

# ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE



## TOOLS, TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR HOUSING CO-OPS

## **Important Notice**

This Resource Guide provides information, resources, and tips to help co-ops to better meet the service needs of people with disabilities.

The information in this Guide is written generally and may not exactly fit with the practices of your co-op. It is meant to be a starting point for providing training to Board members, co-op managers and the people they supervise, volunteers and others who interact with members, applicants, visitors and the public. This Resource Guide will help you comply with the training requirements under the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*. However, it is important to know your own co-op's accessibility policies, procedures and resources. Make sure you find out and integrate them into your accessible customer service training.

Further while this guide provides sector specific resources, tips and information for housing co-ops, it is not a legal document and should be read with the official language of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and the customer service standard. If there is any conflict between these documents, the AODA and the standard are the final authorities.

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# **ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**TOOLS, TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR  
HOUSING CO-OPS**

# ABOUT THIS TRAINING RESOURCE

Delivering accessible, quality service to all members, applicants, visitors and the public makes good business sense and is a vital part of co-operative housing. It is also a requirement under the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07*, also known as the customer service standard.

This Resource Guide, “Accessible Customer Service” gives housing co-ops the information and resources needed to comply with the training requirements of the customer service standard. They incorporate housing specific tips and examples that can be adapted and customized to your co-op.

## **Who should use this Resource Guide?**

This Resource Guide is designed to help you meet and comply with the training requirements under the customer service standard. These resources are useful for all individuals who interact with the public. This may include:

- members of the board of directors
- co-op managers
- other staff members, volunteers or contractors who serve members of the public.

## **How to use this Resource Guide**

Training is a critical component to the customer service standard. Each co-op should identify how to train all individuals who interact with the public. These resources can be incorporated into a regular staff or board meeting, used as the foundation for a training session specifically set up to discuss accessibility or reviewed individually.

### ***Members of the Board of Directors and co-op managers***

For individuals like Board members, and co-op managers who are responsible for ensuring your co-op complies with legislation, and/or who write or approve policies and procedures:

- Review this Guide. It will help you understand your responsibilities under the customer service standard. It will also help you to respond to the accessibility needs of your applicants, members, visitors and the public. This will be important as you develop and approve your own organization’s accessibility policies, and procedures.
- Check the CHF Canada Resource Centre. It provides detailed information, templates and samples to help your co-op comply with the customer service standard.
- Once your co-ops policies and procedures have been developed and approved, ensure they become part of this Resource Guide and your training program. A section at the end of this Guide has been created just for this purpose.

### ***Co-op managers and staff who interact with the public***

For all managers and staff who interact with the public:

- Review this Resource Guide.
- Make sure you know what your own co-op's accessibility policies and procedures are. A section at the end of this Guide has been created where copies of your co-op's specific policies and procedures can be kept for ease of access and use.
- Following your initial training, use this Guide when you have questions or want tips on providing accessible service to your members, applicants, and the public.

#### **NOTE:**

To meet compliance requirements individuals must receive training that incorporates the content of this Resource Guide. Individuals must also receive training on your co-op's accessible customer service policies, practices and procedures.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **The Legal Framework**

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) .....	p 2
The Customer Service Standard .....	p 3
Questions and Answers .....	p 3

## **Customer Service Standard Requirements**

Summary of Requirements .....	p 6
-------------------------------	-----

## **An Accessibility Framework**

Defining Disability: The AODA & Customer Service Standard .....	p9
Core Principles of Accessible Customer Service .....	p10
Who Are Our Customers? .....	P11
Accessibility Barriers .....	p11
Board Roles and Responsibilities in Delivering Accessible Customer Service .....	p13
Staff Roles and Responsibilities in Delivering Accessible Customer Service .....	p15

## **Interacting and Communicating with Tenants/Customers with Disabilities**

Words Can Make a Difference .....	p18
General Tips for Serving People with Disabilities .....	p23
Serving Tenants/Customers with Vision Loss .....	p24
Types of Technology, Equipment .....	p28
General Tips .....	p31
Guiding a Person who is Blind .....	p33
Assisting with Name Signing .....	p34
Serving People with Hearing Loss .....	p35
Types of Technology, Equipment .....	p36
General Tips .....	p41
Communicating through an Interpreter .....	p42
Using Voice Relay Service .....	p42
How to Make a TTY Call .....	p43
TTY Etiquette .....	p44

Serving People who are Deafblind.....	p46
Types of Technology, Equipment.....	p46
Common Communication Methods.....	p47
General Tips .....	p49
Serving People with Physical Disabilities .....	p50
Types of Technology, Equipment.....	p50
General Tips .....	p53
Serving People with Mental Health Disabilities .....	p55
Types of Supports.....	p56
General Tips .....	p56
Serving People with Learning Disabilities .....	p57
Types of Technology, Equipment.....	p59
General Tips .....	p61
Serving People with Developmental Disabilities.....	p63
Types of Technology, Equipment.....	p63
General Tips .....	p65
Serving People with Speech/Language Impairments.....	p66
Types of Technology, Equipment.....	p66
General Tips .....	p68
Communicating with People who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices.....	p69
Service Animals .....	p71
Support Persons.....	p77
Assistive Devices.....	p81

## **Additional Resources and References**

Links to Accessibility Resources and Legislation .....	p85
References . .....	p87

## **Our Organization’s Accessible Customer Service Policy & Procedures**

Our Policies and Procedures.....	p89
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# **THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

# THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK



All Ontarians have certain rights guaranteed by law. The concepts of equal rights and opportunity, as well as freedom from discrimination, have been a cornerstone for Ontarians since 1962, when the *Ontario Human Rights Code* became law.

The Code has resulted in some progress towards breaking down accessibility barriers in Ontario. However, people with disabilities still encounter many barriers that prevent equal access and participation.

The Government of Ontario has recognized that many continue to experience barriers when attempting to fully participate in the breadth of daily activities and when accessing goods and services. The Government has passed legislation with the goal of enhancing and achieving accessibility for all Ontarians.

## **The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**

*The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* which became law on June 13, 2005 provides the foundation for identifying, removing and preventing barriers for people with disabilities. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by January 1, 2025.

The *AODA* allows the Government of Ontario to develop specific standards of accessibility for people with disabilities. These standards are the rules that businesses, organizations and government will need to follow to break down accessibility barriers.

Standards are being developed that address key areas of daily living including:

- \* Customer Service
- \* Information and Communications
- \* Employment
- \* Transportation
- \* The Built Environment

These accessibility standards will provide the building blocks Ontario will use to make measurable and effective improvements to accessibility. Customer service is the first of the standards to become law.

## The Customer Service Standard

The customer service standard, which came into force on January 1, 2008, is the first mandatory regulation under the *Accessibility for Ontario with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Its purpose is to make an organization's operations accessible to people with disabilities by identifying and removing barriers to customer service. This regulation is designed to ensure people with disabilities have equal opportunity to obtain and benefit from goods and services as others.

The customer service standard addresses business practices and training needed to provide enhanced and accessible customer service to people with disabilities.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### 1. Who has to comply with the customer service standard?

The customer service standard applies to all people, businesses and organizations that:

- provide goods or services to the public or to other businesses or organizations;
- have one or more employees in Ontario.

It applies to public, non-profit and private sector organizations like co-op and co-op housing providers.

### 2. What do housing co-ops have to do to comply?

To comply, housing co-ops must implement the requirements set out in the customer service standard. These requirements cover business practices and training needed to enhance accessible customer service to people with disabilities. (See page 6 for a summary.)

