



Accessible Customer Service and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

July 2016

Information for Second Harvest volunteers

The Ontario Government created the Accessibilities for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (or AODA) with the goal of creating an accessible province by 2025. The Accessible Customer Service standard is now the law. For the definition of “disability” and details, see “Accessibility Standards for Customer Service – Overview, Policies, Practices and Procedures” at secondharvest.ca/accessible-customer-service-plan

To make the Second Harvest accessible to all, and to meet our legal obligations for accessible client service under AODA, this summary outlines points for your consideration. If you have questions, please discuss with the Second Harvest staff.

Providing customer service to people with disabilities

The way we communicate and interact with people with disabilities should respect their dignity and independence, and take their disabilities into account. If you are unsure as to how to communicate with or help a person with a disability, ask him or her.

Make an effort to learn about appropriate language when referring to people with disabilities. Use respectful terms when communicating with people with disabilities and others. For example, put the person first. “People with disabilities” is more appropriate than “disabled people” or “the disabled.” Similarly, say “person with autism” than “autistic person.” Avoid terms that imply pity or condescension i.e., “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair-bound.” Instead use “person who uses a wheelchair” or “wheelchair user”.

Feedback process

Persons with disabilities and others are encouraged to comment on the accessibility of our programs and premises. Feedback can be given in person, by phone, by mail or e-mail to the Second Harvest office and at events. If someone offers you feedback, forward the feedback to a staff member. The staff will take appropriate action to respond. Details can be found at secondharvest.ca on the contact page.

Document accessibility

If a person requests communication or documents in an alternate format, ask a staff member about the possibility of making the document available in the format requested. In the event that Second Harvest is unable to provide the requested format, enquire with the person if an alternative format is acceptable.

Assistive devices

Assistive devices help persons with disabilities carry out activities or access services. These devices may include, but are not limited to: wheelchairs, screen readers, recording machines, hearing devices, and communication boards.

Persons with disabilities are entitled to use their own personal assistive devices when accessing our programs, services and events. For details on assistive devices as related to the transportation program, please speak with a staff member. If an assistive device poses a safety concern (i.e. blocking an emergency exit) we will attempt to make alternative arrangements.

Access for service animals and support persons

Service animals or support persons are allowed to accompany persons with disabilities when accessing our programs, services and events or while on our premises. Support persons may be allowed access on a modified or no-fee basis as decided by Second Harvest. For details on service animals and support people as related to the transportation program, please speak with the Second Harvest office. If you cannot easily identify that the animal is a service animal, you can ask the person to provide documentation from a regulated health professional. The documentation must confirm that the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

In certain cases, Second Harvest might require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for health or safety reasons. Before making a decision, Second Harvest will:

- consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs
- consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence
- determine if there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises.

Notice of disruption of services

Second Harvest must provide notification if there is a disruption in any location, with any technology or with any method of providing service that people with disabilities use to access our programs, services, and events. Information should include the nature of the disruption, the duration, and alternative options.

If you notice disruptions of any kind (i.e. power outage, website unavailable) notify the Second Harvest office immediately.



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People with disabilities	Tips
<p>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 preferring to talk instead of using sign language. These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person’s hearing was diminished or lost.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Once a person has indicated s/he has hearing loss, find out what is the preferred method of communication. ▪ As needed, use a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of hand to attract the person’s attention before speaking. ▪ If a person uses a hearing aid, noisy rooms can be challenging. Move away to a quieter area. ▪ Make sure you are in a well-lit area where the person can see your face, your mouth and lips. Some people are able to lip read.
<p>People with learning, intellectual, developmental and/or cognitive disabilities There is a range of learning disabilities. One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information. Developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, can limit a person’s ability to learn, communicate, do physical activities and/or live independently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listen, be patient. It may take a little longer for the person to process information, to understand and to respond. ▪ Don’t make assumptions about what a person can do. ▪ Try to provide information in different ways. When appropriate use pictures, photographs to identify rooms, tasks, and directions. ▪ Use plain language and short sentences when giving information or providing explanations. Provide one piece of information at a time.
<p>People with physical disabilities People with physical disabilities may use various mobility devices. For example, someone with a spinal cord injury may use a wheelchair or crutches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stand directly in front when interacting with someone with a physical disability using a wheelchair. If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level. ▪ Remember to treat items or equipment, such as canes or wheelchairs as personal space or property. Don’t touch, without permission.
<p>People with speech or language impairments Cerebral palsy or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or may cause slurring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don’t assume a person with speech impairment also has another disability. ▪ Be patient. Let the person speak in his or her own way. Do not interrupt or finish the person’s sentences. ▪ Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered “yes” or “no”.
<p>People with vision loss Vision disabilities reduce a person’s ability to see clearly. 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, meaning they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.</p> <p>It may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Some people with vision disabilities use a service animal or a white cane; others may not.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don’t assume someone with vision loss can’t see you. ▪ Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the individual. Or you can use a gentle touch on the person’s arm. ▪ Ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud. ▪ A person who is blind may need you to act as a “sight guide”. Offer your elbow to guide them if needed. When giving directions, be precise and descriptive. Use directions such as “to the right”, “to the left” or measurements such as “two meters ahead”. Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them.
<p>People with a mental health issue or mental illness For every person, mental illness or mental health issues are different.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interact based on your experience with the individual and not on assumptions about mental illness or a particular diagnosis. Learn as much as you need to about the person’s skills and challenges, and develop an action plan together in case difficulties should arise. ▪ Be ready to explain things multiple times as memory and concentration may be affected (sometimes due to medication).