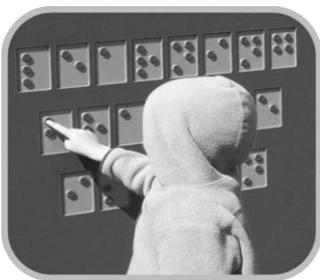




Town of Arnprior

Accessible Customer Service Guide



Available in other accessible formats upon request

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People with Disabilities

- Approximately 1 in 7 Canadians have a disability.
- This number is increasing as the population gets older.
- The government of Ontario believes it is important to address these individuals and their conditions, by making the province accessible to all persons, including those with various disabilities.

General Types of Disabilities

A disability can be visible, invisible, permanent, or temporary. It is not always easy to recognize an individual with a disability. Keep this in mind when dealing with customers.

Type of Disability	Description
Physical Disability	Difficulty moving, standing, sitting, etc. Does not always mean use of a wheelchair.
Hearing Impairment	Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing loss, etc. There is varying degrees of hearing impairment.
Vision Impairment	Reduction in one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind.
Deaf-Blind Impairment	A person who cannot see or hear to some extent. In most cases these individuals will be accompanied by a support worker.
Speech/ Language Impairment	Individuals who have problems communicating. Difficulty pronouncing words, slurring, stuttering, etc.
Mental Health Disability	An invisible type of disability. Examples being depression, anxiety disorders, etc.

Type of Disability	Description
Learning Disability	Individuals that may take longer to process information. There are varying degrees (mild to severe).
Intellectual/ Developmental Disability	These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. It may be difficult to recognize these types of disabilities.
Sensory Disabilities	Disabilities that affect various senses: taste, touch, smell, etc.
Other Conditions	Such as: asthma, various forms of cancer, etc.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The AODA became law in 2005. It applies to the public, broader public and private sector employers.

The purpose of the AODA is:

- To achieve a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.
- Develop accessibility standards.
- Implement accessibility standards.
- Enforce these accessibility standards.

AODA Standards

These Standards were developed to address the various barriers individuals with disabilities may experience. The goal of these standards is to provide accessible customer service to all persons, including those with disabilities.

AODA Standards	Key Areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service • Transportation • Employment • Information and Communications • Built Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goods • Services • Facilities • Accommodations • Employment • Buildings • Structures • Premises

Barriers

Barriers are present everywhere in society. It is important to note that when all individuals have access to places, people, and businesses everyone benefits. A barrier is defined as “anything that keeps someone with a disability from working, playing, shopping, studying, or getting around in our communities (AccessON.ca).” Barriers can be in the form of:

- Architectural
- Structural
- Information
- Communication
- Attitudinal
- Systemic
- Etc.

It is the environment that presents barriers for people with disabilities, not their conditions.

Customer Service Standard

The AODA Customer Service Standard requires:

- Accessible customer service policy, plan, procedures and practices are developed, implemented, and maintained.
- Staff training (all persons who interact with the public and/or third parties).
- A feedback method.
- Alternate communication methods.
- Notice of service disruptions.

What is Accessible Customer Service?

- **Flexible service** that meets the needs of an individual customer.
- Putting the **person first**.
- Understanding that some methods of service **may not work for all** people.
- Allowing for **comments and suggestions** on how to improve accessible customer service.
- Providing as much **notice** as possible if there is a **disruption** in service.
- Treating people with disabilities, with the same **respect** and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Being **patient, optimistic, and willing** to provide the best possible service.
- **Not making assumptions** about what type of disability an individual has, or if they even have a disability (remember some disabilities are invisible).
- **Always asking** before offering to help – do not just jump in to help.
- **Communicating clearly** and listening carefully.

Principles of Accessible Customer Service

- **Dignity** ~ making sure a customer with a disability is valued and provided with respect and ethical treatment, along with effective and full service.
- **Independence** ~ freedom from control or influence of others; freedom to make one's own choices.
- **Integration** ~ customers with disabilities fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other customers
- **Equal Opportunity** ~ a stipulation that all people should be treated similarly, unhampered by artificial barriers, prejudices, or preferences.

Methods of Assistance

Method	Description and Tips
Assistive Devices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Devices that allow persons with disabilities to participate in society have independence, and access goods and services.• Examples: wheelchairs, hearing aids, scooters, canes, walkers, braces, computer software programs and equipment, TTY machines, etc.• Do not separate a person from their device.• Know how to operate any assistive device your organization provides.
Service Animals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service animals are animals that have been trained to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities.• These animals are allowed anywhere customers normally have access (unless prohibited by another law – ex. food industry).

Method	Description and Tips
Support Persons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual relied on by a person with a disability for certain services or assistance. A support person may be a paid professional, volunteer, family member, or friend. • Support persons must be allowed to accompany an individual with a disability to any part of the organization that is open to the public or third parties • Speak to the customer, not just the support person. In confidential matters ask the customer if they would like their support person present.

Providing Accessible Customer Service

Disability Type	Tips for Accessible Customer Service
Visually Impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume the individual can't see you. • Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to him or her. • Offer to help guide the person – always ask first • Identify landmarks or other details to orient your customer to the environment. Be precise and specific in your descriptions. • Do not walk away without saying goodbye.
Hearing Impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract the customer's attention before speaking (Ex. gentle touch on the shoulder, wave). • Do not shout. • Make sure customer can see your face. • Reduce background noise or move to quiet area if the customer wears a hearing aid.

Disability Type	Tips for Accessible Customer Service
Deaf-Blind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who is deaf-blind is likely to explain how to communicate with him or her. • Usually these individuals are accompanied by a support person.
Intellectual/ Developmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. • Use plain language. • Make sure your customer understands what you've said. • Provide one piece of information at a time. • You may want to ask if the information needs to be repeated. • Do not be patronizing or belittling.
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient — people with some kinds of learning disabilities may take a little longer to process, understand and respond. • Provide information in a way that works for your customer. • Be prepared and willing to explain any materials you provide for your customers
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and focus on meeting the customer's needs. • If the person appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask before you help. • Respect your customer's personal space. • Do not move assistive devices out of customers reach. • Inform your customer about accessible features in the immediate environment (Ex. automatic doors, elevator, accessible washroom, ramps, etc.)

Disability Type	Tips for Accessible Customer Service
Speech/ Language Impairment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume that just because a person has this disability they also have another. • Give your customer whatever time they need to get their point across. • Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no," if possible. • Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences. Wait for them to finish.

Service Disruptions/ Documentation

When there is a disruption in service at your organization:

- Notify the public of any service disruptions ahead of time.
- The notice of disruption needs to include information about the reason for disruption, anticipated duration of disruption, and a description of alternative facilities or service if any that are available.
- Make notifications visible, and accessible.

Accessible documentation/ notification options:

Some different types of accessible documentation/ notification are as follows:

- Large print
- Braille
- CD-ROM
- E-mail
- DVD
- Etc.

It is good practice to be prepared for a request for accessible documentation.

Town of Arnprior Feedback Process

Should any member of the public or otherwise wish to make a complaint or suggestion regarding the accessible provision of goods or services they have received, they are able to advise the Town of Arnprior of their concern or suggestion through any of the following means:

- Through the Town website (www.arnprior.ca)
- In writing
- By telephone
- By attending the office to make the complaint in person

Make sure these comments or concerns are directed to the appropriate department responsible for delivering those goods or services.

What is my role at work?

As an employee of the Town of Arnprior you are to do your best to:

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

Please contact the Town of Arnprior Clerk's Department for any questions or concerns:

(613) 623-4231 Ext. 237 or Ext. 239