

ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS TRAINING GUIDE



**For Staff, Members of Council,
Volunteers and those providing
goods and services on behalf of
the Township of Bonfield**

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Introduction

The Township of Bonfield is committed to training staff and volunteers in Ontario's accessibility laws and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities. We will train our employees and volunteers on accessibility as it relates to their specific roles.

This booklet has been developed as a Training Guide for the Township to bring awareness to the importance of accessible customer service, as well as the requirements regarding compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*,

Please read through this Training Guide and complete the Form at the back of the Guide (attached). Completed Forms are to be submitted to the Township's CAO/Clerk's Office.

Why Training? Here's Why

People are now **talking** about accessibility!
Get excited – this legislation is **leading edge** in Ontario and on a national level it is the right thing to do

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) = Social Inclusion

Background Information

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

The *AODA* was enacted in June 2005.

The purpose of the *AODA* is to ensure people with disabilities receive the same level of customer service as everyone else.

The intent is to make Ontario fully accessible for all people by 2025.

There are 5 Standards within the legislation that the Town is required to comply with:

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

The main objective of the 5 Standards is to achieve greater involvement of persons with disabilities, equal participation and overall opportunities for all Ontarians.

The Township of Bonfield recognizes the need for accessible customer service. Please refer to our Accessibility Policy and related Corporate Procedures for information on:

- Service Animals
- Support Persons
- Our Feedback Process
- How to Handle Service Disruptions
- Assistive Devices
- Availability of Documents
- Accessibility Training

A “Disability” as defined by the *AODA* includes:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness
- a condition of mental impairment or a development disability,
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; (“*handicap*”).

Tips on Serving Customer with Specific Disabilities

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

There are many types and various degrees of physical disabilities. Do not assume that because a person has a physical disability that they have any other disability. Give the customer your full attention and speak to them as you would any other customer.

General Principles of Customer Service

- Always ask, “How may I help you?” before you offer your assistance to a customer.
- Be patient and respectful.
- Don’t make assumptions about your customer.
- If you are having difficulty understanding your customer, ask them politely to repeat themselves.

SOME TIPS TO HELP SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Speak directly to the customer and ask before you provide assistance.

- Be patient.
- Don't touch or alter assistive devices unless you're advised by the customer or the situation is an emergency.
- Remove any obstacles or barriers to create a clear passage.
- Make the customer aware of any accessible features that may better assist them.

TYPES OF ASSISTIVE DEVICES

- Elevator
- Mobility Device - scooter, wheelchair, etc.
- Support Persons
- Personal Oxygen Tank

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH SPEECH & LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS

People who have speech or language impairments can experience barriers when they are trying to access goods or services within their community.

Some people who have a speech or language impairment may use a speech generating device, a communication board or other assistive device.

Do not assume that because the customer has a speech or language disability that they have an intellectual or developmental disability.

SOME TIPS TO HELP SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH SPEECH/LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS

- Don't make assumptions about the customer's disability. Having a speech impairment does not mean they have a developmental or intellectual disability.
- Speak as you normally would using your normal tone, volume and rate.
- Allow the customer to complete their sentence without interruptions, even if you think you know what they are asking.
- Try to ask questions that require 'yes' or 'no' answers.
- Be extremely patient with the customer giving them as much time as they need to communicate with you.
- If you are having trouble understanding what they are asking or requesting, politely ask them to repeat it.
- Your best tools are respect and determination to find a way to communicate with the individual.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

When providing customer service to someone with a visual impairment it is important to identify yourself when you approach them.

A visual impairment reduces a person's ability to see clearly but does not necessarily mean the person is blind.

A person may have low vision, difficulty perceiving visual detail clearly, difficulty focusing on objects up close or far away, seeing the contrast of colors or brightness, judging distance or a variety of other difficulties.

SOME TIPS TO HELP SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

- If they request your assistance, offer your arm to help guide them.
- Speak very clearly and directly to the customer.
- Always identify yourself before you offer assistance even if you know the person well.
- Never touch the customer unless they advise you to help or unless it's an emergency situation.
- Be sure to say goodbye before you walk away and ensure their requests have been fulfilled.
- If they have a service animal with them, try to refrain from touching the animal as it needs to focus its attention elsewhere.
- Address the customer directly and not their support person if one is present.

