

DRAFT:
St. Christopher's Church
Accessible Customer Service Guide



The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act became law in 2005. It's the first law of its kind in Canada.

People with disabilities are entitled to have the same opportunities as everyone else. They should be able to do the same things that others take for granted, like go to work or school, shop, enjoy a movie, take a bus or use parks or playgrounds. That is the goal of the AODA. The law requires businesses and organizations that provide goods and services, including churches, to meet accessibility standards in five areas:

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

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O. Reg. 429/07) is the first of the five standards to be released and will take effect in the private sector and non-profit providers of goods and services starting January 1, 2012. (Compliance for public sector organizations began January 1, 2010.)

This guide will give you tips on how to best interact with a person with a disability so that you can provide excellent customer service to all.

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St. Christopher's Church Accessible Customer Service Policy Statement

St. Christopher's Church is a dynamic, inclusive, diverse community rooted in the life-giving, life-affirming, life-changing love of God, reaching beyond ourselves, caring for creation and making a difference for others.

St. Christopher's Church is committed to providing accessible customer service to all people with disabilities. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure goods and services are provided in a way that:

- respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities;
- provides goods and services to people with disabilities in an integrated manner with those who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary. The alternative measure may be temporary or permanent;
- communicates with a person with a disability in a manner that takes his or her disability into account;
- permits people with disabilities to use assistive devices, service animals and / or support persons as is necessary to access goods and services at St. Christopher's Church.

This policy applies to all persons who interact with the public on behalf of St. Christopher's Church, whether the person does so as:

- an employee,
- a member of the Corporation,
- an agent,
- a volunteer,
- a student placement;
- and all persons who participate in developing St. Christopher's Church's policies, practices and procedures.

Examples of Accessible Customer Service

- Information is available in large print.
- Furniture is adjusted so a person with a mobility device has room to sit with the group.
- Written and verbal instructions are given for a task.
- Microphones are used.
- Assistive hearing devices are available.
- Chairs are available during functions where people usually stand.
- Chairs are arranged in such a way that the speaker's face is visible to everyone.
- Assistance available and time allotted for persons with a cognitive disability who need assistance with the order of service or hymn book; or require understanding that it may take longer to process a thought or action.
- Verbal cues for people who are blind or with vision impairment.

Understanding Disability

Disabilities can take many forms. They may be permanent or temporary; cognitive or physical; severe or mild; affect the young or the old; or any combination thereof. A person can be born with a disability or someone could become injured, resulting in a temporary or permanent disability. Some disabilities are visible but many are not visible.

When providing goods and services, we need to consider the needs of people with the following disabilities:

- a physical disability
- deafness or have some form of hearing loss
- blindness or have some form of vision loss
- deaf-blind
- learning disability
- speech or language impairment
- developmental or cognitive disability
- mental illness.

Customer Service Tips

Being able to interact and communicate with individuals with disabilities in an appropriate way is a big part of providing accessible customer service. The best approach is to ask the person “How can I help you?” Here are some general tips:

- Always treat anyone with a disability with the same respect and courtesy that you would offer to anyone else.
- Treat and speak to adults with disabilities as adults.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to the companion, the assistant, nor to the interpreter who may be with them.
- Don’t shout; speak clearly, distinctly, and at a moderate pace.
- It’s okay to use words like “see”, “walk”, or “hear”. Don’t avoid common expressions when they fit naturally into the conversation.
- Ask for permission before offering assistance to a person with a disability. Wait until your offer is accepted before you help. If you are helping and aren’t sure what to do, ask.
- Let a person with a disability make their own decisions regarding what they can or cannot do. Do not make assumptions.
- Do not pet, feed or distract a dog guide or service animal.
- Respect personal space. All assistive devices are part of a person’s personal space.

All people have their own specific needs or preferences. Being positive, flexible and open to suggestions enables St. Christopher’s to be a welcoming dynamic, inclusive and diverse community. Remember, greeting someone and asking how you can help is a good starting point.

