Statement of Policy and Procedure			
Chapter:	Human Resources	SPP No:	HR – Employment 19
Section:	Health & Safety	Issued:	December 12, 2011
Subject:	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 – (AODA) – *The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service ("ASCS") Policy Communication Tips*	Effective:	December 12, 2011
Issue to:	All Employees	Page	1 of 4
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The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service ("ASCS")
COMMUNICATING TIPS

Interacting with people who have physical disabilities

- Only some people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair
- A person with a spinal cord injury may use crutches while someone with severe arthritis or a heart condition may have difficulty walking longer distances

Tips:

- If you need to have a lengthy conversation with one who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level
- Don't touch items or equipment, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission
- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous, or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors

Interacting with people who have vision loss

- Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while other may not

Tips:

- Do not assume the individual cannot see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight.
- Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to them
- Ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (for example, a menu or schedule of fees)
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive
- Offer your elbow to guide them if needed

Interacting with people who have hearing loss

- People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing
- They may also be oral deaf – unable to hear, but prefer to talk instead of using sing language
- These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost

Tips:

- Once a customer has identified themselves as having hearing loss, make sure you are in a well-lit area where they can see your face and read your lips
- As needed, attract the customer's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave your hand
- If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise, or move to a quieter area
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (for example, using a pen and paper)

Interacting with people who are deafblind

- A person who is deafblind may have some degree of both hearing and vision loss
- Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervener, or a professional support person who helps with communication

Tips:

- A customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note
- Speak directly to your customer, not to the intervener

Interacting with people who have learning disabilities

- The term "learning disabilities" refers to a variety of disorders.
- One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information
- This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing

Tips:

- Don't assume that a person with a speech impairment also has another disability
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no"
- Be patient: Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences

Interacting with people who have intellectual/developmental disabilities

- Developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as Down syndrome, can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do everyday physical activities and live independently.
- You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told

Tips:

- Don't make assumptions about what a person can do
- Use plain language
- Provide one piece of information at a time

Interacting with people who have mental health disabilities

- Mental health issues can affect a person's abilities to think clearly, concentrate or remember things
- Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity
- For example, some customers may experience anxiety due to hallucinations, mood swings, phobias, or panic disorder

- If you sense or know that a customer has a mental health disability, be sure to treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
- Be confident, calm, and reassuring
- If a customer appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help

Interacting with people who use assistive devices

- An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enable 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, or speech amplification devices

Tips:

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission
- Don't move assistive device or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your customer's reach
- Let you customer know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. accessible washrooms, location of elevators)

Interacting with a person who has a guide dog or other service animal

- People with vision loss may use a guide dog, but there are other types of service animals as well
- Hearing alert animals help people who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard of hearing
- Other service animals are trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure
- Under the standard, service animals must be allowed on the parts of your premises that are open to the public.
- In some instance service animals will not be permitted in certain areas by law (e.g., a restaurant kitchen)

Tips:

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet
- It is a working animal
- Avoid touching or addressing them
- If you are not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer

How to serve a person accompanied by a support person

- Some people with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person, such as an intervener
- A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member, or a friend
- A support person might help your customer with a variety of things from communicating, to helping with mobility, personal care, or medical needs
- Welcome support people to your workplace or business
- They are permitted in any part of your premises that is open to the public

Tips:

- If you are not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting goods or services, or simply ask
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person

Assisting people with disabilities who need help accessing your goods or services

- If you notice that your customer is having difficulty accessing your goods or services, a good starting point is to simply ask, ***"How can I help you?"***
- Your customers are your best source of information about their needs
- A solution can be simple, and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration