

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Name of Policy: Integrated Accessibility Standard

Category: Accessibility Standards

Issued by: Human Resources Department

Approved by: Executive Team

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Policy# CS-HR-007

Scope

This policy applies to all College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) employees, students, volunteers, consultants, agency personnel, and contractors/subcontractors and any other third party providing goods, services, or facilities on the CFPC's behalf.

This policy includes requirements and associated protocols applicable to both the Integrated Accessibility Standard and Customer Service Standard.

Purpose/Statement of Commitment

This document provides the framework within which accessibility plans and initiatives are to be created in order to raise levels of awareness at the CFPC and move the CFPC towards improved accessibility for people with disabilities, as prescribed in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Should this policy be contrary to any requirements provided by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, as amended, the applicable minimum statutory requirements will be applied.

The commitments in this policy are intended to ensure that accessibility remains a priority in the CFPC's decision-making process and will serve to assist in ensuring that decisions improve accessibility and do not inadvertently create barriers.

The CFPC recognizes the history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in Ontario and the fundamental importance of developing, implementing and enforcing standards in a timely manner in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities. To that end, the CFPC is committed to:

- Full compliance with all applicable AODA standards as they are introduced and become law.
- The principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity described in the AODA and to meeting the needs of people with disabilities, in a timely manner, through the implementation of this policy.
- To establishing, maintaining and implementing policies as well as associated practices and procedures in the Integrated Regulation, specifically in the areas of customer service, information and communications, and employment, and to meet the accessibility needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner.

- Making sure that people with disabilities are given the same chance to get, use, and benefit from CFPC's goods or services, including reasonable efforts so that the goods and services offered by the CFPC are given in a way which:
 - a. Respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities,
 - b. Is offered in the same way as other customers, unless a different way of offering the service is necessary, either on a temporary or permanent basis,
 - c. Gives everyone the same chance to get, use and benefit from the goods and services, and
 - d. Communicates with a person with a disability in a way that takes the person's disability into account.
- Excellence when providing a good or service, including to those with disabilities. When serving persons with disabilities, reasonable efforts will be made to provide the same level of service given to others and service will be provided in a manner that respects their dignity and independence. When providing information to, or communicating with, a person with a disability, information and communication will be provided in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.
- Ongoing improvements to accessibility in its premises and facilities as required by law, as well as to the services offered to patients, employees, volunteers, and members of the general public.
- Promoting values that support relationships between people with disabilities and the organization.
- Securing the involvement of people with disabilities in the development and review of its annual accessibility plan.
- The establishment, implementation, maintenance and documentation of a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization's strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under the Integrated Regulation.
- The incorporation of accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services, or facilities.
- The training of all employees, volunteers, people who deal with customers and the public on the CFPC's behalf, and persons participating in the development and approval of the CFPC's policies, practices and procedures on the requirements under the Integrated Regulation and Human Rights Code as it pertains to persons with disabilities.
- Implementing specific requirements, policies, practices, and procedures, and a multi-year plan under the Standards for Integrated Accessibility, Customer Service, Information and Communication, and Employment.

The CFPC, through the Human Resources department, will monitor and evaluate accessibility initiatives and changes to applicable legislation and/or regulations. Changes to policies, plans, and initiatives will be incorporated as required. The CFPC will also report on performance in relation to established accessibility goals and targets as required by AODA and as identified in the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.

Specific to the Integrated Accessibility Standard and Customer Service Standard:

Accessibility Plans

The CFPC has established a multi-year accessibility plan that outlines our strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility Standard. We will review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years. Our accessibility plan is posted on our website and will be available in an accessible format upon request.

Self Service Kiosks

Currently, the CFPC does not have self-serve kiosks. However, if the CFPC decides to design, procure or acquire self-serve kiosks at a future date, we will have regard to accessibility for people with disabilities.