### 3. By when do we have to comply?

All businesses and organizations including housing co-ops are required to comply by January 1, 2012.

Designated public sector organizations were required to meet the requirements of the customer service standard by January 1, 2010.

### 4. Why am I required to receive training on accessible customer service?

By law, each person who interacts with tenants, applicants, visitors, other organizations, or other members of the public is required to know and follow the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (Ont. Reg. 429/07).

This means all staff (full and part-time, seasonal, temporary), volunteers, as well as contractors who provide service on your co-op's behalf must receive training.

**5. What happens if an organization does not comply with the customer service standard?**

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the Government of Ontario can take enforcement action.

The government has placed an emphasis on compliance assistance through training, education and resources as a critical step in assisting organizations that do not comply.

The *AODA* does however identify enforcement and penalties. Organizations and directors can be penalized if they are found guilty of an offence under this Act. While the framework for administrative penalties has not been finalized, Section 37 of the *AODA* indicates: if a corporation is guilty of an offence under the Act and found liable on conviction, a fine of not more than \$100,000 for each day or part of a day on which the offence occurs could be levied. A fine of not more than \$50,000 for each day or part of a day on which the offence occurs could be imposed upon every director who is found guilty of an offence, on conviction.

**6. Under the customer service standard do we have to make our building and facilities accessible to people with disabilities?**

The customer service standard addresses how you interact, communicate and provide services to people with disabilities. It does not specifically address the accessibility of the actual building and facilities.

It should be noted that the *AODA* and the customer service standard do not replace or change responsibilities such as the "duty to accommodate" under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Section 38 of the *AODA* states the law that provides the higher level of accessibility is the law that must be followed.

# **CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD REQUIREMENTS**

# CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD REQUIREMENTS

The customer service standard outlines a series of different requirements that all organizations across Ontario, including housing co-ops, must meet in order to achieve compliance with the standard.

## Policies, Practices and Procedures



- Organizations must establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities. This includes a policy for people's use of their own assistive devices.
- Organizations must ensure their policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the principles: independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

## Service Animals



- Organizations must let a person with a disability bring their service animal onto the areas of their premises, open to the public or in a co-op's case to members, except where another law specifically excludes animals from the premises.
- If a service animal is excluded by law, then there must be other measures available to provide services to the person with a disability.

## Support Persons



- Organizations must allow a person with a disability to be accompanied by their support person when on premises open to the public or members.
- If there are fees for admission to specific services or events, organizations must let people know ahead of time what, if any, admission will be charged for a support person.

## Notices of Temporary Disruptions



- Organizations must let the public know when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use or access are temporarily unavailable, whether it is a planned or unplanned interruption.

## Customer Service Feedback Process



- Organizations must establish and make publicly available a process for receiving and responding to feedback about the way it provides goods or services to people with disabilities. This includes the actions to be taken if a complaint is received.

## Communication



- Organizations must communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account their disability.

## Training



- Organizations must train everyone responsible for developing policies and procedures on accessible customer service.
- Anyone who interacts with members or the public must receive training on how serve people with disabilities. This includes staff, co-op members, volunteers, and contractors.

# **AN ACCESSIBILITY FRAMEWORK**

# DISABILITY: A DEFINITION

## DEFINING DISABILITY: THE AODA & CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD

Under the AODA and the customer service standard:

“Disability” means,

(a) 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 co-ordination, 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,

(b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

(c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

(d) a mental disorder, or

(e) 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”).

This definition is the same as the definition of disability used in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The definition includes disabilities of varying severity. For example, it can include people with low vision through to individuals who are blind. It can include people who are unsteady on their feet and who use a cane through to people who are paralyzed and who use a wheelchair. It can include people with some hearing loss through to people who are deaf.

The definition includes disabilities that are both visible and non-visible. For example, it can include a person who has had a leg amputated or a person who uses a white cane, as well as person with a mental health disability, learning disability, or acquired brain injury.

The definition also includes disabilities where the effects may come and go or increase in severity over time. For example, a person with epilepsy, or a person with multiple sclerosis may have periods when the condition does not affect their daily routine and other times when it does.



## **CORE PRINCIPLES OF ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The four core principles that are at the heart of accessible customer service include:

### **Dignity**

Dignity means providing service in ways that allow the customer to maintain his or her self-respect and the respect of other people. It means not treating persons with disabilities as an afterthought or forcing them to accept lesser service, quality or convenience. It means providing service in ways that show customers are valued and deserving of effective and full service. It means understanding and respecting the various ways people can effectively access and use services.

### **Independence**

Independence means providing service in ways that ensure people are able to do things on their own, in their own way, without unnecessary help, interference or influence from others. It means providing individuals with the freedom to make their own choices about how to receive service.

### **Integration**

Integration means providing service in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as others. It means that policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities.

### **Equal/Equitable Opportunity**

Equal opportunity means providing services in ways that allow individuals with disabilities to have the same chances, options, benefits and results of your services as others. It means that persons with disabilities should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service or accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.



## WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?

The customer service standard applies to all organizations that provide goods and services to the public or to third parties. What does this really mean?

Within the co-op housing sector, the word customer is not often used. Members, residents, applicants, visitors are much more common. The customer service standard applies to all interactions whether they are with members, applicants, visitors, or members of the general public who have disabilities.



## ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS

A barrier is anything that keeps someone from fully participating in all aspects of society. Barriers can be visible or non-visible. Furthermore, while barriers are often unintentional, they can restrict access to goods and services. Common barriers include:

### **Attitude**

Attitudinal barriers are about our assumptions, beliefs, thoughts and fears. Attitudes can be shaped by our knowledge, previous experience, stereotypes and what we hear and see from media and others. Attitudes can significantly impact how we view, interact and treat with people with disabilities.

### **Architectural or structural**

Architectural or structural barriers may result from design elements of a building such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and room layout. Everyday practices such as where we store boxes, if accessible pathways are obstructed, how we layout the office or a meeting room can also create barriers.

### **Information or communication**

Information or communication barriers affect access to public information, opportunities to express oneself and access to essential services. Communication barriers interfere with the ability of people to participate in life and to obtain services.

Only providing printed material in small print size, low colour contrast between text and background or not facing the person when speaking – can make it difficult for a growing number of people to receive or convey information. Only accepting information in paper format, and not allowing or using electronic communication and information sharing can equally present barriers to people with a range of disabilities.

### **Technology**

Technology, or the lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Common tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers if they are not set up or designed with accessibility in mind. Using only recorded messages, sending out documents or information as images or inaccessible pdf's, requiring members to use an online service but having an inaccessible website can all create barriers for people with disabilities.

### **Systemic**

Systemic barriers arise when policies, practices and procedures support some groups without considering or understanding the needs of others. Having policies that treat everyone the same, regardless of circumstance can create barriers for some groups. For example, a policy that does not allow for prospective members to obtain a copy of the occupancy agreement ahead of the actual agreement signing meeting can create barriers for people with vision loss or learning disabilities who may not be given the opportunity to read or review the occupancy agreement before signing.




## **BOARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN DELIVERING ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

The co-op's Board of Directors has a vital role to play in governing the co-op, providing guidance to managers and keeping an eye on the results. The board also has specific responsibilities to ensure the co-op meets its obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the customer service standard.

