# AODA Customer Service Standard Training

The standard requires that these individuals receive training regarding providing goods or services to people with disabilities. Compliance with this requirement will be a pre-requisite to working with the University.

In order to achieve this, Trent University is offering (at no charge) training to you and any of your staff who fall under the legislation.

The E-Learning Course covers:

* An introduction to the AODA
* A listing of requirements universities must meet under the service standard
* An introduction to the principles of accessibility
* Illustrates best practices for communicating and interacting with persons with disabilities
* Best practices for communicating and interacting with persons with disabilities accompanied by service animals or support persons

This training should be completed and then reported to your supervisor.

Any new staff hired will also be required to complete the training. Information regarding on-going training opportunities will be provided.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact:

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## Learning Objectives for AODA eLearning

We’ve designed this eLearning course to help you understand and comply with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (customer service standard) and to learn how to include accessible customer service in your work at your university.

After completing this module, you will be able to:

* Summarize the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the requirements of the customer service standard; and
* Describe how the AODA and the customer service standard apply to a university setting in general and, more specifically, to you as a faculty member, support staff or student leader.

## Welcome to AODA

AODA: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities

Making Ontario accessible for people with disabilities

The goal of Ontario’s legislation is to ensure that people with disabilities have the same kind of opportunities to participate fully in all areas of the life of our province. At Trent, we have always believed in these principles; the law gives us the opportunity to effectively fulfill them.

People with disabilities should have the opportunity to participate fully in all areas of life in our province.

That’s the goal of Ontario’s new AODA legislation. In order to achieve this, Trent University is offering training to all members of the Trent community, including faculty, staff, administration, student employees, and volunteers, to help them meet accessibility standards. Understanding AODA

AODA: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The purpose of the Act is to benefit all Ontarians by developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards. The AODA has 5 Standards:

* Customer Service
* Transportation
* Employment
* Built Environment
* Information and Communications

\*Note: Transportation, Employment, Information & Communication have been amalgamated into the Integrated Standard that came into law as of January 2012.

The Act aims to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities no later than January 1, 2025.

The scope of the Act includes goods, services, facilities, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

Accessibility standards will be developed cooperatively by people with disabilities, by the Government of Ontario and by the representatives of various sectors of the economy.

Currently only Customer Service Standards have been passed into law as of January 2010. The Integrated Standard came into law of as January 2012.

Annual reporting requirements verifying compliance, including audits and fines for non-compliance.

## Requirements of AODA: Customer Service Standard

* Training for all staff
* Development of an Accessible Customer Service Policy
* Establishing practices and procedures that meet the service needs of persons with disabilities
* Providing feedback mechanisms to allow for future service developments/fixes/ disruptions

Email [service@trentu.ca](mailto:service@trentu.ca?subject=Accessibility). Website: [Trent University Feedback](http://www.trentu.ca/ohrea/feedback.php)

The customer service standard requires Trent University to train staff on providing customer service to people with disabilities.

1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.
2. 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.
3. How to use equipment or devices available on the provider’s premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods or services to a person with a disability.
4. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider’s goods or services.

## Defining Disability

The AODA uses the same definition of “disability” as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Disability is defined as:

1. 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 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
2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
4. a mental disorder

## A Word about Trent

Trent has one of the largest number of students with disabilities per capita over any other Canadian University. Trent appeals to students because of its small student to teacher ratio DSO well established in its support services

Trent University offers support in three offices:

* Accessibility Services Office
* Trent Counselling Centre
* Health Services
* Disability Services Office

Trent DSO 2011-2012: total of 687 students

| **Type of Disability** | **Number of Students** |
| --- | --- |
| Acquired Brain Injury | 17 |
| ADHD | 90 |
| Chronic/Systemic Illness | 72 |
| Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing | 15 |
| LD Confirmed | 216 |
| Low Vision, Blind | 8 |
| Mobility/Functional | 41 |
| Psychiatric | 216 |

Trent Counselling Centre Clients in 2010-2011: Total of 600 clients

| **Presenting Issues** | **Percentage of Students** |
| --- | --- |
| Anxiety & Stress | 27% |
| Relationships | 21% |
| Depression/Grief | 18% |
| Sense of Self | 10% |
| Academic Concerns | 8% |
| Trauma/Abuse | 8% |
| Addictions | 2% |