Training

The CFPC will provide training to all of its employees and other individuals who have contact with the public or third parties on our behalf, and all individuals who are involved in the development of our policies, practices and procedures.

The training will be appropriate to the duties of the person being trained and will be provided as soon as practicable. Human Resources will keep records of the training provided, including the dates on which the training was received and the number of participants.

Our training program will consist of the following:

- (i) An overview of the purpose of the AODA and the requirements under the Integrated Accessibility and Customer Service Standards;
- (ii) training on the parts of the *Ontario Human Rights Code* that pertain to people with disabilities
- (iii) Training on how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- (iv) Training on 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;
- (v) Training on how to use equipment or devices available on the CFPC's premises or otherwise provided by the CFPC that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability;
- (vi) Training on what to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the CFPC's goods or services; and
- (vii) Training on our current policies, practices and procedures relating to the Customer Service Standard.

Training will be provided on an ongoing basis whenever CFPC makes changes to our policies, practices or procedures to ensure policy and legislation compliance.

Note, though legislation only requires remote employees (those who reside outside of Ontario) to be trained on the OHRC, the CFPC requires these individuals to also receive AODA training.

Use of Assistive Devices

People with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices, or those which may be offered by CFPC while getting goods and services given in any premise owned, leased, occupied or operated by CFPC. CFPC employees are trained on the use of various types of assistive devices used by people with disabilities accessing our goods and services so that they are better able to provide services to these individuals.

If a person with a disability uses an assistive device, the person will be allowed to enter all applicable CFPC premises with the device and to use the device, unless not allowed by law. Where the device is not allowed by law, the individual will be provided with the reason and the CFPC will look for other ways for the person to get the goods and/or services. Possible barriers to the use of assistive devices will be removed where they can be.

Use of Service Animals and Support Persons

A person with a disability who uses the assistance of a service animal is permitted to access all areas of our premises open to the public or third parties with the service animal, except where animals are not permitted by law. Where an animal is not allowed by law, or may affect the health and safety of other customers, other ways will be explored in order to provide service to a person with a disability.

If it is not readily identifiable that the animal is used by the person for reasons related to his or her disability, the CFPC may require documentation from a health practitioner, as defined in the AODA Customer Service Standard, that confirms that the animal is required for reasons related to disability.

CFPC employees are trained on how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

A person with a disability who requires the assistance of a support person will be allowed to enter all areas of our premises open to the public or third parties with the support person. The person with a disability will not be prevented from access to the support person at any time while on our premises and/or accessing CFPC goods or services. Sometimes permission by the person using a support person may be needed before letting the support person be at a private meeting or interview. Additionally, sometimes CFPC may determine that a support person is needed to go with a person with a disability to protect the health and safety of all persons.

If support persons are charged a participant fee, advance notice must be given about the amount that the support person must pay. Notice about fees for support persons may be posted on a sign, a brochure or on the website.

Notices of Temporary Disruption

If there is a temporary disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities CFPC will provide customers with notice of the temporary disruption as soon as possible. The notice of disruption will include the following information: (1) the reason for the disruption, (2) the anticipated duration of the disruption, and (3) a description of any alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be posted on all public entrances to our premises. Notice may also be given by posting the information on the premises, on the CFPC website, voicemail messaging or by any other reasonable method. Disruptions may be planned or unplanned, in whole or in part.

Feedback Process

In order to properly assess the needs of people with disabilities, the CFPC has a feedback process. The CFPC welcomes comments from individuals on how effectively we are accommodating people with disabilities in the provision of our goods and services:

- (a) Receiving Feedback - Feedback may be provided to Human Resources in person, in writing, by email, on USB/disk, or by another method. The feedback will be reviewed by Human Resources and forwarded to the appropriate person/department for response.
- (b) Responding to Complaints - The CFPC will address complaints that arise through the feedback process in a timely manner.