Word Choices

Choosing positive words can empower people. Inappropriate terms convey inaccurate information and perpetuate negative stereotypes. The notion that people with disabilities are inspirational, brave and courageous for living successfully with their disability is a myth. The fact is a person with a disability is simply carrying out the activities of daily living when they drive to work, go to church, pay their bills or participate in a sporting event. They may just do it in a way that is different than you. People with disabilities are ‘people first’ – unique individuals, created by God, who also happen to have a disability. Use words that put the person first, referring to them as a “person with a disability” or “person with hearing loss”.

Instead of this	Please say this
The handicapped, disabled person.....	Person with a disability
Normal.....	Person without a disability, non-disabled, able-bodied
The blind, the visually impaired.....	Person who is blind, person with a visual impairment, person with a vision loss
The deaf	Person who is deaf, person who has difficulty hearing, person with a hearing loss
Physically challenged	Person with a disability
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound.....	Person who uses a wheelchair, scooter
Suffers with, victim of, afflicted with, stricken by.....	Person with a disability, person with cerebral palsy (CP), person who has multiple sclerosis (MS), arthritis, etc.
Handicapped parking	Accessible Parking
Handicapped washroom/bathroom.....	Accessible washroom/bathroom
Mental, insane, crazy.....	Person with a mental illness, person with mental health issues
Mentally retarded, slow, feeble minded, retarded	Person with a cognitive disability

Specific Disabilities and Ways to Assist

Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require use of mobility aids like wheelchairs, scooters, crutches or canes. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with stamina, moving, standing, sitting or the ability to reach or grasp. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Customer Service Tips:

- If you are having a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting, squatting or kneeling, so that you are at eye level.
- Ask before you help. Offer assistance but don't insist.
- Speak naturally and directly to the person, not to their companion or support person.
- Avoid touching any assistive devices unnecessarily. Don't move assistive devices (items or equipment), such as canes and walkers, out of the individual's reach.
- If a counter top is too high or wide to interact comfortably with an individual, step out from behind it to provide service.
- Provide information about accessible features offered at the location.

Blindness and Vision Loss

There are varying degrees of vision loss and a distinction between blindness and low vision. The majority of people living with a vision loss have some vision. There are also people who are totally blind. A vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read print or signs, recognize faces, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some may use a white cane or dog guide to help with orientation and movement, while others may not.

Customer Service Tips

- Don't assume the individual cannot see you.
- Identify yourself as you approach an individual.
- Speak directly to the person, not to their companion or support person.
- Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Don't leave without saying goodbye.
- Use specific directions like "behind you on your left" or "the cup is by your right hand." Avoid vague directions like "over there."

- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted.
- Offer your elbow as a sighted guide if needed. Identify obstacles before you come to them.
- Do not pet, feed or distract a dog guide from doing its job.

Deafness and Hearing Loss

Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals may use hearing aids, cochlear implants, sign language, and/or other assistive-listening and communication devices.

Customer Service Tips:

- Attract the person's attention before you speak. Use eye contact and a simple wave to connect visually.
- Make sure you are in a well-lit area where the individual can see your face and read your lips.
- If the individual uses a hearing aid, reduce background noises, or move to a quieter location, whenever possible.
- Do not cover or have anything in your mouth when speaking.
- Look at and speak directly to the person with the hearing impairment, not the interpreter.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Speak naturally, with normal expression and at a normal pace.
- Discuss any personal (e.g. financial) matters in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- When writing back and forth, keep sentences short.
- In group settings, talk one at a time, using a microphone if one is available. The speaker's face must be able to be seen by the person with the hearing impairment.

Deaf-Blindness

A person who is deaf-blind has some degree of both vision and hearing loss. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information. Many people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional who helps with communication.

Customer Service Tips:

- Speak directly to the individual, not to the intervenor.
- Ask the individual how to best communicate with him / her.
- Do not try to communicate from across the room or table.
- Don't leave without saying goodbye.
- Do not pet, feed or distract a dog guide from doing its job.

Speech and Language Disabilities

People with speech and language disabilities may have problems communicating. For many reasons, people may have difficulty speaking clearly – for example, as a result of a stroke, cerebral palsy or hearing loss – which may result in difficulties with verbal communication such as slurring or stuttering. Some people may use communication boards or other assistive devices. A speech disability often has no impact on a person’s intellect or ability to understand.