Trent Health Services 2012: 4441 total physician visits, 17134 nurse visits

| **Reason for Visit** | **Number of Clients** |
| --- | --- |
| Depression | 201 |
| Mood Disorder | 13 |
| Anxiety | 198 |
| Bi-polar | 4 |

## AODA: Principles to Remember

Accessible Customer service is provided when it encompasses the following four factors:

* Dignity
* Independence
* Equal Opportunity
* Integration

## Identifying Barriers

The standards requires us to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. Barriers keep people with disabilities from fully participating in activities that most of us take for granted. Barriers include: attitudinal, architectural/ structural, information and communication, technology and systemic barriers.

Example: A student is having difficulty manoeuvring into the classroom where you are teaching. There is uneven surface and no visible area to sit for someone in a wheelchair. What do you do?

## General tips on providing service to customers with disabilities

* If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "May I help you?” Your customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
* Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to his or her support person or companion.
* Avoid stereotypes and make no assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities the person has. Some disabilities are not visible.
* Take the time to get to know your customer’s needs and focus on meeting those needs just as you would with any other customer.
* Be patient. People with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond. A good start is to listen carefully.
* Make an effort to learn about appropriate language and terminology to use when referring to people with disabilities.
* If you cannot understand what your customer is saying, politely ask them to repeat themselves.
* Respect that service animals are working and should not be disturbed. They need to pay attention at all times.
* Be sure to ask permission before touching assistive devices, including wheelchairs.
* Consider offering interactive devices (such as self-serve checkouts, direct payment devices) that can be used by people with various types of disabilities or offering alternate services.
* Consider including people with disabilities in the testing or evaluation of your communication services.

## Communicating with people with specific disabilities

### How to interact and communicate with people who have vision loss

Vision loss reduces a person’s ability to see clearly. Few people with vision loss are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision. Some people can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Vision loss can restrict your customers’ abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some of these customers may use a guide dog or white cane, but others may not. Sometimes it may be difficult to tell if a person has vision loss.

**Example:**

You are using power point slides, photocopied handouts, and are showing videos on YouTube. After class has started, you realize you have a person in the room who is blind. What do you do?

**Tips:**

* Be sure not to assume that the individual can't see you.
* Be sure to ask your customer permission to touch them (i.e., if you are guiding them).
* 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.
* Identify landmarks or other details to orient your customer to the environment around him or her.
* Be sure not to distract (by touching or speaking) service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
* Be sure not to leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show him or her to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
* If you need to leave your customer, let him or her know you are leaving and will be back.
* Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to him or her, even if he/she is accompanied by a companion.
* There is generally no need to raise your voice because the person does not necessarily have hearing loss.
* Be clear and precise when giving directions, e.g., two steps behind you, a metre to your left, etc. Avoid using terms such as “over there” or point in the direction.
* If you’re uncertain about how to provide directions, ask the person how to do so.
* Rest assured that there is no need to be afraid or embarrassed to use words such as “see”, “read” and “look.” People with vision loss also use these words.
* When providing printed information, offer to read or summarize it.

### How to interact and communicate with customers who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing

People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. People who are profoundly deaf may identify themselves as culturally Deaf or oral deaf. In Deaf culture, indicated by a capital “D,” the term is used to describe a person who has severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no hearing. Oral deaf is a term describing a person who was born deaf or became deaf before learning to speak, but is taught to speak and may not typically use American Sign Language. The term “deafened” describes a person who has lost their hearing slowly or suddenly in adulthood. The person may use speech with visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speechreading or sign language. The term “hard of hearing” describes a person who uses their residual hearing (hearing that remains) and speech to communicate. The person may supplement communication by speechreading, hearing aids, sign language and/or communication devices.

**Example:**

A student who is deaf has sent you an e-mail asking to meeting with you during your office hours. What do you do?

**Tips:**

* Attract the customer’s attention before speaking. Generally, the best way is by a gentle touch on the shoulder or with a gentle wave of your hand.
* Ask how you can help. Be sure you’re not shouting!
* Move to a well-lit area, if available, where your customer can see your face.
* Try to avoid putting your hands in front of your face when speaking. Some people read lips.
* If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example, using a pen and paper.
* Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate. American Sign Language may be your customer’s first language. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.
* Look at and speak directly to your customer. Address your customer, not the interpreter or support person.
* Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Confirm that your customer understands you.
* If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area, if possible, so the person can hear or concentrate better.
* Avoid the assumption that the customer knows sign language or reads lips.