The CFPC will arrange for accessible formats or communication supports when requested in relation to the feedback process. Feedback from the public can be submitted to CFPC by website, email, in person, by mail, program survey, online web form, by fax, using TTY (Text Telephone) or by another communication technology. If the situation is urgent or requires faster action, departments must work to meet the urgency. If the situation is complex, departments must work out timelines together with the customer to find a solution.

Notice of Availability of Policy

This policy is posted on our website, and will be available in an accessible format upon request.

Format of Documents

The CFPC will provide a copy of this policy in an accessible format upon request.

Specific to the Information and Communication Standard:

Feedback

In order to make our feedback processes more accessible to people with disabilities we will provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request. We will respond to such requests in a timely manner and at no additional cost.

Accessibility Formats and Communication and Supports

We strive to provide information about our goods and services in formats that are accessible to our customers. The CFPC will provide accessible formats and communication supports as required under the Integrated Accessibility Standard at no additional cost. When an accessible format or communication support is requested, we will make the necessary arrangements in a timely manner that takes into account the person's accessibility needs due to disability. We will consult with the person making the request when determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication support. We will notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports (on our website).

Accessible Public Emergency Information

Currently, the CFPC does not prepare emergency procedures, plans or public safety information that is available to the public. If the CFPC prepares public emergency information at a future date, we will ensure that it is provided to a person with a disability in an accessible format upon request.

Web Accessibility

The CFPC recognizes the importance of website accessibility. Unless it is not practicable, we will incorporate the web accessibility features from the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") in accordance with the timetables set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standard.

Specific to the Employment Standard:

Recruitment

The CFPC understands the importance of accessibility during recruitment. We will notify current employees and the public about the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities during the recruitment process.

Job applicants that are selected to move forward in the recruitment process will be notified that accommodations are available upon request in relation to the materials and processes involved. If an accommodation is requested, we will consult with the applicant when determining a suitable accommodation.

The CFPC will notify successful job applicants about our policies related to the accommodation of employees with disabilities when making an offer of employment

Notification of Policies

The CFPC will inform our employees of all CFPC policies that support employees with disabilities, including policies on the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to disability. This information will be provided to new employees as soon as practicable after they begin their employment. Employees will be provided with updated information whenever there is a change to policies pertaining to the provision of job accommodations for employees with disabilities.

Accessible Formats and Communication Supports

When requested, we will provide accessible formats and communication supports to an employee with a disability for information that is needed in order to perform the employee's job and information that is generally available to employees in the workplace. The appropriate format or communication support will be selected after consulting with the employee making the request.

Individualized Workplace Emergency Response Information

Individualized workplace emergency response information will be prepared for employees with disabilities where the disability is such that the individualized information is necessary and the CFPC is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

Individualized workplace emergency response information will be prepared as soon as practicable after the CFPC becomes aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

With the employee's consent and where deemed necessary, a person(s) will be designated to provide assistance during an emergency.

An employee's individualized workplace emergency response plan will be reviewed:

- (a) when the employee moves to a different location;
- (b) when the employee's overall accommodations needs or plans are reviewed; and
- (c) when our general emergency response policies are reviewed.

Refer to the CFPC Workplace Emergency Response Information Guidelines for more detailed information.

Individual Accommodation Policy

Employees with disabilities will be provided with individualized accommodation plans. We have put in place a written process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. The process includes the eight elements set out in the Integrated Accessibility Standard. Refer to the CFPC Individual Accommodation Policy for more detailed information.

Return to Work Policy

We have put in place a documented return to work process for employees with disabilities who are returning to work and require disability-related accommodation. The return to work process outlines the steps the CFPC will take to facilitate the return to work of employees who were absent from work due to disability. It also incorporates the individualized accommodation plan in the process. Refer to the CFPC Return to Work Policy for more detailed information.

Performance Management, Career Development, and Redeployment

The CFPC will take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, including individualized accommodation plans, during performance management, career development and redeployment.