Customer Service Tips:

- Talk to people with speech disabilities as you would talk to anyone else and speak in your regular tone of voice.
- Do not speak for the individual or complete their sentences. Be patient.
- Tell the person if you do not understand what they are trying to say. Ask the person to repeat the message, tell you in a different way, or write it down.
- Consider asking questions that require only short answers or a nod of the head.
- If an individual is difficult to understand, concentrate on content not voice.
- Give individuals time to fully explain themselves. Don’t interrupt.
- If the individual has a stammer, don’t finish their words or sentences.

Cognitive Disabilities

A cognitive disability is characterized by a significantly below average intellectual development and capacity that involves a permanent limitation in a person’s ability to learn and / or adapt to their environment. The effects of an intellectual disability can range from mild to profound. People with intellectual disabilities do not necessarily have a recognizable condition.

Customer Service Tips:

- Use simple words.
- Use plain language and keep sentences short.
- Give one piece of information at a time.
- Use concrete examples.
- Maintain a polite attitude. Be supportive and patient.
- Don’t make assumptions about what anyone can do.
- Be prepared to repeat or rephrase your sentences.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities range from mild to severe and may affect a person's ability to receive, process, remember or analyze information. Some learning disabilities can interfere with a person's ability to concentrate or focus. Other learning disabilities can make it difficult for a person to read, write, spell, or solve math problems. A learning disability is not indicative of intelligence level.

Customer Service Tips:

- Ask your customer how to best accommodate their needs.
- Take some time — people with some kinds of learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Provide information in different formats.
- Minimize distractions so that full attention is on communication.
- Keep sentences short and clear.
- Use gestures or diagrams as needed.
- Avoid complex words or jargon.
- Use language that is concrete rather than abstract.
- Be patient and willing to explain something again if needed.
- Some people may find it difficult to read. Others may have problems with numbers.

Mental Illness

People with mental illness look like anyone else. You won't know that an individual has a mental health disability unless you are told, nor will you need to. Usually it will not affect your interaction with that individual at all. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let the individual tell you how you can best help.

Customer Service Tips:

- Create a climate of confidence.
- Accept the individual, do not judge.
- Do not "talk down".
- Use plain, clear language; avoid complex ideas and jargon.
- Talk to the person as you would talk to anyone else and speak in your regular tone of voice.
- Speak in a calm manner and present one thought at a time.
- Repeat using different words if you are not understood.
- Pay attention to non verbal cues.

Serving People Who Use Assistive Devices

An assistive 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. Personal assistive devices can include things like wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes, note taking devices, walkers, canes, grasping tools, portable magnifiers or assistive listening devices.

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission; it is an extension of the individual's personal space.
- Allow individuals to keep and use their own assistive devices as needed.
- Don't move assistive devices or equipment out of the individual's reach.
- Tell individuals about any accessible features or assistive devices available on site that are appropriate to their needs, for example: assistive listening devices, accessible washrooms, large print documents, etc.

Serving People Who Use a Service Animal

People use service animals for various reasons, for both visible and invisible disabilities. Service animals can assist people with disabilities in their day-to-day activities and can be trained to open doors, pick up items, predict seizures, or alert someone to sounds such as doorbells and telephone rings.

- Service animals are allowed to be with their owner at all times, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- A kitchen where food is prepared is one of the few environments for disallowing a service animal.
- It may be clear that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign or has an identification card that identifies it as a service animal. It may also be clear if a person is using the animal to assist him or her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.
- If it is not clear if an animal is a service animal, ask the person. A medical note may be requested to confirm that the animal is necessary for reasons related to that person's disability.
- Do not pet, feed or distract a dog guide or service animal from doing its job.
- It is not appropriate to ask the nature of the disability of the individual using a service animal.

Serving People Who Use Support Persons

A support person may accompany a person with a disability to help them with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or access to services. A support person might be a family member, friend, volunteer or paid personnel.

- Speak to the individual with the disability, not the support person.
- Allow the individual with a disability to be accompanied by the support person.
- Do not discuss confidential matters in the presence of a support person without first getting the appropriate permission to do so.
- Where admission fees are charged, provide advance notice of whether or not the support person is required to pay the admission fee.

Disruption of Service – Reasonable Notice

What happens if we can't serve a person with a disability?