All co-op boards must:

- ✔ **RECEIVE TRAINING** – The customer service standard requires everyone involved in setting and/or approving policies and procedures on providing goods and services to receive training. The standard sets out the topics that the training must cover.
- ✔ **ENSURE THE CO-OP HAS ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES** – This includes developing new, and revising existing policies and procedures on the delivery of service to people with disabilities ensuring they are consistent with the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equity/equality of opportunity.
- ✔ **ENSURE THE CO-OP HAS A TRAINING PLAN** that identifies how everyone who interacts with members or the public will receive the training prescribed in the customer service standard, and to monitor progress to ensure the plan is carried out.
- ✔ **ENSURE A PROCESS TO TRAIN** new staff, contractors or members who will interact with the public is in place and for providing retraining of all staff if there are changes to the co-ops own policies and procedures for delivering service.
- ✔ **IDENTIFY THE BOARD'S ROLE** in receiving and responding to feedback about the way the co-op provides service to people with disabilities.
- ✔ **BE AWARE OF ANY ASSISTIVE DEVICES** your co-op offers and how to use them.
- ✔ **CONSIDER WAYS TO ENHANCE THE CO-OP'S OVERALL ACCESSIBILITY.**

- ✔ LEAD BY EXAMPLE, demonstrating through its own actions the importance of treating all members, applicants, visitors and members of the public with dignity and respect, and in ways that promote independence, integration and equity of opportunity.



Under *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*:

- "Every director or officer of a corporation has a duty to take all reasonable care to prevent the corporation from committing an offence under this section. 2005, c.11, s.37 (4).
- Every director or officer of a corporation who has a duty under subsection (4) and who fails to carry out that duty is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not more than \$50,000 for each day or part of a day on which the offence occurs or continues to occur. 2005, c.11, s.37(5)"

Under the *AODA* a person is guilty of an offence who,  
“(a) furnishes false or misleading information in an accessibility report filed with a director under this Act or otherwise provides a director with false or misleading information; (b) fails to comply with any order made by a director or the Tribunal under this Act;

A person is also guilty of an offence if they obstruct an inspector carrying out an inspection under a warrant; (b) refuses to answer questions on matters relevant to the inspection; (c) provides the inspector with information on matters relevant to the inspection that the person knows to be false or misleading; or (d) withholds from the inspector any information that is relevant to the inspection.”



## **STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN DELIVERING ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Co-op managers and the people they supervise are responsible for putting the customer service standard into action.

The co-op manager, or a person supervised by the manager:

- ✔ Develops and recommends to the board policies, practices and procedures that comply with the Customer Service Standard.
- ✔ Receives customer service training as prescribed in the customer service standard.
- ✔ Develops a training plan for all staff and members who interact with members or the public. This also includes providing regular reports to the board.
- ✔ Ensures a record of all customer service training is maintained.
- ✔ Works with members and others to find alternative ways to meet service needs of people with disabilities. Seeks the board's approval for any measures that will require policy changes or spending.
- ✔ Ensures the co-op's written communications are widely accessible, responding to requests for information in alternative formats.
- ✔ Provides quality, accessible customer service that meets the Customer Service Standard including:
  - Communicating in ways that takes into account a person's disability
  - Using "people first" language that is respectful and focuses on the individual not their disability
  - Learning about any assistive devices and measures provided by the co-op and how to use them
  - Allowing people with disabilities to use their own personal assistive devices or those which may be offered by your co-op while accessing your services

- Ensuring service animals and support people are welcomed and can accompany a person with a disability in all areas of the co-op open to members and the public, as well as the individual's own unit
  - Publicizes admission fees for support people for any events with an admission charge, prior to the event.
  - Provides notices of planned or unexpected disruption in services. By law, notices must indicate: the reason for the disruption (e.g. elevator is being serviced); the expected duration; and a description of alternate facilities or services, if available.
- ✔ Develops and administers a feedback process about the way the co-op provides services to people with disabilities
  - ✔ Ensures all co-op members and the public are treated with respect and dignity.



If someone is experiencing problems in accessing your services

- Ask the person how you can best help him or her.
- Ask what alternative method or service would be more accessible.
- Be flexible.
- Provide service in a variety of ways, as quickly as possible.



Each co-op must have its own policies and procedures on providing service to people with disabilities. Make sure you find out your organization's expectations.

# **INTERACTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**



## **WORDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**"The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug."- Mark Twain**

Language plays a critical role in shaping and reflecting our thoughts, beliefs and feelings. The language we use to talk about disability influences the way society views people with disabilities. Words can positively, or negatively, influence and reinforce perceptions of people with disabilities. Language and words can play an important part in creating an accessible environment.

'People-first' language is used to emphasize the person, not the disability. People-first language reminds us that disability is not the main, defining characteristic of an individual, but one of several aspects of the whole person.

Below are some general suggestions for speaking to and about people with disabilities.

### **GENERAL TIPS ABOUT LANGUAGE**



- ✔ Use language that focuses on the person rather than their disability. Put people first by saying "Person with a disability" rather than a "disabled person". Avoid using words like "handicapped," "able-bodied," "physically challenged," and "differently-abled".
- ✔ A person's disability should not be their defining feature. Only refer to a person's disability when it is related to what you are talking about. For example, don't ask "What's wrong with you?"
- ✔ Use the word "accessible" rather than "disabled" or "handicapped" when talking about places where accommodations have been made for people with disabilities. For example, refer to an "accessible" parking space rather than a "disabled" or "handicapped" parking space or "an accessible washroom" rather than "a handicapped washroom."



# tips



- ✔ Do not use the article "the" with a specific disability to describe people with that disability. Example: NOT "the blind". USE "people who are blind". The preferred term, "people with disabilities," avoids making the person an object.
- ✔ Just because someone has a disability doesn't mean he/she is "courageous," "brave," "special," or "superhuman." Be cautious of implying that people with disabilities deserve to be pitied, feared, or ignored. Be careful not to imply that they are somehow more heroic, courageous, patient, or "special" than others who do not have a disability. People with disabilities are the same as everyone else. It is not unusual for someone with a disability to have talents, skills, and abilities.
- ✔ Avoid using terms that define a person's disability as a limitation. Example: NOT "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair bound" USE "wheelchair user" or "uses a wheelchair". To many people items like a wheelchair are not negative, but provide the individual with a means to independence.
- ✔ Terms such as "victim" or "sufferer" should not be used to refer to people who have a disability or disease. This implies powerlessness. Example: NOT "AIDS sufferer" USE "person with HIV/AIDS".
- ✔ Never use the word "normal" to refer to people who do not have a disability in contrast to people with disabilities. Use "non-disabled" or person without a disability instead. Example: NOT "Jane did as well on the exam as the normal students." USE "Jane did well on her exam."


Sometimes people who do not have a disability are concerned about offending people by using the wrong term. When in doubt, call a person with a disability by his/her name or ask the individual the terminology that they would like you to use.

