



Guidelines for Delivering Accessible Customer Service



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Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA)

Peel Children's Aid is committed to providing excellent service to its families and clients. We are also committed to ensuring that we comply with the Provincial standards to provide accessible customer service to all our clients, including those with a disability.

Provincial Accessibility Standards

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province in five areas:

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Transportation
- Employment
- Built Environment

The **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service** is the first of the five standards. Peel Children's Aid is required to comply by January 1, 2012. The standard details specific requirements for all service providers.

What do we mean when we say “Disability”?

A disability can be sometimes obvious and sometimes not.

A disability as defined by the AODA includes:

- A 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 coordination, 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.
- 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 of spoken language.
- A mental disorder
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.



What is Accessible Customer Service?

At Peel Children's Aid, we are committed to providing customer service to persons with disabilities in a manner that:

- Respects their dignity and independence.
- Is integrated as fully as possible into the method of service delivery.
- Ensures reasonable efforts are made to provide an opportunity equal to that offered to other customers to obtain and use services.
- Allows people with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way as other clients.
- Is sensitive to an individual's needs.
- Is responsive by delivering service in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the specific accommodation required.

By providing accessible customer service, we understand that each individual may need a slightly different type of accommodation for the service we provide.

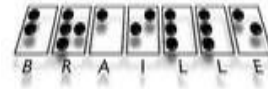
For example:



- A person who is blind may need to have information read aloud to them.
- An individual with a learning disability may need to have instructions written down.
- A client who is deaf blind may need you to communicate with them through an assistance card or note.



How Should I communicate with Persons with Disabilities?

Vision Loss



Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<p>Vision loss includes those who have limited vision, such as tunnel vision, or a lack of central vision. Some people with vision loss can see the outline of objects, while others can see the direction of light.</p> <p>Vision loss can restrict a client's ability to read signs, locate, read documents, etc.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille • Large print • Magnification devices • White cane • Guide dog • Support person such as a sighted person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume the individual can't see you. • Don't touch your client without asking permission. • Offer your elbow to guide the person. If he or she accepts, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so. Lead, don't pull. • Don't touch or speak to service animals. • Don't leave your client in the middle of a room. Show him/her to a chair or guide them to a comfortable location. • If you need to leave your client, let him or her know you are leaving and will be back. • Identify yourself when you approach your client and speak directly to him or her, even if he/she is accompanied by a companion. • When providing printed information, offer to read or summarize it.

Hearing Loss



Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf—person who has severe or profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing. • Oral deaf—person who is born deaf or became deaf before learning to speak, but is taught to speak and may not typically use sign language. • Deafened—person who lost their hearing slowly or suddenly in adulthood. The person may use speech with visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, sign language, etc. • Hard of hearing—describes a person with residual hearing (hearing that remains) and speech to communicate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing aid • Paper and pen • Personal amplification device (e.g. pocket talker) • Phone amplifier • Hearing ear dog • Sign language • Support person such as a sign language interpreter <div data-bbox="613 1262 927 1549" data-label="Image"> An icon featuring a central silhouette of a person's head with sound waves emanating from the ear. This central figure is surrounded by four circular arrows in a clockwise cycle, colored blue, green, orange, and purple. Below this central graphic are four smaller circular icons, each containing a silhouette of a head with a different colored background (blue, green, orange, purple) and a small ear icon. </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract the client’s attention before speaking—e.g. gentle touch on the shoulder. • Ask how you can help. Don’t shout. • Move to a well lit area, if available. • Don’t put your hands in front of your face when speaking. Some people read lips. • Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate. • Look and speak directly to your client, not the interpreter or support person. • Be clear and precise when giving directions; confirm your client understands you. • If the person is using a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area. • Don’t assume the client knows sign language or reads lips.

Deaf Blind



Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<p>A person who is deaf blind can neither see nor hear to some degree. This results in difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. May people who are deaf blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille • Large print • Hearing aid • Magnification equipment • White cane • Service animal • Support person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf blind have some sight or hearing. • A customer who is deaf blind will likely explain to you how to communicate with him/her through an assistance card or note. • Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach our client who is deaf blind, but then speak directly to your client as you normally would, not the intervener.



Physical Disabilities



Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<p>There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevator • Mobility device (e.g. wheelchair, scooter, cane, crutches). • Support person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak naturally and directly to your client, not to his/her companion or support person. • If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone in a wheelchair, consider sitting so that you can make eye contact. • Ask before you help. People with disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. • Respect your client's personal space. Do not lean over him or her or his or her assisted device. • Don't move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of a person's reach. • Don't touch assisted devices without permission. • Let your client know about accessible features in the immediate area (e.g. automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevators, etc.)

