assumptions. You can ask the person to provide documentation (such as a letter, note or form) from a regulated health professional that states that they require the animal because of their disability.
- If the person shows you the documentation, then they must be allowed to be accompanied by their service animal.
- The person is not required to disclose their disability or demonstrate how the animal assists them.

Therapy, emotional support, and comfort animals

The terms "therapy animals", "emotional support animals", and "comfort animals" are not defined by legislation in Ontario. Therapy, emotional support, and comfort animals qualify as Service Animals when the animal meets the Service Animal definition found in the Customer Service Standards and documentation from one of the regulated health professionals listed in the Standards are provided to confirm that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to their disability.

For further information please consult the [Queen's Service Animals on Campus policy](#)

People with a support person

A support person can be a paid personal support worker, an intervenor, volunteer, family member or friend. A support person might help your customer with communication, mobility, personal care or with accessing your services.

A person with a disability is permitted to bring their support person with them to any area of your premises that is open to the public or to third parties.

"A support person assisting someone in a wheelchair."

According to the Accessible Customer Service Standard, you are required to provide advanced notice of admission costs for support persons, if any. Be mindful that persons with disabilities who use a support person often cannot attend events or participate in activities without their support person.

Consider waiving admission costs for support people for Queen's Events. For example, your event notice could state that support people will not be charged for admission or registration, but a small or reduced fee will be charged for food or meals consumed.

Support person tips:

- Address the person with the disability directly, rather than the support person, unless directed otherwise by the person with the disability.
- Both the person with a disability and their support person will be provided with access to all public areas in a respectful manner.
- The person with a disability may choose not to introduce the support person. If you are not sure, it is appropriate to ask, "Is this your interpreter or support person?"
- Address the person appropriately, for example: "Would you like a hard or soft cover textbook?" as opposed to "Can you ask them if they want hard or soft cover?"
- Remember that support persons, especially interpreters, tend to communicate everything to the person. Avoid engaging in "side" conversations with the interpreter, thinking these will not be conveyed to the person with the disability.
- Plan for the presence of support persons, e.g., help facilitate the interpreting process by reserving seats of persons who are deaf and by allocating space near presenters for interpreters.
- Where possible, provide written materials to both the person with the disability and the support person.
- During event planning, note the location of washrooms that will accommodate persons with disabilities and their support persons.
- Guidelines for Customer Service to Persons Who Use Support Persons

Assistive devices

An assistive device is a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help with daily living. Most assistive devices are "personal assistive devices," such as a wheelchair or walker, white cane, hearing aid, oxygen tank or communication board. They belong to the person using them and are part of their personal space. Many people with disabilities who use personal assistive devices see these devices as extensions of the body and/or a part of personal space and bodily autonomy.

Serving a customer with personal assistive device tips:

- Don't move assistive devices or equipment (such as canes or walkers) out of the person's reach.
- Describe what you are going to do before you do it.

Devices offered at Queen's:

For equipment or devices used by Queen's or by your Unit for an event, make sure you know how to use them. It may be helpful to have instruction manuals handy or an instruction sheet posted where the device is located or stored. Some examples of devices that might be offered include:

- mobility devices, such as a manual wheelchair or motorized scooter
- lift, which raises or lowers people who use mobility devices
- technology that makes it easier for people with disabilities to communicate or access information, such as certain computer software, an amplification system or a TTY phone line
- adjustable desk or workstation, which changes the height or tilt of a writing surface
- accessible interactive kiosk, which might offer information or services in braille or through audio headsets

Offering assistance tips:

Here are a few other situations you might encounter on campus where you can potentially offer assistance according to your own abilities. The best way to offer assistance is to ask: "How can I help?". Remember: always ask or offer help before assuming or acting! If according to your own abilities, you could:

- Ask someone who uses a walker if they would like your help with getting the books they need from the top shelf.
- Call Facilities as soon as you notice that a power door opener doesn't work or notice that the elevator in your department is out of service.
- Ask if someone with vision loss would like for you to read aloud some written materials that were circulated during a meeting of a committee.
- Ensure you are doing your part to provide accessible formats, materials, practices, policies, and spaces. For example, when planning an event be sure to question - is this event accessible? Who might this event not be accessible to in its current form and what do I need to do to change that?
- Ask if repeating or providing multiple phrasings or formats of a question could be helpful to a student who is hard of hearing.
- Ask student in significant distress what would be a supportive resource for them. For example, ask if the student would like you to call a supportive friend or family member or if they would like you to involve campus mental health services or emergency support.
- Ask a power chair user who is visiting campus if you could help them find accessible seating, relevant accessible facilities, or relevant support persons at a meeting or event.