## TERMINOLOGY

 <b>Don't use</b>	 <b>Use</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The aged</li> <li>• The elderly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seniors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth defect</li> <li>• Congenital defect</li> <li>• Deformity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who has a congenital disability</li> <li>• A person with a disability since birth</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The blind</li> <li>• The visually impaired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who is blind</li> <li>• A person with vision loss</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain damaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person with a brain injury</li> <li>• A person with an acquired brain injury</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confined to a wheelchair</li> <li>• Wheelchair bound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who uses a wheelchair</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cripple</li> <li>• Crippled</li> <li>• Lame</li> <li>• Physically challenged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person with a disability</li> <li>• A person with a physical disability</li> <li>• A person with a spinal cord injury</li> <li>• A person who uses a walker</li> <li>• A person who uses a mobility aid</li> <li>• A person with arthritis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crazy</li> <li>• Insane</li> <li>• Lunatic</li> <li>• Psycho</li> <li>• Mental</li> <li>• Mental patient</li> <li>• Maniac</li> <li>• Neurotic</li> <li>• Psychotic</li> <li>• Unsound mind</li> <li>• Schizophrenic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person with a mental illness</li> <li>• A person with a mental disorder</li> <li>• A person with a mood disorder (for example, a person with depression, a person with bipolar disorder)</li> <li>• A person with a personality disorder (for example, a person with an antisocial personality disorder)</li> <li>• A person with an anxiety disorder (for example a person with obsessive-compulsive disorder)</li> <li>• A person with an eating disorder (for example a person with anorexia nervosa, a person with bulimia)</li> <li>• A person with schizophrenia</li> </ul>

 <b>Don't use</b>	 <b>Use</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The deaf</li> <li>• The hearing impaired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who is deaf (for example, a person with profound hearing loss)</li> <li>• A person who is deafened (for example, a person who has become deaf later in life)</li> <li>• A person who is hard of hearing (for example, person with hearing loss)</li> <li>• If you are talking about the Deaf community and their culture (whose preferred way of communication is sign language), you can use "the Deaf"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf and dumb</li> <li>• Deaf mute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who is deaf and does not talk</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The deaf-blind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who is deafblind (for example, a person who has any combination of vision and hearing loss)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Epileptic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who has epilepsy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fits</li> <li>• Spells</li> <li>• Attacks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seizures</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The handicapped</li> <li>• Invalid</li> <li>• Patient</li> <li>• The disabled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a disability</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hidden disability</li> <li>• Invisible disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-visible disability</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning disabled</li> <li>• Learning disordered</li> <li>• Dyslexic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person with a learning disability or people with learning disabilities</li> </ul>

 <b>Don't use</b>	 <b>Use</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentally retarded</li> <li>• Idiot</li> <li>• Simple</li> <li>• Retarded</li> <li>• Feeble-minded</li> <li>• Imbecile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person with an intellectual disability</li> <li>• A person with a developmental disability</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midget</li> <li>• Dwarf</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A little person</li> <li>• A person of short stature</li> <li>• A person who has a form of dwarfism</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mongoloid</li> <li>• Mongolism</li> <li>• Downs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person with Down Syndrome</li> <li>• A person with an intellectual or developmental disability</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person without a disability</li> <li>• A person who is not disabled</li> <li>• Specifically, a person who is sighted, a hearing person, a person who is ambulatory</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spastic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who has muscle spasms</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stutterer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person who stutters</li> <li>• A person with a communication disorder</li> </ul>



**KEEP IN MIND**

- Each person is an individual, NOT a disability
- Treat adults as adults



## General Tips for Serving People with Disabilities

- ✔ Treat a person with a disability the same as a person without a disability (i.e. with dignity and respect).
- ✔ Avoid making assumptions about the type of disability or disabilities a person has and the person's capabilities.
- ✔ Because a person has one disability does not mean they have another.
- ✔ Not all disabilities are visible. Don't assume that a person does not have a disability because you can't see it. Listen to what your members and the public are asking for, and respond in a way that meets his/her needs.
- ✔ Don't assume a person needs help because the individual has a disability. Adults with disabilities want to be treated as independent people. Offer assistance, if the person appears to need it.
- ✔ If a person wants assistance, ask "How May I Help?" before acting. Usually a person with a disability knows what works best for him/her. (e.g. speak clearly, take my arm, etc.)
- ✔ Communicate clearly and patiently to ensure shared understanding. This may mean allowing the person to finish what he/she is saying without interrupting. It also may mean not being afraid to ask someone to repeat something if you don't understand.
- ✔ While acknowledging the presence of an interpreter, attendant, or other support person remember to address the person with a disability directly.
- ✔ Respect people's assistive devices e.g. a cane, scooter, walker, wheelchair, service animals, etc. Do not touch or move these devices without permission from the individual.

### REMEMBER

An important part of your job is providing services to members and the public. Delivering services in ways that promote dignity, independence, and a sense of integration and equality for all, including for people with disabilities is a critical part of providing quality service.



## Understanding the Needs of People with Vision Loss

How should you interact or communicate with a person who is blind or who has vision loss? The simple answer is just as you would anyone else.

Each person with vision loss is different. The reason, degree and nature of their vision loss, as well as the length of time the person has experienced the vision loss can be very different. There are hundreds of different conditions that can cause vision loss and total blindness. Not all have obvious outward symptoms. Don't presume that you know what a person who has vision loss looks like. Also, don't assume that because someone is blind they can't see you. A low percentage of people are totally blind and see nothing at all.

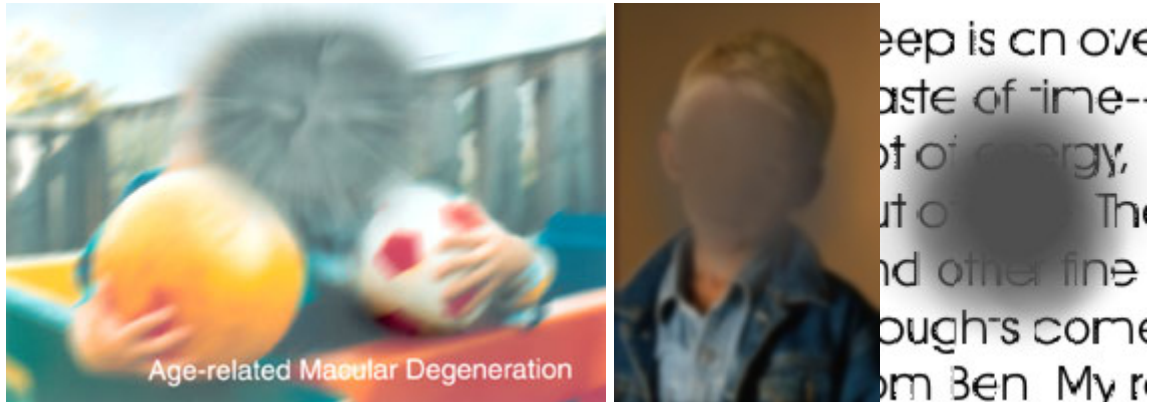
No pictures can imitate what an individual with vision loss experiences. The following pictures from the "National Eye Institute – National Institutes of Health" and "Webaim" are meant to give the viewer some idea of what people with different types of eye conditions might see.

The following is a scene as it might be viewed by someone who does not experience vision loss. The same scene, is then presented as it might be viewed by a person with various types of vision loss.



