



What is a Disability?

A disability is defined by the AODA 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 physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device, or
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability, or
- A learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the process involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language, or
- 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; ("handicap").

Customer Service Standard

The Ontario government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* on June 13, 2005. Under this Act, there are five standards: The Built Environment, Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communications, and Transportation.

As of January 1, 2008, the Customer Service standard became law. As an organization under the Customer Services standards, YMCA Brockville must comply with this standard by January 2010.

This brochure will help you understand the standard and how to comply.

Legislation and Policies

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)

[Ontario Regulation 429/07: Accessibility Standards Customer Service](#)

[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code \(OHRC\)](#)

Customer Service Standard

Accessibility for Ontarians
with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Interacting and communicating with customers...

Vision Loss:

- The customer may have partial vision, so don't assume that they can not see you.
- Give clear and precise verbal directions. Don't say "over there", or use gestures as directions.

Hearing Loss:

- Don't shout at the customer. Ask how you can help.
- You might need to use an alternative form of communication. You might need to conduct your conversation in writing using pen and paper.
- Make sure the customer can see your full face in order to help with lip reading.

Deaf-Blind:

- Don't assume a deaf-blind customer has no vision or hearing. Not all vision or hearing loss is complete.
- Identify yourself to the customer's intervener when you initially approach the customer, but then speak directly to the customer.

Mental Health Disabilities:

- Remain patient. Allow the customer the time to process information and get their message across.
- If the customer appears to be in crisis, ask them how you can best help them.

Speech and Language Impairments:

- Be patient if they speak slowly or with a stutter. It is insulting for the customer if you cut them off to complete their sentences.
- Ask closed questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no".
- Don't assume a person with a speech impairment must also have a developmental disability.

Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities:

- Provide information in manageable chunks. Don't overwhelm the customer with too many details at once.
- Confirm that the customer understands what you have said by having them repeat what you have said back to you in their own words.

Learning Disabilities:

- Allow the customer the extra time they need to process the information you have given them. It may take them longer to respond to you.
- Remain patient and be ready to repeat explanations if necessary.

Physical disabilities:

- Ask before you offer help. Customers with physical disabilities will have their own ways of doing things.
- Make sure that customers with physical disabilities are aware of the accessible features available to them (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevators, family locker room, etc.)

In General:

- Speak directly to your customer, not their interpreter or support person.
- Don't touch or speak to service animals. They are not pets, they are "on the job" and need to be left alone to focus.
- Treat any assistive device the customer may be using as a part of their physical space and be respectful of it. (Don't lean on someone's wheel chair or move their walker out of their reach)
- Don't make assumptions about what a person can or can't do

Remember, customers do not have to inform you of any disability they may have. It is up to us as service providers to provide accessible customer service to everyone who comes through our doors.