Specific to Design of Public Spaces Standard

The CFPC will comply with the requirements under the Design of Public Spaces Standard when building or making major modifications to public spaces. Procedures will be developed for (i) preventative and emergency maintenance, and (ii) temporary disruptions of the accessible elements that are put in place in compliance with the Design of Public Spaces Standard.

Every washroom on every floor of 2630 Skymark Avenue has an accessible stall. The CFPC has an additional washroom on the 1st floor which is also fully accessible.

Procedures

Specific Accountabilities

Human Resources

- Develop and maintain AODA policies and procedures
- Develop and maintain AODA training and content required
- Maintain training records for all CFPC employees
- Provide support to Managers and Employees to enable compliance to AODA
- Ensures the CFPC is compliant with the law and that our work environment is one that provides the widest feasible scope of access, which is the right or opportunity to reach, use or participate in the CFPC's systems, facilities and services
- Prepares and files compliance reports as required by legislation

Managers

- Ensure all employees follow the guidelines set out in this policy
- Ensure all employees are trained and educated on the Accessibility Regulations and Standards under AODA, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and all related policies, procedures and practices
- Ensure employees are permitted with the time needed to complete the required training
- Follow up on their employees who are not compliant with any of the AODA policies and/or training requirements

Employees and Others Listed in Scope

- Adhere to and follows the commitments set out in this policy
- Review and comply with CFPC's AODA related policies and associated legislation
- Complete the required training within the specified timeframes
- Ontario-based Independent and Agency Contractors are required to confirm their AODA awareness and compliance as required by legislation prior to commencing work for the CFPC, and complete CFPC-specific AODA education and training as soon as practicable after the work agreement comes into effect

Glossary of Terms (as provided in the AODA and/or associated standards/regulations)

Assistive Devices - means technical aids, communication devices, or medical aids modified or customized that are used to increase, maintain or improve how a person with a disability can function. An assistive device may be as simple as a pen and paper used to assist a person to communicate. Other examples may include, but are not limited to, wheelchairs, walkers, white canes used by people who are blind or have low vision, note taking devices, portable magnifiers, recording machines, assistive listening devices, personal oxygen tanks and devices for grasping. Assistive devices may be provided by the customer or may already be on the premises, and are used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services provided by CFPC.

Examples of some assistive devices currently used at the CFPC:

- Amplification System (phone volume can be increased)
- Elevator
- Grab bars (used in washrooms)
- Monitor (larger screen)
- Wheelchair
- Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) software

Accessibility features - features intended to remove barriers for people with disabilities. This can include signage, accessible washrooms and automated communications systems, as well as technical features (e.g. software) and structural features (e.g. physical design, including hardware or product specifications)

Accessible Formats – may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, Braille, and other formats useable by persons with disabilities

Accommodation – refers to reasonable accommodation provided it does not impose undue hardship on the Employer. It may include, but is not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language, and other supports that facilitate effective communications

Barrier - means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice

Communications -the term communications as it used in the Information and Communications Standard refers to the interaction between two or more people or entities when information is provided, sent or received.

Communication Supports – communication supports” may include, but are not limited to, captioning, alternative and augmentative communication supports, plain language, sign language and other supports that facilitate effective communications

Disability - A “disability” is:

- a) 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 physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.

Documented Consent - means that the person with a disability has given consent for a support person to attend a confidential interview and that the consent is documented by employees on the consent form. The person's consent can be written, verbal, by nod of a head or by other methods that confirm consent, depending on the type of disability.

Equal Opportunity - means service is provided to a person with a disability in such a way that they can access goods and services equal to that given of others.

Guide Dog - means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations (*Blind Persons' Rights Act, R.S.O. 1990*).

Information - includes data, facts, and knowledge that exist in any format, including text, audio, digital, or images, and that convey meaning

Integration - means service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other customers, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.