Background and General Tips

In this next section, we will discuss accessible customer service for people with a variety of disabilities. It is important to remember that accessible customer service is about:

- not making assumptions about what a person can or cannot do because of their disability
- inclusion – making everyone feel welcome and included
- understanding that people with disabilities may have different needs and what those needs may be
- creating broader access and safety for all

General Tips for Affirming and Accessible Customer Service

Be respectful and affirming in your language choices. Keep up to date with best language practices, for example, use the term disability rather than outdated language like handicapped.

Good customer service and supportive relationships of all kinds involve consent and permission. Unless asked, do not touch or interact with service animals, assistive technology, physical mobility aids, support persons, and any other supports a person with disabilities uses. Think of these supports and assistive devices, such as wheelchairs or powerchairs, as extensions of the person's personal space – touch these only if you are asked to. Do not touch someone to physically assist or guide them unless you've asked to and consent has been given.

Speak directly to the person with a disability and not their support person, companion, or interpreter. Ignoring or talking over a person with a disability is patronizing and an affront to their dignity.

Model the language people use for themselves when appropriate - Some people with disabilities prefer "people first language", for example, saying "people with a disability" as opposed to "disabled person". For others, they

may feel most affirmed by identity-first language, such as "disabled person". However, not all language people use for themselves is what they want others to use, especially if you are an acquaintance or non-disabled yourself. When unsure of the ways people refer to themselves and their disability using person-first language such as "people with disabilities" is recommended.

When appropriate, reference specific disabilities, such as a person with a developmental disability, a person who is blind or has vision loss, or a person who uses a wheelchair. Being specific can help ensure persons with disabilities are provided with the most relevant support and are affirmed in their specific experience of disability. However, remember this specificity and detail is not needed in many situations to actually provide support, accommodation, or accessibility to those you are interacting with.

Remember: no one is entitled to details or specifics about someone's disability.

Avoid a tone of sympathy or pity that assumes that people with disabilities are suffering, "victims", or feel negatively about their disabilities. Also avoid using a tone of inspiration, awe, or surprise when discussing and interacting with people with disabilities. While treating people with disabilities as inspiring may seem positive, pleasant or uplifting it actually is dehumanizing and objectifying because it sees people with disabilities as inspirational and exceptional for simply existing and engaging in everyday ordinary tasks.

Check out the video below to learn more about the harms of tokenizing inspirational narratives of disability.

The video features the late comedian, journalist, and disability rights activist Stella Young. [16]

Always avoid harmful stigmatizing and ableist language and slurs. Due to systemic ableism, many slurs and stereotypes are prevalent and

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[16] I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much. Youtube. TED, 2014.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K9Gg164Bsw&ab_channel=TED

normalized. It is everyone's job to learn more about ableist language and its tremendous impact. We all play a role in correcting and redirecting ourselves and others. Remember, ableist language and slurs are harmful whether or not they are directed at a person with disabilities. Continued use of ableist words entrenches ableist ideas and values.[17]

Examples of Harmful Language

Content warning - slurs and ableist rhetoric below.

Words such as "crazy" or "insane" are indicative of ableism toward mental illness. These words further stigmatize mental health and illness.

Phrases like "confined to a wheelchair", physically challenged, or "stricken" with a particular illness or disability evoke ableist concepts of people with disabilities as suffering or limited.

Words like "spaz", "lame", or "crippled" have a long history as derogatory descriptions of physical disabilities. These words, like all ableist slurs, are harmful whether or not they are directed at people with disabilities.