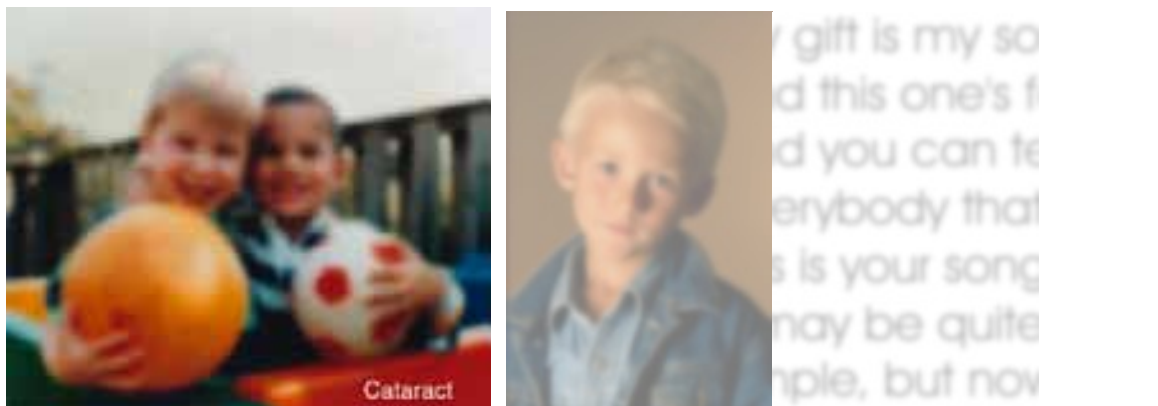
## Age-Related Macular Degeneration

The most common signs of Age-Related Macular Degeneration are: blurring of central vision, difficulty seeing fine details, both up close and at a distance, even with the lenses or glasses, the distortion of lines and shapes, difficulty seeing or distinguishing colours, and developing an obvious blind spot in the centre or near the centre of their vision. The person's central area of sight is affected the most, making it difficult to see objects that the person is looking at directly. Text can appear broken and unclear.



## Cataract

Individuals with cataracts have areas of cloudiness in the lens of their eyes which result in a blurred or hazy effect, especially in bright light. Text can appear to fade into the background. High contrast is especially important for people with advanced cataracts.



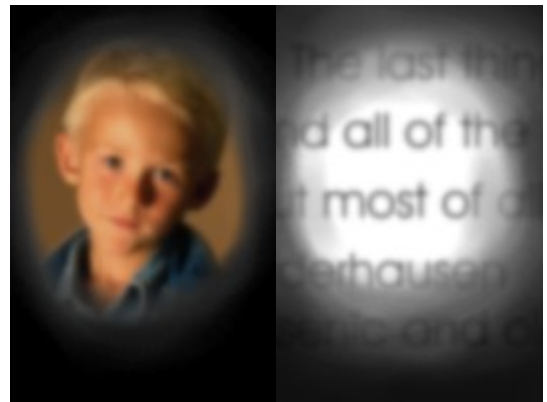
## Diabetic Retinopathy

One of the effects of long-term diabetes can be the leaking of blood vessels in the retina. This can cause dark patches in the field of vision where the leaks occur. Text can appear blurred or distorted in these regions.



## Glaucoma

The end result of glaucoma is often the loss of peripheral vision and a blurry central area of vision. It can be particularly difficult to read text because text seems faded as well as blurry. Some people have compared the effects of glaucoma to looking at everything through a straw.



## Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP)

In some common forms of RP symptoms include: difficulty seeing in dim light, night blindness, loss of peripheral (side) vision, and tunnel vision. In other forms of RP, a person may experience: blurred central vision, loss of colour perception, and eventual loss of peripheral vision.



### How will I know if a person has vision loss?

Don't assume that you know what a person who is blind or who has vision loss looks like. Sometimes the person may:

- Wear dark glasses
- Use a white cane
- Have a guide dog
- Be accompanied by someone who will act as a guide.

In other cases, eye conditions may not be obvious. Some clues that may indicate vision loss include:

- Squinting
- Reading at close range
- Getting close to people
- Asking someone to read a sign or document out loud
- Being unsure in their walk
- Bumping into things
- Looking around for signs or directions.

## Types of technology, equipment or other resources a person with vision loss may use

People with vision loss may use many types of technology, equipment and resources in their daily lives. Some assist with mobility, others help with access to information. Personal choices regarding communication and the amount of vision loss affect the types of resources used. Some of the resources can include:

- White cane
- Guide dog
- Support person such as a sighted guide
- Magnifying devices
- Screen reading software
- Audio and mini pocket recorders, PDA's and notetakers
- Large print materials
- Braille
- Electronic information and computer disks

### MOBILITY DEVICES:

#### White Cane and Guide Dog

A white cane and a guide dog are mobility aids used by people with varying degrees of vision loss.



The white cane is an “obstacle detector.” It helps detect objects in the person’s path, changes in the walking surface and dangers like steps. It also helps the person determine the height of drop-offs and steps. In addition, it can be used to find and count landmarks. A white cane also lets others know that a person is navigating with vision loss.

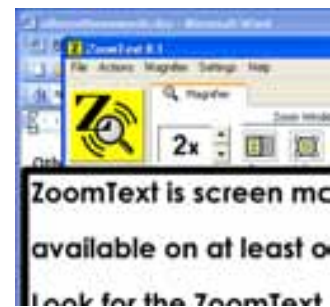
A guide dog is an “obstacle avoider.” By holding the specially designed harness, a person with vision loss is led around obstacles and prompted to stop at curbs and stairs.

### VISION DEVICES:

#### Magnifiers



Magnifiers are one of the most common devices used by people with low vision. They can include hand-held, pocket or stand magnifiers that come with or without light. They can also include software that allows individuals with low vision to magnify the contents of the computer screen, and to read documents, websites and other information.



## CCTV



Another common technology used by people with low vision is the electronic video magnifier. It is also known as a closed circuit television system (CCTV). A CCTV allows users to magnify and read printed text and other material. The benefit of a video magnifier is that it allows for greater magnification and a larger field of view than a conventional magnifying glass. CCTV systems can be stand-alone or come as portable, hand-held devices.



## Screen Readers



A screen reader is a software program that converts the text on a computer screen into speech. The program is capable of voicing all of the text displayed on the screen, including menus, dialog boxes, controls, and buttons that are control led by the keyboard. Screen readers can also provide Braille output for people who prefer Braille over speech output. Together, a screen reader and Braille display that presents Braille characters usually by means of raising dots through holes in a flat surface, allow text to be read using Braille without having to physically print out the text.

## COMMUNICATION/ORGANIZING DEVICES: PDA's, Voice Recorders and Notetakers



Keeping track of phone numbers, appointments, and other important information can be a challenge for people who are blind or who have significant vision loss. Current technology has simplified this task. Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's) are small, portable devices that can be used to store names, addresses, email, and telephone numbers, keep track of appointments, and to keep notes. They can also be used for word processing and web browsing. Accessible PDA's come in different formats: Braille output, text- to- speech output, or a combination of the two. The choice depends on whether the individual wants to get information in a tactile or audio format, or both.

**ALTERNATIVE FORMAT MATERIALS:**

**Large Print**

# Large Print

Large print refers to the point size for fonts used in print materials. Some suggest a minimum 16-point font for the best viewing by people with vision loss while maintaining a small enough point size to include a good amount of information. The type of font is important as well. Fonts with embellishment lines and curves at the tops and bottoms of letters are difficult for a person with low vision to read and therefore should be avoided. Fonts such as Verdana and Arial are considered to be the most legible for people with different types of vision loss.

**Braille:**



Braille is a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people whose eyesight is not sufficient for reading printed material. It is a code by which languages may be written and read. Based on US and United Kingdom surveys, it is anticipated that approximately 10% of people with vision loss use Braille. Use of Braille is in part dependent upon when an individual lost their vision and their preferred method of communication. Today, many people with vision loss prefer electronic software that can magnify or read text, rather than Braille for everyday communications.

**Removable Disk Media**



People with vision loss may prefer to have information available in an electronic format such as on a computer disk, DVD, etc. This is particularly the case for information designed for home review. Information on disk can be used with a personal computer that has screen reader software or enlarged font capability to access the information on the disk. The information can also be printed out in large print or by using a Braille printer. CD's and cassettes can also be used to present information in audio format, further enhancing access to information for individuals with vision loss.