Ask the customer if you can read any printed material out loud to them.

- If the information is confidential, guide the customer to a private room or area.
- Offer to describe information.
- Always orient your customer to a chair or guide them someplace comfortable before you leave them.
- If you are providing the customer with information, be very clear.
- If you are assisting them, make them aware of their surroundings by identifying landmarks such as upcoming obstacles or doorways.

TYPES OF VISION AIDS

- Braille
- Large Print
- Magnification Devices
- Guide Dog/Service Animals
- Support Person
- Cane
- Digital Audio Player

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL OR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

“Nobody is good at everything. Advantages and disadvantages come in many forms.”

“Once we accept our limits, we go beyond them.”

SOME TIPS TO HELP SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL OR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

- Be patient and supportive.
- Treat the person as you would anyone else.
- If you are having difficulty understanding what they are saying, simply ask them to repeat themselves.
- Don't make assumptions about what a customer may or may not understand or what the person can or cannot do.
- Speak directly to the customer and try to use short sentences.
- Ask the person periodically if they understand the information you've provided.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

SOME TIPS TO HELP SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

- Look directly at the customer when speaking to them.
- Don't shout or raise your voice when speaking to them.
- Ask how you can help.
- Repeat yourself with patience, if necessary.
- Always ensure they can see you when you're speaking to them; don't put your hands or any object in front of your face.
- Ask them if they would feel more comfortable communicating another way, such as the use of an assistive device (paper and pen).
- If the customer has a service animal do not address the animal as they are working.
- Don't assume the customer can read lips.
- Do your best to provide clear and precise information.
- If the environment you are speaking to the customer in contains competing sounds direct them to an area where it is less busy, (especially in cases that you notice the individual has a hearing aid).
- All personal matters (such as service feedback) should be dealt with in a private area/room to ensure no one overhears the information.

TYPES OF ASSISTIVE HEARING DEVICES

- Hearing Aid
- Teletypewriter TTY
- Phone amplifier
- Personal Amplification Device

- Relay Service
- Paper & Pen
- Support Person/Sign Language Interpreter
- Service Animal

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES

A person's mental health issues can affect their ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things.

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else.

Unless you are informed of a person's mental health disability you may never know one exists. Usually a person's mental health disability will not affect your customer service.

SOME TIPS TO HELP SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES

- Treat customers with a mental health disability as you would any other customer.
- Listen carefully with patience to the customer's request.
- Use plain language.
- Allow for the person to give a nod or signal of understanding.
- When answering questions or providing information be very reassuring and speak with confidence.
- If the customer appears to be distraught or confused ask them first how you can assist them.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Learning disabilities affect how a person receives or retains information. Learning disabilities can be subtle or more pronounced and can interfere with your customer's ability to process information or express themselves clearly.

A learning disability may become evident when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

SOME TIPS TO HELP SERVE CUSTOMERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- If you notice someone with a learning disability needs your help, kindly acknowledge them and ask how you can help.
- Patience is your best tool in assisting a person with a learning disability.
- Don't rush or interrupt them.
- Speak clearly and directly to them.
- Make sure you have paper and a pen handy in case they wish to have the information written out for them.
- Always ask, "How may I help you?"
- Treat all customers with dignity and respect – the same way you would like to be treated.

TYPES OF ASSISTIVE LEARNING DEVICES

- Electronic Notebooks or Laptop Computers
- Personal Data Managers
- Mini Pocket Recorders

Sensitivity Awareness

It is important to understand that customers with disabilities are just like any other customer in that they each have their own individual preferences, needs and habits. They are looking for the same quality of services and products and deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect.

Think About It...

When you think of the word disability, what is the first thing that you think of?

Was this what came to mind?



If you pictured a wheelchair, you are not alone.

The majority of Canadians associate the word disability with a wheelchair.

In Someone Else's Shoes

1. Amanda, the girl in the wheelchair, is the new girl in payroll.
2. The payroll department has a new employee; her name is Amanda.

The second sentence is correct. Amanda should not be identified or defined by her use of a wheelchair.

Always start with people first. In language, that means saying “person with a disability” rather than a “disabled person”. In any interaction, it means addressing the person’s service needs, rather than focusing on the disability.