Phrases like "tone deaf" and "blind ignorance" equate being ignorant and unaware with disability. These phrases are ableist as they imply a hierarchy of non-disabled ways of being and suggest people with disabilities are lacking. Remember, disabilities are not a lack of perception but rather disability highlights different ways of perceiving and engaging.

The word "retarded" or "retardation" is incredibly offensive and ableist.

To learn more about <u>harmful ableist language</u> .18

- Dismiss your stereotypes and avoid making assumptions about a person's disability or capabilities. Many persons with disabilities often

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[17] Dear Everybody Tips on Ableist and First Person Language. Toronto: Holland Bloorview. http://deareverybody.hollandbloorview.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/DearEverybodyTipsonAbleistLanguage2018-19.pdf
[18] Ableism & Language. Youtube. Social Work Technical Writer, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSpaHUDkHoE&ab_channel=SocialWorkTechnicalWriter

talk about being frustrated with people assuming what they can or can't do.

- Speak directly to the person with a disability and not their support person, companion, or interpreter. Ignoring or talking over the person with the disability is patronizing and an affront to their dignity.
- If you make a mistake or have done something that negatively impacted a person with disability, apologize and correct yourself and the behaviour in the moment. Be responsive to the person or people you have impacted and take your cue from them. If the impacted person desires or the mistake warrants further discussion or clarification be sure to follow through on these next steps when appropriate.
- Unless prompted by the person with a disability you have impacted avoid dragging out your apology, trying to "explain it away", looking for forgiveness, or asking the people with disability to teach you how to do better. Instead take on more learning and research yourself at your earliest opportunity.
- When you don't know what to do, it's always best to ask the person with a disability, "How can I best be of help to you?".

Check out this entertaining and informative video created by the DC Government on how to (and how not to) interact with people with disabilities:[19]

People with Physical or Mobility Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities – not all require a wheelchair or powerchair. Also, some people are ambulatory wheelchair users that may not use their wheelchair all of the time. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or temporary disabilities may have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting. In many cases, just because a

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[19] Disability Sensitivity Training Video. Youtube. DC Government, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv1aDEFlXq8&ab_channel=dcgovernment

disability is physical doesn't mean it is obvious or easy to identify. Physical disabilities are diverse and unique and as such it may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a physical disability:

- Ask before you help. People with disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
- When meeting a person using a wheelchair or walker, do offer to shake their hand, even if they appear to have limited use of their arms. This common action of personal contact creates a warm environment for communication.
- If the person uses a wheelchair or powerchair and the conversation is expected to last longer than a few moments, find somewhere to sit down nearby. This enables you to make eye contact on the same level and reduces neck strain for the person having to look up at you. Don't crouch to make eye contact as it can be belittling and an affront to dignity.
- Don't make assumptions about a person's capabilities. Some people can walk with assistance but use a wheelchair, powerchair, or scooter to conserve energy or move around quickly.
- Remember that the person's assistive device is part of their personal space. Don't lean or rest your foot on the wheelchair or powerchair, walker or other equipment.
- Don't move items or equipment, such as canes or walkers, out of the person's reach or without consent.
- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
- If the person is accompanied by a support person or companion, speak to the person directly. It is annoying and frustrating not to be included in a conversation that involves you.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of accessible features located nearby, such as accessible entrances, washrooms, elevators and

lifts. Although a student who uses a walker, for example, may be familiar with some parts of campus, they may still ask a faculty or staff member the location of the nearest accessible washroom.

- When hosting or planning an event, ensure events are accessible. Always let attendees know about the location of these features beforehand, for example in event posters or other announcements.
- If the service counter at your office space is too high for a person using a wheelchair or powerchair to see over, step around it to provide service. Have a clipboard handy if filling in forms or providing a signature is required.

People who are Blind or have Low Vision

The organization, CNIB says: the term "blindness" covers a broad spectrum of visual disability, from when your sight is impaired enough to interfere with daily activities like reading, cooking or driving, up to total blindness. Most people with blindness are not totally blind and many can see some light, outline, colour, peripheral or central vision.[20]

People with visual disabilities may use other terms such as partial vision, vision loss, and low vision to describe their disability or the degree of their blindness. For some people the term "vision loss" feels limiting because it frames blindness as a loss or impairment rather than focusing on blindness as another valued way of perceiving and being.