Service Animal - An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if,
(a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
(b) the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability

Support Person – means in relation to a person with a disability, another person who accompanies him or her in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities (*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, Ontario Regulation 165/16*).

Temporary Disruption - means a short term planned or unplanned disruption to facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to get goods and services. Potential temporary disruptions may include, but are not limited to: evacuations due to fire, flood, road closures, mechanical failures, elevator out of service, and failure of telephone or technology equipment or bus detours.

References/Resources

- [CFPC Guidelines for Sick Days and Short Term Medical Leave](#)
- [CFPC Health and Safety Policy](#)
- CFPC Individual Accommodation Policy
- Individual Accommodation Plan form
- CFPC Return to Work Policy
- CFPC Workplace Emergency Response Information Guidelines
- Employee Emergency Information Profile form
- Employee Emergency Response Plan form
- CFPC Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- [CFPC Exam Accommodation for Special Needs and Impediments](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)
- Stringer – Step by Step AODA Compliance – seminar April 2016

Consultations

- Associate, Miller Thomson LLP
- HR Advisor
- HR Advisor (Bilingual)
- HR Systems Specialist
- Director, Infrastructure & User Support
- Director, Business Solutions
- Director, Finance & Asset Management
- Manager, Materials & Facilities
- Manager, Communications
- Director, Communications
- Manager, Meetings & Events
- Manager, Family Medicine Forum
- Manager, Member Care Centre
- Director, Marketing & Membership Services
- Manager, Practice Support Programs
- Manager, Operations & Administration
- Manager, MAINPRO
- Director, Human Resources

Signature Block

		
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APPENDIX - Accessible Customer Service: Tips for Serving People with Disabilities

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) is committed to offering its goods and services in ways that respect the dignity and independence of people with disabilities, allowing them to get the same services, in the same places and a similar way as other customers. The following tips will make sure customers are served in ways that take the person's disability into account.

Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities include a range of ways that physically limit a person's body from carrying out daily activities. It can range from minor difficulties in moving or coordinating one part of the body, through muscle weakness, tremors and paralysis. People may be born with physical disabilities, such as Muscular Dystrophy, or it may happen at some point in their lifetime, such as tendonitis. A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to:

- Perform manual tasks such as holding a pen, turning a key or grip a door knob.
- Move around independently.
- Control the speed or coordination of movements.
- Reach, pull or use objects.
- Have strength or stamina.

Tips for serving individuals who have physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to your customer, not to the support person who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things. Ask if they would like help.
- Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are part of a person's personal space. Don't touch, move or lean on them.
- Provide information about accessible features that are close to them (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.)
- Keep ramps and corridors free of clutter.
- If a counter is too high or wide, step around it to provide service.
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.
- Be patient. Individuals with disabilities will tell their needs to you.

Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing

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

- Use a public telephone.
- Understand speech in noisy places.
- Pronounce words clearly enough to be understood by strangers.

Tips for serving customers who have hearing disabilities:

- Attract the individual's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Always ask how you may help. Do not shout. Speak clearly.
- Be clear and use specific information when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Face the person and keep your hands and other objects away from your face and mouth.
- A person who is deaf may use a sign language interpreter to communicate. Always direct your attention to the person who is deaf, not the interpreter.

- Any personal (e.g. financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area that is not noisy.
- If necessary, write notes back and forth to share information.

Deaf-Blindness Disabilities

Deaf-blindness disabilities are a combination of hearing and vision loss. A person who is deaf-blind has great difficulty getting information and performing daily activities. Deaf-blindness makes communication, learning, orientation and mobility difficult. People who are deaf-blind communicate using various sign language systems, including Braille, telephone devices, communication boards or a combination of these systems. Many people who are deaf-blind use the services of an Intervener who helps the person understand what is being said and seen, gives information and acts as a sighted guide.

Tips for serving customers who are deaf-blind:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- An individual who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Do not touch or address a service animal. It is working and has to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency.
- Understand that communication can take some time. Be patient.
- Direct your attention to your customer, not the Intervener.