Mental Health Disabilities



Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<p>Mental health disabilities are not as visible as many other types of disabilities. You may not know that your client has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it.</p> <p>Examples of mental health disabilities include: schizophrenia, phobias, as well as bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.</p> <p>A person with mental health disability may have difficulty with one, several or none of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to think clearly • Hallucinations (e.g. hearing voices, seeing or feeling things that are not there) • Depression or acute mood swings (e.g. from happy to depressed with no apparent reason for the change) • Poor concentration • Difficulty remembering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service animal • Support person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If someone is experiencing difficulty controlling his or her symptoms, or is in crisis, you may want to help out. Be calm and professional and ask your client how you can best help. • Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else. • Be patient • Be confident and reassuring. • Listen carefully and work with your clients to meet their needs.



Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<p>These can mildly or profoundly limit the person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs. You may not know that someone has this type of disability unless you are told.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication board • Speech generating device • Service animal • Support person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat your client like anyone else. They may understand more than you think and they will appreciate that you treat them with respect. • Use plain language and speak in short sentences. • To confirm if your client understands what you have said, consider asking the person to repeat the message back to you in his/her own words. • Provide one piece of information at a time. • If you cannot understand what is being said, simply ask again. • Be supportive and patient • Speak directly to your client not to their companion or support person.



Learning Disabilities

Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<p>A learning disability describes a range of information processing disorders that can affect how a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains, understands or uses verbal and non-verbal information. A person with a learning disability is not incapable of learning; rather, it means they learn in a different way.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dyslexia (problems in reading and related language based learning); • Dyscalculia (problems in mathematics) • Dysgraphia (problems in writing and fine motor skills) <p>Learning disabilities can result in different communication difficulties with people. They can be subtle, such as difficulty reading, or more pronounced. They can interfere with a client’s ability to receive express or process information. You may not know that a person has a learning disability unless you are told.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative technology for writing • Calculator • Scanning or reading technology • Tape recorders, mini pocket recorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak naturally, clearly and directly to your client. • Allow extra time if necessary—people may take a little longer to understand and respond. • Be patient and willing to explain something again, if needed.



Speech or Language Impairments



Definition	Type of Assistance Used	Tips for Serving Clients
<p>Some people have problems communicating because of their disability. Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other difficulties may make it difficult to pronounce words or may cause slurring or stuttering. They may also prevent the person from expressing themselves or prevent them from understanding written or spoken language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication board• Paper and pen• Speech generating device• Support person	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't assume that because a person has one disability, they also have another. For example, if a client has difficulty speaking, it doesn't mean they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well.• Ask your client to repeat the information if you don't understand.• Ask questions that can be answered yes or no, if possible.• Try to allow enough time to communicate with your client as they may speak more slowly.• Don't interrupt or finish your client's sentences. Wait for them to finish.

How do I communicate with people with disabilities during home visits and/or phone conversations?



Home Visits

- When possible, confirm the details of your arrival time in advance.
- Be patient. You may need to wait a few moments for your client to answer the door.
- Introduce yourself clearly. Some customers may not be able to read identification cards.
- If you need to move some of your client's possessions, make sure that you leave the home exactly as it was when you arrived. For example, someone with vision loss will expect that their furniture is in the same place and could trip if you moved something.
- If you cannot complete the task, clearly explain what will happen next.

Phone Conversations

- Speak naturally, clearly and directly.
- Don't worry about how the person's voice sounds. Concentrate on what they are saying.
- If you don't understand, simply ask again.
- If a telephone client is using an interpreter or relay service, speak naturally to the client, not the interpreter.
- If you encounter a situation where, after numerous attempts, you and your customer cannot communicate with each other due the customer's disability, consider alternate arrangements.

What are some assistive devices people with disabilities use and how should I interact with those who use these assistive devices?

An assisted device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities, such as moving, communicating or lifting. It helps the person maintain independence at home, at work and in the community.

There are a variety of assisted devices that your client may use, depending on their disability.

1. People with Vision Loss

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

2. People who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf, hard of hearing

- Hearing aid— makes sounds louder and clearer.
- Personal amplification device (e.g. pocket talker) - boosts sound closest to the listener while reducing background noises.
- Phone amplifier—makes voices louder on the telephone.
- Teletypewriter (TTY) - helps people who are unable to speak or hear communicate by phone. The person types the message on the TTY keyboard and the messages are sent using telephone lines to someone who has a TTY or to an operator (Bell Relay Service) who passes the message to someone who does not have TTY.
- Support person such as a sign language interpreter.

3. People with Physical Disabilities

- Elevator.
- Mobility device (e.g. wheelchair, scooter, cane, crutches) helps people who have difficulty walking.
- Personal oxygen tank—helps people breathe.
- Support person.
- Calculator.
- Scanning or reading technology.
- Tape recorders, mini-pocket recorders—records information for future playbacks.