Some people may use a guide dog, a white cane, or a support person such as a sighted guide, while others may not.

When communicating and interacting with someone with who is Blind or has low vision:

- When you know someone has low vision, don't assume the person can't see you. Many people with low vision have some vision.

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[20] "What is Blindness?" CNIB Foundation. https://cnib.ca/en/sight-loss-info/blindness/what-blindness?region=ab

- Identify yourself when you approach someone who is blind and speak directly to them even if they are with a companion. Don't raise your voice. Say your name even if you know the person well, since many voices sound similar.
- Ask if your customers would like you to read, describe, or summarize any printed information out loud to them, such as a menu, a bill, or a schedule.
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive (for example, "two steps in front of you" or "a metre to your left"). Don't say "over there" or point in the direction indicated.
- When offering to guide someone with blindness, stand on the side they direct you and hold out your elbow. When they've taken it, walk at a normal pace and the person will usually walk a step behind. Announce handrails, doors (e.g., to the left, right, push/pull to open) and describe the surrounding areas.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the surroundings. For example, if you're approaching stairs or an obstacle, say so.
- If you need to leave the customer, let them know by telling them you'll be back or saying goodbye.
- When guiding someone do not leave them in the middle of a room – guide them to a chair or comfortable location.
- If you're not sure how to give directions, ask the person what would be most helpful.
- Do not touch or speak to service animals. They are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- When offering a visual description don't assume that details don't matter. Ensure visual descriptions are specific, accurate, and engaging.

What is alt-text?

Include alt-text for each image in online media and text material. Alt-text is a description of visuals, images, and graphics that is embedded into a

digital text so that people using assistive technologies can fully engage with the text. Alt-text should accompany everything from ads to infographics to portraits alongside online biographies.

For example, alt-text for the image to the left might be:

Photograph of a vast field of vibrant red poppies with green stems. In the distance are two grassy mountains coming together to make a valley. The sky is bright blue with wispy white clouds.

Activity: Knowledge Check

Think or write some alt-text for this image.

After you have written some alt-text, place your cursor over the image to see if you wrote something similar.

Remember: be specific but concise in your description.

People who are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing

People who are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing may identify in different ways that affirm and/or describe their experience. For example, people may refer to themselves as experiencing deafness or hearing loss, or as d/Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, oral deaf, or Hard of Hearing (HOH). For some people

the term "hearing loss" feels limiting because it frames deafness as a loss or impairment rather than focusing on deafness as another valued way of perceiving and being. These terms can be used to describe different levels of hearing or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost.

- A person who is Hard of Hearing has a mild to profound hearing loss.
- A person who is deafened previously were hearing and have lost significant hearing gradually or suddenly.
- People who are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing may use devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM systems or may use speech-reading (also known as lip reading).
- A person who is d/Deaf has severe to profound hearing loss and may depend upon visual rather than auditory communication.
- Oral deaf refers to a person who is d/Deaf and whose preferred mode of communication is verbal and auditory. The person may or may not use sign language.
- Deaf spelled with a capital D is usually used to refer to people who are Deaf and who identify with the culture, society, and/or sign language.
- A person might use a hearing aid, an amplification device or hearing ear dog. They may have preferred ways to communicate, for example, through sign language, by lip reading, or using a pen and paper.

When communicating and interacting with someone who is d/Deaf:

- Once someone has self-identified as being d/Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing, make sure you face the customer when talking and that you are in a well-lit area so the person can see you clearly.
- Speak clearly, pacing your speech and pauses normally. You don't have to shout, exaggerate or over-pronounce your words.
- If possible, find a quiet place to converse – background noise can be hard to filter out.

- Don't stand in front of a window or light as it shades your face – poor light and shadows can make it difficult to speech read.
- Don't put your hands, glasses or other objects such as a pen, in front of your face when speaking. This too can make speech reading difficult.
- As needed, attract the person's attention before speaking. Try a gentle tap on the shoulder or discreet wave of your hand.
- Maintain eye contact. Use body language, gestures and facial expressions to help you communicate.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or if possible, move to a quieter area.
- Don't assume that the customer knows sign language or reads lips.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (for example, using a pen and paper).
- When using a sign language interpreter, look and speak directly to the customer, not the sign language interpreter. For example, say "What would you like?" not "Ask them what they'd like."
- If necessary, ask the person for suggestion on how to improve the communication. They may ask you to move away from the light, speak a little more slowly or perhaps even use a pen and paper.