Vision Disabilities

A person with a vision disability has difficulty seeing clearly. Vision disabilities can include a loss of side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means the person cannot see straight. Very few people are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person only sees ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Vision loss may result in:

- Difficulty reading or seeing faces.
- Difficulty moving around in unfamiliar places.
- Difficulty seeing colours or distances.
- A narrow field of vision.
- The need for bright light or contrast.
- Night blindness.

Tips for serving customers who have vision disabilities:

- Say who you are before making physical contact.
- Do not touch or address a service animal. It is working and has to pay attention at all times.
- Verbally describe the setting, form and location as necessary.
- Offer your arm to guide the person. Do not grab or pull.
- Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it is an emergency.
- Do not leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Do not walk away without saying good-bye.

Intellectual Disabilities

Intellectual disabilities affect a person's ability to think and reason. It may be caused by the person's genetic makeup, such as Down's Syndrome, or because they were exposed to a toxic substance, such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, brain trauma or psychiatric disorders. A person with an intellectual disorder may have difficulty with:

- Understanding spoken and written information.
- Understanding concepts.
- Being aware of sensory information.
- Memory

Tips for serving customers who have an intellectual or developmental disability:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use clear, simple language.
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples regarding information.
- Remember that the person is an adult and unless you are informed otherwise, can make their own decisions.
- Be patient and verify your understanding of what they need.
- If you can't understand what is being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant.

Speech Disabilities

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

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

Tips for serving customers with speech or language disabilities:

- If possible, talk in a quiet environment.
- Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Ask them to repeat as necessary, or to write their message.
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no.'
- Verify your understanding of what they need.
- Have patience, respect and willingness to find a way to communicate.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities include a range of disorders that affect the getting, keeping, understanding and processing of spoken and non-spoken information. People with a learning disability have average or above average intelligence, but take in and work through information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in difficulties in:

- Reading.
- Problem solving.
- Time management.
- Finding the way.
- Processing information.

Mental Illness

Mental illness disabilities result from a range of mental illnesses and disorders. There are, however, three main types of mental illness:

- Anxiety.
- Mood.
- Behavioural.

People with mental illness may seem edgy or frustrated, act forcefully, seem to be pushy or abrupt, be unable to make a decision, start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Smell Disabilities

Smell disabilities may involve not being able to smell odours or be overly sensitive to odours and smells. A person with a smelling disability may have allergies to certain odours, scents or chemicals or may be unable to identify dangerous gases, smoke, fumes and spoiled food.

Touch Disabilities

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

Taste Disabilities

Taste disabilities may limit the experience of the four main ways we taste: sweet, bitter, salty and sour. A person with a taste disability may be unable to identify spoiled food or unpleasant substances.

Other Disabilities

Other disabilities result from a range of other conditions, accidents, illnesses and diseases including ALS, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, being overly sensitive to substances in the environment, disorders that make a person have seizures, heart disease, stroke and joint replacement.

Disabilities are not always visible or easy to identify.

Terminology – Speaking about Disabilities

The following is taken from the *Ministry of Community and Social Services*.

[Guidelines and Resources on Communicating with People Who Have Communication Disabilities](#)

“Words can influence and reinforce the public's perception of people with disabilities. They can create either a positive view of people with disabilities or an indifferent, negative depiction,” which means that the person is thought of in a negative way. Here are some general tips that can help you communicate with or about people with all types of disabilities more successful:

- Use *disability* or *disabled*, not *handicap* or *handicapped*.
- Never use terms such as *retarded*, *dumb*, *psycho*, *moron* or *crippled*. These words are very demeaning and disrespectful to people with disabilities.
- Remember to put people first. It is proper to say *person with a disability*, rather than *disabled person*.
- If you don't know someone or if you are not familiar with the disability, it's better to wait until the individual describes his/her situation to you, rather than to make your own assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.