Talking About Disabilities

- Using words like, “disability or disabled” is appropriate.
- Avoid using words like “handicapped”, “crippled”, “brain damaged”, etc.
- Put the person first, *not* their disability; identify them by their name not their disability.
- Remember a person is not defined by their disability or their use of an assistive device.
- Consider that each person might need slightly different accommodations; people with disabilities need access to opportunities not pity.
- Demonstrate sensitivity when interacting with all customers.
- If you are unfamiliar or unsure of how to provide a customer with service to meet their needs – just ask!
- Avoid statements that make it seem like a person with a disability should be pitied.
- Address a person’s service needs rather than their disability.
- People with disabilities are just like everyone else, and like everyone else they have their own strengths, skills, abilities and talents
- Customers with disabilities deserve the same level of access, service and respect as any other person.
- It is best to allow a person to describe their disability, rather than to make assumptions about their limitations.

Understanding Barriers

Barriers can be defined as anything that prevents a person with a disability from accessing and/or participating in goods or services offered to them. It is important to remember that barriers are not always apparent to able bodied people.

Types of Barriers

- Architectural
- Physical
- Information & Communication
- Attitudinal
- Technological
- Systemic

Accessibility Planning

The Town's Accessibility Plan describes the actions that will be taken to prevent and remove barriers and the anticipated timelines for completion. The Plan is a road map for increasing accessibility – that is, the actions that support our organization's commitment to accessibility and its accessibility policies.

The Township of Bonfield is responsible for:

- Establishing, reviewing, and updating our accessibility plan in consultation with people with disabilities.
- Preparing an annual status update on our progress in implementing our plan, including steps taken to comply with the requirements of the regulation.
- Posting the status update on our website and providing it in an accessible format on request.

In addition to the Accessibility Plan, the Town has developed accessibility policies describing what we do, or intend to do, to meet the requirements of the regulation. These policies serve as rules that guide our organization's everyday practices. These policies are available to the public, staff and are available in accessible formats upon request.

Procuring or Acquiring Goods and Services

Under the law, only public sector organizations have this requirement. The Township of Bonfield will incorporate accessibility criteria and features when procuring or acquiring goods, services or facilities, including self-serve kiosks. If it is not possible and practical to do so, we will provide an explanation upon request.

It is important to incorporate accessibility criteria into procurement and buying practices. Doing so, can make a significant impact on preventing new accessibility barriers and addressing existing ones.

Township staff are responsible for:

- Incorporating accessibility design, criteria and features in procurement, except where it is not practicable to do so (e.g., when older products and newer ones being procured are technologically incompatible).

- Providing an explanation, on request, as to why accessibility design, criteria and features were not practicable to incorporate into the procurement (e.g., when accessible goods, services, or facilities are not available).

Information and Communication

Each and every day people inside and outside our organization communicates and shares information about the goods and services we offer. When requested, the information and communication must be provided in an accessible manner to people with disabilities.

Alternatives to standard print are often referred to as accessible formats, and ways to help communication between people are referred to as communication supports.

When a request is received, you must **consult** with the person to determine their accessibility needs. You have the **flexibility** to determine the most appropriate accessible format or communication support depending on the accessibility needs of the person and the **capability of our organization** to deliver.

Accessible formats and communication supports must be provided in a **timely manner** and **at a cost that is not more** than the regular costs charged to other people.

Examples of alternate formats and communication supports:

- Reading written information to a person directly
- Large print
- Text transcripts of audio or visual information
- Handwritten notes instead of spoken word
- Information written in plain language
- An electronic document formatted to be accessible for use with a screen reader

Tips on Providing Accessible Formats

1. Ensure Electronic Version is Accessible

The use of Microsoft Headings allows individuals with screen readers to navigate through the document which ensures consistency.

2. Follow Clear Writing Principles

- Use short sentences
- Avoid unnecessary disabilities
- Action in your verbs
- Write as you talk
- Tie in with reader's experience
- Write to express, not to impress

3. Follow Clear Print Guidelines

It is important to keep clear print guidelines in mind when designing any product (letters, emails, flyers, signage, documents, forms, business cards, agendas, minutes and websites)

- Black and white is best
- Keep text large, between 10 and 18 font size
- Use bold
- Use Arial font type
- Do not use all caps
- Do not use *italics*
- Appropriate use of white space

For example:



Each of the written statements above are identical. As you can see, the statements written in Arial font type is significantly easier to read.