This section identifies a sampling of devices and resources that staff may encounter or want to supply when providing service to people with vision loss.

The amount and type of vision loss, the age of the member, personal choice and the cost of the devices can affect their use and suitability.

It is always best to ask how you can help and the best way of meeting your members', prospective members' and visitors' needs.

## Tips on Communicating and Interacting with Members who have Vision Loss

Keep the following in mind when interacting and communicating with a person who is blind or who has vision loss.

### GENERAL TIPS

- ✔ Don't assume the individual can't see you.
- ✔ Introduce yourself when you approach a member who is blind or who has significant vision loss using your name and/or position.
- ✔ Speak directly to the person, not through a companion, guide, or other individual.
- ✔ Use a natural conversational tone and speed when speaking.
- ✔ There is generally no need to raise your voice when speaking to a person who is blind. The person does not necessarily have a hearing loss.
- ✔ Address the person by name when possible. This is especially important in crowded areas.
- ✔ Immediately greet a person who has significant vision loss when they enter a room or a service area. This lets them know you are present and ready to assist. It also eliminates uncomfortable silences.
- ✔ Indicate the end of a conversation with a person who has severe vision loss to avoid the embarrassment of having them continue speaking when no one is actually there.

### DIRECTIONS & DESCRIBING TIPS

- ✔ Be precise and thorough when describing individuals, places, or things to a person who is blind. Don't leave things out or change a description because you think it is unimportant or unpleasant.
- ✔ During conversations, it is OK to use words that refer to vision. Vision-oriented words such as *look*, *see*, and *watching TV* are a part of everyday verbal communication. The words *blind* and *vision loss* are also acceptable in conversation.
- ✔ Feel free to use visually descriptive language, making reference to colours, patterns, designs, and shapes.
- ✔ If you are giving directions, don't point. Avoid vague terms like "over there" or "over here".
- ✔ Be specific about the location of people, places and things. Indicate the approximate distance to a requested location. For example: "The door is about two metres to your left." Refer to right and left as they apply to the person with vision loss.
- ✔ A useful method for describing directions is to refer to the positions of the numbers on a clock. Most people are familiar with this method of providing directions. The office door is about two metres ahead at 2 o'clock.

## ORIENTATION & MOBILITY TIPS

- ✔ Orient a person with vision loss to their surroundings. Remember to inform the person if any furniture, equipment or articles in the environment have been moved.
- ✔ Make sure floor space and passageways are as clear of obstacles as possible.
- ✔ Be calm and clear about what to do if you see a person with vision loss about to encounter a dangerous situation. For example, if a person is about to bump into a stanchion in a lobby, calmly and firmly call out, "Wait there for a moment; there is a pole directly in front of you." Yelling, "Look out!" does not tell the person if he should stop, run, duck or jump.
- ✔ When providing printed information, offer to read or summarize it. As appropriate, offer to provide the information in alternative formats such as in large print or in accessible electronic format.
- ✔ Keep signs big, bold and bright. This can help members with vision loss locate facilities. Signs should be clearly lettered in contrasting colors. It is easiest for most people with vision loss to read bold white letters on a black background.
- ✔ Good lighting is important. However, very shiny paper or walls can produce a glare that disturbs people's eyes.
- ✔ Some individuals who are blind or who have significant vision loss use devices to assist them in reading printed materials. Asking the member or prospective member how they would like to receive written information is important.

## PRINTED MATERIALS TIPS

- ✔ When providing general notices to members, use clear fonts with appropriate spacing and font sizes. (Fonts like Verdana and Arial at a font size of 12 or more) Ensure there is high contrast between the paper and text color. As a very rough guide, documents are generally considered to be large print if the font is 16 point or higher.
- ✔ Having key forms and documents available in accessible text formats will help ensure members who use different assistive devices can independently access your information and forms.



## Guiding a Person who is Blind or who has Significant Vision Loss



Do you conduct unit showings or need to introduce members or prospective members to your building and its amenities? Do visitors to your building ask for help in finding a unit or other another part of the co-op?

There may be occasions when you might need to guide a person who is blind. The following will help ensure you can guide an individual who is blind in a safe and respectful manner:



- Let the person who is blind know who you are, and ask if assistance is needed. Ask the individual if he/she wishes to be guided. If the answer is “yes,” offer your arm. Ask which arm is better. Walk at a normal pace. Remember - guided assistance is not always required or wanted; in some instances it can be disorienting and disruptive. Respect the desires of the person you are with.
- Allow the individual to take your arm just above the elbow when your arm is bent. Walk ahead of the person you are guiding. Never grab the arm of a person who is blind or has vision loss.
- When approaching a narrow space, alert the person you are guiding. Then swing your arm, which the person is holding, to behind your back so the two of you are walking single file.
- When coming to stairs, inform the person who is blind, noting whether the stairs go up or down and if there is a railing. Have the person switch to your side that is closest to the railing. Describe the stairs as steep, shallow, narrow, broad or curved. The guide makes the first step with the person being guided following behind by one step. Tell the person you are guiding when you are at a landing and when you have reached the top or bottom of the flight of stairs.
- When approaching a door, let the person who you are guiding know whether the door swings away from you or toward you.
- Do not leave a person who is blind standing in “free space” when you serve as a guide. Always be sure that the person you guide has a firm grasp on your arm, or is leaning against a chair or a wall if you have to be separated.

## Assisting a Member who is Blind in Signing their Name



There are a number of occasions when members or prospective members may need to sign their name. For example: on an occupancy agreement, on a service request form, on RGI annual review forms etc. For some individuals who are blind or have significant vision loss this can be a challenge.

Below are a few ways to assist someone who is blind or who has significant vision loss to sign their name. Each person is different; however, some suggested methods include:

- Place your finger on the place where the person needs to sign and ask them to put their finger on the same spot. Hand over the pen. The person will then sign.
- Hold the pen in place and describe where it is, for example, "Sir, I am holding the pen in position for your signature. It is directly in front of your right hand". Once the person takes the pen you can let it go.
- The person may ask you to guide their finger/hand to where they need to sign. First make contact by gently touching their finger or right hand then guide it to the position.
- Offer the use of a Signature Guide. These devices are approximately the size of a credit card and are made of plastic. They have a rectangular cut-out in the middle. Staff can line up the signature guide with the writing line. This allows the person with vision loss to sign their name independently in the writing space. Signature Guides can be purchased online through places that provide assistive devices for people with vision loss like the CNIB.





## Understanding the Needs of People who are Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing

Hearing loss has a wide variety of causes. The degree of hearing loss an individual experiences also can vary and range from mild to profound. Terms like “deaf”, “Deaf”, “deafened” and “hard of hearing” which are often used in relation to people with hearing loss are based principally on the individual’s preferred language (spoken or sign) and/or on the actual degree of hearing loss.

### **Deaf (with capital D):**

Deaf refers to individuals who are medically deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of Deaf people, which is based on Sign Language. Their preferred method of communication is Sign Language.

### **deaf:**

The term deaf refers to people who have little or no functional hearing. It is also sometimes used as a collective noun (“the deaf”) to refer to people who are medically deaf but who do not necessarily identify with the Deaf community. Some may use speech to communicate using their remaining hearing and hearing aids, technical devices or cochlear implants, and/or speech/lip reading.

### **deafened:**

This is a term used to refer to individuals who have become deaf later in life. People who are deafened often have developed speech, but find it difficult or cannot understand speech without visual clues such as captioning, speech/lip-reading, computerized note taking or sign language. Most cannot use the telephone and need sign language or speech reading to understand conversation.