It is possible that there will be disruptions in services, such as elevators under repair, renovations of buildings or outdoor spaces or technology that is temporarily unavailable. If a disruption in service is planned, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

Individuals with disabilities may go to a lot of trouble to access services, such as booking transit or arranging for their support person to accompany them. By providing reasonable notice that a service is temporarily unavailable you can save the individual an unnecessary trip.

Notice can be provided by several methods and usually it is a good idea to use more than one method to provide notice. A notice on St. Christopher's Church's website, a broadcast announcement when calling St. Christopher's Church by telephone, a notice in the bulletin, an e-mail, or a temporary sign are all ways to inform people of service disruptions.

Disruption of Service – Unexpected Disruptions

In the event that access to services is impaired, provide notice quickly and in as many ways as possible. Think about how you might offer another way to provide the service when informing the individual who may be affected.

Appendix A

Accessible Customer Service

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (O. Reg. 429/07)

Key requirements of the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service:

- Establish policies, practices and procedures for providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
- Communicate with a person with a disability in a way that takes their disability into account.
- Permit people to use their own personal assistive devices to access goods and / or services.
- Permit people with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal on the premises of St. Christopher’s Church that are opened to the public, unless the animal is excluded by law.
- Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods and / or services anywhere on premises that are open to the public or third parties.
- Train staff, volunteers, contractors or others who interact with the public or other third parties on behalf of St. Christopher’s Church on the AODA requirements as outlined in the Customer Service Standards.
- Establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way goods and services are provided to people with disabilities.
- Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on are unavailable.

Appendix B

What is Accessible Customer Service?

Accessible customer service is good customer service: courteous, helpful and prompt. Accessible customer service is the understanding that access to worship, programs and special events may, at times, require some modification to be accessible to some individuals. Each individual person may need a slightly different type of accommodation for the services that we provide. St. Christopher's Church is committed to providing services to people with disabilities by:

- Respecting the dignity and independence of all participants.
- Integrating everyone as fully as possible into services and programs we offer.
- Ensuring reasonable efforts are made to provide an equal opportunity to access, experience, and use the goods and service offered by St. Christopher's Church at St. Christopher's Church.
- Allowing people with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way as others; in other words, an equality of outcome.
- Being sensitive to an individual's needs.
- Being responsive by delivering service in a timely manner, considering the nature of the service and the specific accommodation required.

Appendix C

Bell Canada Relay Service (BCRS):

How to use the Bell Canada Relay Service (BCRS):

- Phone the number (1-800-855-0511), and tell the operator your name, the name of the person you are calling, and the number you wish to reach.
- The operator will make the call for you, and 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 said hello.” Remember to say “Go Ahead” when you finish speaking, so the person on the other end will know it is his or her turn to speak.
- Operators will not betray confidences. They will not relay profanity, threats or criminal propositions, but will relay marriage proposals, banking and personal financial information and other personal (and even intimate) conversations.

Appendix D

Points to Remember

- Use a microphone if one is available; speak slowly and clearly at all times
- Arrange a second microphone for participants to use when asking questions or providing commentaries.
- The speaker should repeat or summarize the questions or comments from the audience, to allow all people in the group to clearly understand the questions or comments being made from the floor.
- Be aware of the sight lines when preaching or presenting so people can see the face of the speaker whenever possible; position the speaker so all participants can see the speaker's face
- If the speaker is using visual aids, that person should be careful to not turn his/her back to the audience as some people read lips, and rely on facial expressions for further comprehension.
- Arrange for "quiet breakout spaces" to be available when a large group divides into smaller groups for purpose of discussion. This allows group members with hearing impairment to hear voices of all people in the small group, and also people with invisible disabilities to be accommodated if they wish.
- Leave space for entry of those using mobility aids, such as wheelchairs or walkers.
- Explain procedures clearly to lessen anxiety.
- Answer all questions honestly and take concerns seriously.
- The facilitator of the group needs to encourage all members to speak up clearly, and keep hands from blocking speech, so that information is understood.
- When sitting around a table people tend to lean on their hands, thus blocking sound and making it difficult for people who rely on facial expression for comprehension.
- Show willingness to help and support the person while on site.
- Address participants directly and respectfully.
- Help people acquaint themselves with the facilities.
- Remember a ramp is available to allow access to the sanctuary for worship and presentations.



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