People who are Deafblind

A person who is d/Deafblind has some degree of both hearing and vision disability. People who are d/Deafblind are often accompanied by an intervenor, a professional support person who helps with communication. Intervenors are trained in Two Hand Manual sign language that involves touching the hands of the client.

People who are d/Deafblind might also use the assistance of braille, large print, a hearing aid, magnification equipment, white cane, or service animal.

When communicating and interacting with someone who is deafblind:

Speak directly to the person you are interacting with not to the intervenor.

People who are deafblind likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or note.

Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deafblind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.

Suddenly touching a person who is deafblind can be alarming and should only be done in emergencies.

People with Speech and Language Disabilities

Cerebral palsy, stroke, hearing disability or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or express themselves. People with speech disability may have difficulties with articulation or stuttering. A person with a language disability may experience difficulty understanding others (receptive) or sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a speech or language disabilities:

- Don't assume that a person who has difficulty speaking doesn't understand you. Many people with speech disabilities share that because they have difficultly speaking that people treat them like they are unintelligent or incapable.
- Remember that anxiety can often aggravate a speech disability – your being relaxed will help reduce the other person's anxiety.
- Speak directly to the person you are interacting with and not to their companion or support person.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no."

- If the person uses a communication device, take a moment to read visible instructions for communicating with them.
- Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish the person's you are interacting with's sentences.
- Confirm what the person has said by summarizing or repeating what you've understood and allow the person to respond – don't pretend if you're not sure.
- If necessary, provide other ways for the customer to contact you, such as email.

People with Learning or Development Disabilities

The term "learning disabilities" refers to a range of disabilities and experiences. Examples include dyslexia (difficulty understanding written words), dyscalculia (difficulty solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts) and auditory or visual processing disorders (difficulty understanding language, not to be confused with hearing or visual disabilities). This disability may become apparent when the person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing. People with learning disabilities just learn in a different way.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a learning disability:

- Be patient and allow extra time if needed. People with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information or to understand and respond.
- Provide information in a way that works best for that person. For example, even if you have written notes, it may be helpful to verbalize the information too. If you are not sure, gently ask the person if there's a different way you can provide the information that would be helpful.

- Be willing to rephrase or explain something again in another way, if needed.

Developmental disabilities (such as Down syndrome) or intellectual disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do every day physical activities or live independently.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a developmental or intellectual disability:

- Remind yourself to be patient.
- Speak more slowly and leave pauses for the person to process your words.
- Use plain language and avoid jargon.
- Speak directly to the person.
- Ask one question at a time, giving the person time to formulate and give their reply.
- Don't move items or equipment, such as canes or walkers, out of the person's reach or without consent.
- If you're not sure of what is being said to you, confirm by summarizing or repeating what was said, or politely ask them to repeat it – don't pretend if you're not sure.
- Ask the customer if they would like help reading your material or completing a form and wait for them to accept the offer of assistance.

People with Mental Health Disabilities

Did you know mental illness is the leading cause of disability in Canada? By the time Canadians reach 40 years of age, 1 in 2 have—or have had—a mental illness.[21] Findings released from Statistics Canada in September 2021, indicate that the prevalence of mental illnesses is increasing.

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[21] "Mental Illness and Addiction: Facts and Statistics." CAMH. https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics

One in four (25%) Canadians aged 18 and older screened positive for symptoms of depression, anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in spring 2021, up from one in five (21%) in fall 2020.[22]

Mental health disability is a broad term for many emotional, psychological, traumatic, or mental health conditions that can range in severity. Examples of mental health disabilities include: anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder (BPD), substance abuse, anorexia, schizo-effective disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic attacks, and dissociative disorder. Mental health disabilities are usually not visible. Mental health disabilities may affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things.