### **hard of hearing:**

This term generally describes people who still have some useful hearing and can understand some speech through hearing in some situations, either with or without amplification such as hearing aids. They often also read lips to assist with communication. Most people who are hard of hearing can still use the telephone and make use of hearing aids and assistive devices. The degree of hearing loss can vary considerably, from mild to profound.

## **How will I know if a person is deaf, deafened or hard of hearing?**

Do not presume to know if a person is deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. Each person is different. However a person may:

- Tell you (using spoken language) that they have a hearing loss and recommend the best way to communicate
- Point to their ear and shake their head
- Use a note pad and pencil or make writing motions in the air
- Move their lips without making any sound
- Speak with a noticeably unmodulated voice
- Point to their hearing aid or cochlear implant
- Use gestures
- Have contacted you through a telephone relay service, interpreter services or a third party, identifying themselves as deaf or having a hearing loss
- Be accompanied by an interpreter or have requested an interpreter be booked for the appointment.

## **Types of technology, equipment or other resources a person with hearing loss may use**

People who are D/deaf, deafened or hard of hearing may use many types of technology, equipment and resources. Use will depend on the amount of hearing loss, personal choices regarding communication, as well as the types of equipment and resources that the individual and /or housing co-op may have. Some of the resources can include:

- Hearing support animal
- Support person such as a sign language interpreter
- Personal amplification systems
- Hearing aids
- Neck loops
- Induction loop systems
- Phone amplifier
- Teletypewriter (TTY)
- Relay service
- Text messaging and email
- American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ)
- Captioning

## HEARING SUPPORTS: Hearing Support Animal



Hearing support animals are also known as hearing alert or hearing signal dogs. They assist people who are deaf and hard of hearing by alerting them to a variety of household sounds, for example: a door knock or doorbell, alarm clock, oven buzzer, telephone, baby cry, name call or smoke alarm. Hearing support animals are trained to make physical contact and lead their deaf partners to the source of the sound.

## Sign Language Interpreter



Sign language interpreters can play an important role in assisting communication between Deaf and non-Deaf people. Interpreters pass on all spoken and signed information so that all individuals can fully interact. Trained interpreters are responsible for maintaining the reliability of the message. This includes both the content and spirit of what the speaker is saying. Interpreters do not add or delete any information at any time.

## LISTENING DEVICES: Personal Amplification Systems



One of the most common personal amplification systems is Pocket Talker. It is a portable 1-to-1 communication device that assists conversation with a person who is hard of hearing and who is not wearing a hearing aid. The speaker talks into the lapel microphone. The sound is then carried directly to the headset of the person who is hard of hearing. This minimizes background noises and allows for individual volume control.



Other personal sound amplifiers transmit conversations or sounds from a stereo, radio or TV and send them to a wireless headset. The device consists of a transmitter that is placed close to the sound source and a receiver on a headset. The conversation, TV or radio programme is transferred directly from the transmitter to the headset.

The user can adjust the volume on the headset to a level that suits them without affecting anyone else in the room. These types of amplification systems are great for apartment living where maintaining low noise levels between units is important.

## Hearing Aids and T-Coil



A hearing aid is a small electronic device that is worn in or behind your ear. It makes some sounds louder so that a person with hearing loss can listen, communicate, and participate more fully in daily activities. A hearing aid can help people hear more in both quiet and noisy situations.

Hearing aids vary greatly in type and features. One feature available in some hearing aids is a T-Coil. A t-coil is a very small coil of wire built within a hearing aid that serves as an antenna which can be activated by the switch on the hearing aid. The big advantage of using t-coils is that they generally cut out background noise and increase sound clarity.

## Personal Neck Loops



Personal loop systems or neck loops are used by people with hearing loss and are compatible with t-coil enabled hearing aids. Audio signals are picked up by the microphone in the loop or directly (electrically) or from a sound source like a telephone, TV, stereo. Loop systems cut out background noise so the individual only hears the sounds from the device they are listening to.

## Induction Loop System



Induction loop systems are great for enhancing sound clarity for people with hearing loss. Loop systems can be portable for use in reception areas, on service counters, or in an office. They contain a built in microphone that picks up speech and conversations. Full room wiring that integrates with a room microphone can be used for larger meeting rooms.

Induction loop systems are designed to assist hearing aid users by transmitting sound directly to their t-coil equipped hearing aid or cochlear implant providing enhanced sound clarity and individual volume control. Individual receivers can be used for people who do not have t-coil enabled hearing aids.

## COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES AND SUPPORTS:

### Amplified Phone



Amplified phones and separate phone amplifiers are available to increase the sound on a conventional phone. This facilitates telephone communication for some people with hearing loss. Amplified phones can come with amplified ringer volume, visual ringers, LCD screens and can be compatible with hearing aids. Amplified phones come as corded, as well as cordless phones.

## Relay Service



A Relay Service supports phone conversations between people who are deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or those who experience speech difficulties and individuals who have hearing. This is a free service (for local calls) offered by the major telephone companies.

The Relay service can be used if one party has a TTY and the other individual does not. Professionally trained operators act as intermediaries to facilitate the call. Operators are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A person who is deaf, deaf-blind, hard-of-hearing, or speech-disabled uses a TTY to type his/her conversation to a Relay Operator, who then reads the typed conversation to a standard telephone user. The Operator relays the hearing person's spoken words by typing them back to the TTY user.

## TTY - Teletypewriter



TTY's are telephones that consist of a keyboard and small display screen allowing communication over the phone lines by typed conversation. Some TTY's are used in conjunction with conventional phones, others plug directly into the phone jack. Public pay phones can be equipped with TTY's.

If both the caller and the receiver have a TTY, the call can take place directly person to person. If one of the parties does not have a TTY, they can communicate through a telephone relay operator using a toll-free number. The operator acts as a communication link by typing what the hearing person says so that it appears as written text on the TTY screen and voicing what the TTY user types.

## SMS and Email



SMS stands for Short Message Service. It is also known as text messaging or "texting". With SMS messages can be sent to a cell phone using another cell phone, a computer connected to the Internet, a regular land line, or a handheld device such as a Blackberry. Texting has become a very popular means of communication for people with hearing loss. Email is also a preferred means of communication for many, as it can provide instant, inexpensive access to people and information.

## ALTERNATIVE FORMAT COMMUNICATIONS:

### Sign Language



Some people who are D/deaf, deafened may use sign language to communicate. American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual language that has its own grammar and syntax (word order) which is different from spoken language. Meaning is conveyed through signs that are composed of specific movements and shapes of the hand and arms, eyes, face, head and body posture. For the Deaf, English is a second language.

### Captioning:



CART or Communication Access Real-time Translation is the instant word-for-word speech-to-text translation of spoken language into text for display. A stenotype machine, notebook computer and real-time software are used to produce the text. The text is usually displayed either on a screen by a projector connected to the notebook computer, or on a notebook computer or computer monitor. CART is usually used by people with hearing loss who use spoken language as a primary mode of communication. This type of captioning tends to be used for meetings or events.