The next samples outline how properly using features in Microsoft Work can increase the legibility of the document you are creating.

Use upper and lower case characters. Do not use all CAPs

X **MARY RIDES HER BIKE TO SCHOOL** (All CAPs)

✓ **Mary rides her bike to school** (Upper & lower case)

Do not use *italics*

X *Mary rides her bike to school* (Arial Italics)

✓ **Mary rides her bike to school** (Arial – no italics)

Ensure spacing between each letter

x **loan** (Agency – font size 36)

✓ **loan** (Verdana – font size 36)

4. Colour Contrast

- Use **high contrast colours** for text and background
- Printed materials are most legible in **Black and White**
- Do not use colour as your **only means** of communication
- Reduce distractions by **not** using **watermarks** or complicated background designs

Incorrect = blue on black

Correct = white on black

Correct= black on yellow

Feedback Process

Under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, organizations must establish a customer service feedback process for receiving and responding to feedback about how they provide goods or services to people with disabilities.

In addition to a customer service feedback process, our organization may have other types of external or internal feedback processes – for example, online surveys or forms, email, phone, or print. When developing any type of feedback method, it is important to ensure accessibility has been worked into the process. For example, the following disclaimer shall be added to all feedback materials, online or hard copy:



Accessibility Accommodations

Please provide advance notice if you require an accessibility accommodation to attend or participate or to access information in an alternate format, please contact the Municipal Office by phone at 705-776-2641 or email at officeclerk@bonfieldtownship.org

Accessible Website and Web Content

An organization's website is often a primary way to share information. For this reason, it is important that our website and web content be accessible.

The Township has specific guidelines that we must conform to known as the International Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, as outlined in the standard.

These Guidelines were developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and explain how each organization can make their website more accessible for persons with disabilities.

With the launch of the Township's website, the guidelines for accessibility were worked into the development process. Web content, through the use of inaccessible pdf documents, lack of proper headings on website pages is the Township's main challenge.

Emergency Preparedness

The Township provides a variety of different emergency procedures, plans and public safety information to the public. The information is helpful to everyone, including persons with disabilities when planning a visit to a location and being prepared to vacate in the event of an emergency.

Examples of emergency information can include, but is not limited to:

- Emergency plans and procedures
- Maps, warning signs, and evacuation routes
- Information provided to the public about emergency safety

Real-time emergency information is not included in this requirement.

Employment Standard

The Township will notify employees, potential hires and the public that accommodations can be made during recruitment and hiring.

The Township notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We will put in place a process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.

Where needed, we will also provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency.

Our performance management, career development and redeployment processes will take into account the accessibility needs of all employees. Note: This only applies to organizations that already have these processes in place.

The Ontario Human Rights Code requires all employers to meet the accommodation needs of employees with disabilities to the point of undue hardship.

The Employment Standard builds on this requirement by ensuring employers have a process in place to determine an employee's accommodation needs.

The Township's Policies and Procedures take into account persons with disabilities and contain information regarding accommodation through the life cycle with the Township. All Policies and Procedures can be found on the Township's internet site or by contacting the Municipal Office directly.

The requirements apply to paid employees and do not apply to volunteers and other non-paid individuals. The requirement also does not apply to a bona-fide occupational requirement.

Accommodation Plans

The Township is required to have a written process to document accommodation plans for employees with disabilities. Having a Plan helps to clarify the approach and provides consistency.

An individual accommodation plan is a formal way to record and review the workplace related accommodations that will be provided to an employee with a disability. Employers must work with an employee with a disability to find the appropriate accommodation to meet the individual's accommodation needs.

For example, an accommodation might include the need to provide screen reader software for a computer or a large screen monitor.

Emergency Response Information

Individualized emergency response information can help both employees with disabilities and organizations prepare for various emergencies such as fire, power outages or severe weather.

For example, an employee who cannot hear a fire alarm will need to know how and when to safely exit the building in the event of a fire.

Every employer must provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees with disabilities **upon request from the employee**. With the employee's consent, the information can be shared with anyone designated to help them in an emergency.