You may not know someone has this disability unless you are told. Stigma and lack of understanding are major attitudinal barriers for people with mental health disabilities.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a mental health disability:

- Treat people with mental health disabilities with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else. Do not assume how someone's mental health disability impacts their experience and interactions.
- Be confident, calm, clear, understanding, and reassuring in communication and providing support.
- If your know or it appears someone might be experiencing panic or distress (acute or chronic) ask what supports are most useful to them in that moment. Offer appropriate alternatives that may help alleviate the distress, such as a quiet place to speak, fresh air, phoning a supportive person, providing more personal space or time.

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[22] Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. "Survey on Covid-19 and Mental Health, February to May 2021." The Daily, October 4, 2021. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210927/dq210927a-eng.htm.

- Regularly familiarize yourself with Queen's protocols and local community-based resources for dealing with situations of mental health crises and distress
- Consider expanding your learning with a mental health first aid course like Suicide Alert Training.
- As with all people, in the unlikely event that a person's distress becomes confrontational or unsafe for yourself, others, or the person themself, remain patient and calm, set necessary boundaries, and seek out urgent support.

Other Disabilities

Chronic health conditions, such as asthma, arthritis, diabetes, lupus, sickle cell anemia, and hemophilia, are disabilities that may affect a person's ability to move around, sit or stand or do other things. Many people don't think of these health conditions as disabilities requiring accessibility considerations but in some cases, they do. You will probably not know that someone has a disability. Since universities have no way of identifying all of the persons with disabilities who may use its services, university employees should think more frequently and naturally about accessibility in their activities, services and interactions.

Scenarios and knowledge check

Accessible customer service

Your upper-year seminar is on the top floor, and you realize that one of the elevators is broken. You see one of your students, Devan, who has a broken ankle and is using crutches. When you ask the students to give you 10 minutes to find a suitable location for Devan, you overhear a student saying to another, "What's the big deal? Devan should just suck it up and get on with it."

- How do you ensure you uphold the AODA principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity?
- How do you ensure the seminar will be accessible for Devan? And
- how do you address your students who used subtly ableist rhetoric that minimizes the importance of accessibility?
- Ensure to find an accessible space for your class, you can also adapt by running your seminar virtually for the week to give yourself more time to find an ongoing accessible option.
- Check in with Devon to see how you can best support them.
- Follow up with the students privately when you get a chance and reiterate the importance of ensuring everyone is accommodated.

Student Scenario

You are hosting a meet and greet event at your club, which takes place in an active learning space involving lots of walking and writing. The whiteboards used for activities are at a height only accessible while standing. As you observe the event, you notice some participants making ableist remarks.

To ensure you uphold the AODA principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity, there are several steps you can take. Firstly, ensure your space is accessible before and immediately upon notification, which may require making accommodations and adaptations on short notice.

- Address the ableist remarks by intervening promptly. You can approach the individual privately to discuss their behavior and its impact. If the remarks are more widespread, consider addressing them publicly to remind everyone of respectful behavior expectations.
- Additionally, consider co-creating or sharing a "Community Agreement" before the meet and greet. This document can outline expectations for respectful conduct, fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels safe and valued

Staff Scenario

Your unit is updating its website with bios and photos of employees. You recommend adding alt text for web accessibility. Your colleague responds, "Is it really that big of a deal?"

- Ensure alt-text and accessibility are built into the website from the start.
- Explain the value of accessibility and the importance and requirement that webpages meet WCAG standards.
- Consult the HREO's Accessibility Hub for more information on accessible documents and webpages.

You have now completed the Customer Service Standard module.

This learning is a key step in ensuring our peers, colleagues, alumni, visitors, friends, and family with disabilities and access needs different than our own can engage in campus and community in safe, accessible, and affirming ways. You have learned about:

- the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- the requirements of the Customer Service Standard
- tips on interacting with people with various types of disabilities
- tips on interacting with people who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person
- what to do if a person with disability is having difficulty accessing your organization's goods, services or facilities
- Campus resources

Ask yourself

- What have I learned about serving and supporting people with disabilities at Queen's University?
- What has challenged my thinking about disability and accessibility?
- How can I apply what I have learned today?

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