### How to interact and communicate with customers who have physical disabilities

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.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

* Elevator
* Mobility device (i.e., wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches)
* Support person.

**Example:**

You are very clear with your class that the break is 10 minutes. You have a student with a physical disability who always seems to come in late – after the break. What do you do? Where are the accessible washrooms in relation to your classroom?

**Tips:**

* Speak naturally and directly to your customer, not to his or her companion or support person.
* If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone in a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so that you can make eye contact.
* Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
* Respect your customer’s personal space. Do not lean over him or her or on his or her assistive device
* Be sure not to move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of the person’s reach.
* Be sure not to touch assistive devices without permission. If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to:

1. Wait for and follow the person’s instructions
2. Confirm that your customer is ready to move
3. Describe what you’re going to do before you do it
4. Avoid uneven ground and objects
5. Avoid leaving the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

### How to interact and communicate with customers who have intellectual or developmental disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities 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. As much as possible, treat your customers with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate that you treat them with respect.

Informational Note: Persons with intellectual or development disabilities do attend university. Furthermore, the purpose of this training is to encourage you to think about all the different people who come to your campus, including parents, children of mature students and kids attending campus programs like summer camps. Any of these people could be persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, requiring your skills and willingness to provide them with accessible customer service.

**Example:**

You are working to install new equipment in one of the office buildings on campus; in doing so you are required to interact with the staff who are working there in order to minimize disruptions to productivity. One of the employees in the office tells you that her colleague has an intellectual disability. How do you respond? Does this impact your interactions with this individual?

**Tips:**

* Avoid assumptions about what a person can or cannot do.
* Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
* To confirm if your customer understands what you have said, consider asking the person to repeat the message back to you in his or her own words.
* If you cannot understand what is being said, simply ask again.
* Provide one piece of information at a time.
* Be supportive and patient.
* Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or support person.

### How to interact and communicate with customers who have mental health disabilities

Mental health disabilities are not as visible as many other types of disabilities. You may not know that your customer has a mental health disability unless you’re informed of it. Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, as well as bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.

A person with a mental health disability may have difficulty with one, several or none of these:

* Changes in performance or behaviour (loss of interest, lack of motivation, decrease in achievement)
* Unusual behaviour or appearance (change in manner, style or hygiene, restless, agitated, depressed, expressions of sadness)
* Inability to think clearly
* Hallucinations (e.g., hearing voices, seeing or feeling things that aren’t there)
* Depression or acute mood swings (e.g., from happy to depressed with no apparent reason for the change)
* Poor concentration
* Difficulty remembering
* Apparent lack of motivation
* Indicators of self harm (communicating thoughts of suicide or self harm, hopelessness)

If someone is experiencing difficulty controlling his or her symptoms, or is in a crisis, you may want to help out. Be calm and professional and ask your customer how you can best help. In a crisis situation call Trent Security 748-1333 (x 1333) for immediate assistance. If the student is suicidal or threatening to injure others, call 911. Do not leave the individual alone. Inform a colleague so that you are not alone with the individual.

### How to interact and communicate with customers who have learning disabilities

The term “learning disability” describes a range of information processing disorders that can affect how a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains, understands or uses verbal or non-verbal information. Examples include dyslexia (problems in reading and related language-based learning); dyscalculia (problems in mathematics); and dysgraphia (problems in writing and fine motor skills). It is important to know that having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means they learn in a different way.

Learning disabilities can result in different communication difficulties for people. They can be subtle, such as difficulty reading, or more pronounced. They can interfere with your customer’s ability to receive, express or process information. You may not know that a person has a learning disability unless you are told.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

* Technology for writing
* Calculator
* Scanning or reading technology
* Tape recorders, mini pocket recorders, smart pens

Learning Disability Fact:

Today, there are more than 13,000 students in Ontario’s colleges and universities who have diagnosed learning disabilities. These students are capable of being successful, if they have the supports and services they require to level the playing field and demonstrate what they know. When you know someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can help.