What are some assistive devices people with disabilities use and how should I interact with those who use these assistive devices? (Con.td)

4. People who have Learning Disabilities

- Alternative technology for writing—electronic notebook or laptop computer—used to take notes and to communicate.
- Personal data managers—stores, organizes and retrieves personal information.
- Calculator.
- Scanning or reading technology.
- Tape recorders, mini-pocket recorders—records information for future playbacks.

5. People who have Intellectual/Development Disabilities

- Communication board (e.g. bliss board) - used to pass on a message by pointing to symbols, words or pictures.
- Speech generating device—used to pass on a message using a device that “speaks” when a symbol, word or picture is pressed.
- Service animal or support person.



What Should I know about Service Animals?

A service animal assists a person with a disability.



The following charts lists some types of service animals, key task they perform and those who use service animals.

animals, key task

Service Animal	Key Task	Users
Autism assistance or service dog	Keeps a child from running into danger and provides assistance when sensory stimulus is heightened. Dog is attached to the child's waist by a belt and a leash held by an adult	People with autism or other developmental/intellectual disability
Guide dog, dog guide or seeing eye dog	Follows directions of owner, alerts owner to changes in elevation (e.g. kerbs, stairs and obstacles)	People with vision loss
Hearing ear, hearing, sound alert or hearing alert dog, cat or animal	Alerts owner to sounds often by a nudge or a pawing and leads him/her to the source of the sound. May use a special signal to alert owner to fire alarm	People who are deaf, oral deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing
Psychiatric service dog	Retrieves and prompts a person to take medicine, retrieves or activates medical alert, leads persons out of crowds, etc.	People with mental health disabilities
Service or mobility dog or animal, special skills dog or animal. (Small ponies or miniature horses are used but not as common.)	May pull wheelchairs, carry objects, pull items, turn handles or push buttons such as door openers. Larger dogs may provide balance support.	People with physical disabilities
Seizure, seizure alert, seizure assist or seizure response dog or animal	Steers owner away from danger during a seizure, activates medical alert. Can alert owner to an oncoming seizure	People who have epilepsy or other seizure disorders

What Should I know about Service Animals? Cont.d

Tips

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal.
- Avoid touching or addressing service animals.
- Avoid making assumptions about the animal. If you are not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask the client.
- Remember your client is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. You are not expected to provide care or food for the animal. However, you could provide water for the animal if your customer requests it.



How to Use a TTY and the Telephone Relay System

TTY (Teletypewriter) is a device that allows users to send typed messages across phone lines. Many people who are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, or who are deafblind may use TTYs to call other individuals.

This device generally has a keyboard and display that lets the users send and receive typed messages over telephone lines. People who are deafblind may use an additional large print or Braille display to read the typed messages.

A stand-alone TTY must communicate with another TTY. TTY users can directly call other TTY numbers or they can call a Relay Service. The Relay Service operator will receive the messages on a TTY and relay the messages by standard phone to a person who does not have a TTY. A standard phone user can also place a call through the Relay Service operator to a TTY user.

If your business or organization has a TTY, learn how to operate the device.

To make a TTY call:

1. Push the "ON" switch.
2. Push the DISPLAY switch if you wish to use the screen alone, or the PRINT switch if you want what is typed both on screen and in print.
3. Place the telephone receiver on the TTY's rubber receptacles. Make sure that the receiver is firmly in place and that the telephone's receiver cord is on the LEFT side to the TTY.
4. Check the telephone indicator light; if it is lit, you have the line.
5. Dial the number and watch the telephone light; if it is flashing slowly, this indicates that the device on the other end is ringing.
6. When the person you are calling answers, you will see a phrase appear on the screen such as: "Hello, this is Richard GA." The "GA" stands for Go Ahead — don't forget to use "GA" whenever you have finished what you are saying, so that the other person will know it is his/her turn.
7. When you wish to call to end and you wish to advise the other person, type GA or SK (Stop Keying). The will respond by "SK" if he/she agrees. Be courteous—wait until the other person indicates "SK" before hanging up.



How to Communicate Using the Relay Service

1. Phone the Relay Service number—1-800-855-0511
2. Tell the operator your name, the name of the person you are calling, and the number you wish to reach.
3. The operator will make the call for you. You speak to the operator as if you were talking directly to the person you are calling. For example, say “Hi how are you doing?” Do not say: “Tell him I say hello.”
4. Remember to say “Go Ahead” when you finish speaking, so the person on the other end will know it is their turn to speak.
5. If you normally speak very quickly, the operator may ask you to speak more slowly so your message can be typed while you are speaking. There will be brief silences as the operator types to the TTY user and the user replies.

For more information and assistance about this service contact:
www.bell.ca/specialneeds/