This emergency response information must be reviewed when:

- The employee moves to a different location in our organization.
- The employee's overall accommodation needs, or plans are reviewed.
- We review our organization's emergency response policies.

In addition to employee Accommodation Plans and Emergency Response Information, the Township must also develop procedures for informing employees of supports, advertising job positions, inviting job applicants to participate in the selection process and offering a job to a successful applicant that take into account employees and potential employees with disabilities.

Contact the Township's Municipal Office for more information on how the Township accommodates employees with disabilities.

Transportation Standard

The Transportation Standard sets out the requirements that will prevent and remove barriers to public transportation to make it easier for people to travel within Ontario.

This standard outlines requirements for transportation service providers

Since the Township does not have any public transportation services or taxi cabs and the likes, the Township of Bonfield will continue to encourage owners and operators to make their vehicle registration and identification in accessible formats. The Township will also continue to endeavour to attract and encourage taxi cab owners to add taxicabs to the community, to consult with the public and people with disabilities in the Accessibility Plans.

Note: Although the Township of Bonfield does not currently offer conventional and/or specialized transit, as Ontario residents it is important we know and understand the changing transportation standards.

There are some requirements common to both conventional and specialized transportation service providers, such as:

- Making information available to the public on accessibility equipment and features of their vehicles, routes and services.
- Providing accessibility training to employees and volunteers.
- Not charging a fare to a support person accompanying a person with a disability when that person requires a support person.
- Meeting additional transportation specific requirements in the accessibility plans.

Some of the requirements for conventional transportation service providers are technical requirements for accessible lifting devices, steps, grab bars/handrails, floor surfaces, lighting, warning indicators and alarms and route signage.

Fares: not charging people with disabilities a higher fare than people without disabilities, and not charging for storing mobility aids or mobility assistive devices, such as wheelchairs or walkers.

Stop Announcements: providing on-board audible and visual stop announcements.

Seating: Providing clearly marked seating for people with disabilities.

Service Disruptions: supporting people with disabilities during service disruptions by offering alternative accessible arrangements, if necessary, and accessible communication. There are other requirements that are unique to each specific type of transportation provider, for more information please refer to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, specifically the Transportation Standard.

Bus Stops and Shelters

Note: Public sector organizations must incorporate accessibility features. And private and non-profit organizations must have regard for accessibility in this requirement. We will incorporate accessibility features/consider accessibility for people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks.

Municipalities that offer conventional transportation services must consult on, and plan for, accessible bus stops and shelters in their community.

To determine what is needed to make bus stops and shelters more accessible, municipalities must consult with the public, and people with disabilities. Any planning or steps to meet the goal of accessible bus stops and shelters must be included in the municipality's accessibility plan.

Taxi Cabs

Municipalities must consult with the public, and people with disabilities to determine the proportion of on-demand accessible taxicabs required in the community. Municipalities that license taxicabs must ensure that owners and operators of taxicabs meet specific requirements, which include:

- Not charging higher fares or additional fees to a person with a disability.
- Placing vehicle registration and identification information on the rear bumper.
- Making available vehicle registration and identification information to people with disabilities in an accessible format

Final Thoughts

So how does this relate to me?

Here at the Township of Bonfield, we encourage everyone to:

- Have respect for everyone's dignity and independence;
- Provide equal opportunity to all customers to obtain goods or services;
- Allow persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services in a similar way as all other customers (equity of outcome);
- Be sensitive to individual needs;
- Provide information and communicate in an accessible manner;
- Make sure documents, emails, websites, and other forms of information are created keeping in mind accessible formats;
- Welcome and create employment opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Encourage employees to self-identify to ensure they get the assistance they may need;
- Ensure accessible transportation is available within our municipality; and
- Ensure we incorporate accessibility criteria when planning for the future.

We are working towards an “accessible Ontario!” Let’s proudly move it forward! Thank you for taking the time to read through our Training Guide on Accessible Customer Service. It is an essential part of our corporate values and our commitment to removing and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities.

Additional Resources

1. Township of Bonfield Municipal Office phone: 705.776.2641
Email: cao.clerk@bonfieldtownship.org
2. The Township's website – www.bonfieldtownship.org
3. Training for an Accessible Ontario - <https://accessforward.ca>
4. Human Rights Code Training - <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/learning/working-together-code-and-aoda>