**Tips**:

* Speak naturally, clearly, and directly to your customer.
* Allow extra time if necessary - people may take a little longer to understand and respond
* Remember to communicate in a way that takes into account the customer’s disability.
* Be patient and be willing to explain something again, if needed.

### How to interact and communicate with customers who have speech or language impairments

Some people have problems communicating because of their disability. Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult to pronounce words or may cause slurring or stuttering. They also may prevent the person from expressing themselves or prevent them from understanding written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Types of assistance your customer might use:

* Communication board
* Paper and pen
* Speech generating device
* Support person.

**Example:**

A visitor approaches the reception desk of the Sports and Recreation Centre and asks for a pamphlet on the Centre’s fitness programs. The receptionist has a difficult time understanding and asks the visitor to repeat himself several times. The receptionist eventually understands and responds by asking the visitor if he is staff, student, faculty or a community member. The visitor responds but again, the receptionist does not understand him. The phone on his desk is ringing and the receptionist is becoming frustrated with not being able to understand this visitor. What do you do?

**Tips:**

* Avoid making the assumption that because a person has one disability, they also have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking, it doesn’t mean they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well.
* Ask your customer 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 customer as they may speak more slowly.
* Avoid interrupting or finishing your customer’s sentences. Wait for them to finish.

## Face-to-Face Skills in Customer Service

Keys to Effective Personal Communication:

* Be enthusiastic.
* Be attentive.
* Stay focused on the customer

First Impressions Are Lasting Impressions! Customers frequently gain their first impression of your institution based on the service provider’s communication skills. Then, during every contact thereafter, the manner in which you communicate continues to make further impressions .Average communication skills tend to cover the facts, but often don’t convey your professional, service-oriented attitude. Advanced communication skills put that extra polish on your service relationships— the icing on the cake that makes your customers want to come back for more! Which kind of communication makes the best impression on you?

| **Average Communication** | **Advanced Communication** |
| --- | --- |
| “Yes?” “How may I help you?” | “Yes, I remember you.” |
| How may I help you?” | “Sure I remember you—it’s good to see you again!” |
| You’re welcome.” | “You’re quite welcome—I’m happy to help!” |

Body Language: Facial expressions, eye contact, posture, handshake, and even the way you walk impact on the experience

Tone of Voice

* Words need to match pleasant and helpful tone of voice
* Spatial Relationships
* Be respectful of personal space
* Prevent Mistakes
* Be mindful of common errors
* Make your point clearly
* Be specific and concise
* Check up on yourself
* “What do I need to know, learn, improve upon…”
* Read customer cues
* Look for subtle cues

## Talking to people with disabilities over the phone: General Tips

* Speak naturally, clearly and directly.
* Don’t worry about how the person’s voice sounds. Concentrate on what they are saying.
* Don’t interrupt or finish your customer’s sentences. Give your customer time to explain or respond.
* If you don’t understand, simply ask again, or repeat or rephrase what you heard and ask if you have understood correctly.
* If a telephone customer is using an interpreter or a Relay Service, speak naturally to the customer, not to the interpreter.
* If you encounter a situation where, after numerous attempts, you and your customer cannot communicate with each other due to the customer’s disability, consider making alternate arrangements.

## The Art of E-mail

* Be extremely cautious about using e-mail to transmit any sensitive personal information (e.g. medical, financial, etc.) about individuals.
* Only share e-mails with other employees on a need to know basis
* Access to Information
* Once you create an e-mail message concerning Trent business, it becomes a University record and potentially subject to a future access request under FIPPA
* Even though FIPPA contains many provisions for protecting personal information from disclosure, individuals do have a general right to access information about themselves
* Avoid writing non-factual e-mail messages that, if disclosed later, would cause embarrassment to yourself, the University or one of our clients

## Access to Information

Once you create an e-mail message concerning Trent business, it becomes a University record and potentially subject to a future access request under FIPPA.

Now, please proceed to the Assessment Section for a brief quiz. Upon successful completion on the quiz, you will receive a Certificate of Completion.

## Acknowledgements

* Council of Ontario Universities (COU)
* Accessible Customer Service Training group at Queen’s University
* Customer Service Steering Committee
* Serve-Ability (Ontario)

If you require any additional information or have any questions, please contact Andrea Walsh, [awalsh@trentu.ca](mailto:awalsh@trentu.ca) or ext. 6602.