## Tips for Interacting and Communicating with a Member with Hearing Loss

If you know you're talking to someone with hearing loss:

### GENERAL TIPS:

- ✔ Avoid startling or frightening a person by doing anything unexpected from behind. Approach the person so you can be seen.
- ✔ Get the member's attention before you start speaking. Use positive body language and a gentle touch to gain the person's attention. Depending on the situation, you can extend your arm and wave your hand, tap the person gently on the shoulder.
- ✔ Always face the person as you speak and maintain eye contact. It's important for him or her to be able to see your face (particularly if the person lip reads).
- ✔ Be aware of background noise and try to find a place to talk that minimizes it.
- ✔ Pick a spot to speak where the light, artificial or natural, is not behind your face since it makes it difficult to speech read, or to pick up visual cues such as facial expressions and gestures.
- ✔ Keep your mouth visible --do not obscure it with your hands or by chewing gum or food. Be aware that moustaches and beards can hinder speech reading for some people.
- ✔ Speak at a normal pace, enunciating carefully; do not exaggerate your lip movements or mumble as this makes speech reading difficult.
- ✔ Feel free to use words such as "hear" or "sounds". These are words people use everyday.
- ✔ Don't shout. If the person has no hearing, it won't help. If the person has some hearing and wears hearing aids, it will only distort what you say, not to mention the embarrassment created for the both of you when everyone turns to stare.
- ✔ If a member has hearing aids or other assistive listening devices, give her/him an opportunity to adjust the equipment, if necessary.
- ✔ Be flexible with your language. If the person doesn't understand what you have said, don't just repeat it. Re-phrase it or try another word.
- ✔ If the member does not seem to understand you, write it down.
- ✔ If the individual's speech is difficult to understand, don't hesitate to ask them to repeat. Don't say "never mind". This attitude may be interpreted by the person with hearing loss that what he/she has to say is not important.
- ✔ If a person with hearing loss uses an interpreter, speak directly to the person with hearing loss, not to the interpreter. Avoid saying "tell him", "let her know that".
- ✔ Try to give the person some indication when you change the subject. Make sure that only one person talks at a time.



## Tips when Communicating through an Interpreter



- ✔ Maintain eye contact with the person even if he or she is looking at the interpreter.
- ✔ Be aware the interpreter facilitates communication only. The interpreter does not participate in the conversation or activity.
- ✔ Direct questions to the person, not the interpreter. Use "Could you please sign this form?" instead of "Could you ask her if she could sign this form?"
- ✔ The interpreter should stand or sit near the speaker, and the person should have a clear view. As the interpreter will be a few words behind the speaker, allow additional time for questions before continuing.
- ✔ It's helpful to provide written instructions, as the person watching the interpreter can't take notes. In a meeting, where taking notes may be important, a volunteer note-taker can be extremely helpful.



## Using the Voice Relay Service to Communicate with a Person who Uses a TTY



People who do not have a TTY can call a person who uses a TTY through the voice relay system. This is a free service offered by the major telephone companies. A Relay Operator will type your spoken words to TTY users and read back their replies.

1. Dial 1 800 855-0511. The Relay Operator will answer saying Relay Service, (operator's name) speaking, followed by GA (for go ahead).
2. Provide the Relay Operator the area code and number you would like to call. Although you are not required to give the agent your name or the name of the person you are trying to reach, doing so helps the agent connect to the person you are calling.
3. The Relay Operator will dial the number and keep you informed, as you will not be able to hear the line ring.
4. The Relay agent will tell you when the TTY has answered and read what is typed, followed by **GO AHEAD**. GO AHEAD is your cue to begin speaking. Always finish by saying GO AHEAD so the TTY user will know it is their turn to respond.

## Tips for Voice Users using the Relay Service

- ✓ Remember to speak directly to the TTY user, not to the Relay Operator.
- ✓ Speak a bit more slowly than usual as the Relay Operator is typing in word for word what you are saying.
- ✓ Spell names.
- ✓ Always say **GO AHEAD** when you are finished.
- ✓ Always wait for the Relay Operator to say **GO AHEAD** before speaking.
- ✓ Let the Relay Operator know at the beginning of the call if you are familiar with the service.



## How do you make a TTY call?

To make a TTY call:

1. Place the handset in the acoustic coupler (modem) attached to a regular telephone and turn on the power. Two small lights will come on. Only the power light will stay on: the phone light waits to respond to any sounds picked up by the acoustic coupler.
2. Dial the number and watch the phone light, which shows the dial tone, busy signal, or ringing by corresponding light patterns. The light remains on for the length of the sound and goes off when there is no sound. For example, the light flashes rapidly and rhythmically with a busy signal.
3. People answering the phone will respond with their names and a short message followed by "GA" which means "go ahead."
4. You start typing at this point and identify yourself at the beginning of the TTY call.
5. To end a turn in the conversation, type "GA", and the other person will begin typing again. Each person is expected to take a turn only after receiving a "GA" from the other party.
6. When you are done with your conversation, type "GA to SK", meaning "go ahead to stop keying" or "good-bye", to let the person know you are finished with talking on the TTY.
7. A TTY message in process cannot be interrupted, even if one knows what the other person is going to type.



## TTY Etiquette and Tips

- ✔ When calling TTY users, let the phone ring at least 7 or more times before hanging up. Many people who are deaf and hard of hearing and are TTY users rely on flashing lights to alert them to ringing phones. Flashers can take longer than sound to attract attention.
- ✔ Any other people who may be watching the conversation should be identified.
- ✔ **Answer by saying: HELLO, THIS IS (NAME and your CO-OP) GA.** Indicate that it is the other person's turn to respond by typing GA "go ahead." While many current TTY's are equipped with "Turbo Code," which enables the users to communicate as fast as they can type and even interrupt one another when they need to, it is still wise to take turns.
- ✔ **Punctuation marks are not commonly used during TTY conversations.** Simply skip a couple of spaces between sentences.
- ✔ **Don't worry about spelling errors or "bad typing."** Continue on with the conversation without backtracking to make corrections. If you do wish to make corrections, you can either type out a line of X's (XXXXXX) and then retype the **correct** information, or you can use the **backspace** key to go back and "fix" your error as long as it still appears on the screen.
- ✔ **To end a TTY conversation,** use **GA** or **SK** which means "Go Ahead or Stop Keying." This indicates to the other person that you are ready to end the conversation but allows an opportunity for additional comments. When the conversation is complete, both parties will type **SKSK**.
- ✔ **Express emotions in words.** A TTY conversation may seem impersonal or awkward if you are not familiar with this particular method of communication. Because the TTY does not pick up vocal cues, it is sometimes important to express your feelings or moods. This can be done by typing responses such as SMILE, GRRRR, SIGH, HAHA and so forth.



**Some common abbreviations:** Although you don't have to use them, certain abbreviations can be quite helpful when using a TTY. Listed below are some commonly used ones:

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
CLD	Could
GA	Go Ahead
HD	Hold on
IMPT	Important
INFO	Information
KIT	Keep in touch
MSG	Message
MTG	Meeting
N	And
NBR	Number
PH	Phone
PLS	Please
Q	question mark
R	Are
SHD	Should
SK	Stop keying (end of call)
SKSK	Hanging up
THX	Thank you
TMW	Tomorrow
U	You
UR	Your



## Understanding the Needs of People who are Deafblind

Deafblindness is the combination of both hearing and vision loss. Most people who are deafblind have some remaining hearing and/or sight. However, neither their vision nor their hearing can be used as a main source of getting information.

A person who is deafblind might be totally blind and hard of hearing, totally deaf and partially sighted, or may be close to totally blind and close to totally deaf but have some useful, but not necessarily reliable vision and hearing. A number of people have little or no useable hearing and vision.

Some people use speech as their main communication and have a variety of hearing devices that help them to communicate. Others, who may have been born deaf and lose their sight as adults, tend to use sign language to communicate.

As with all individuals, people who are deafblind come from different social, vocational and educational backgrounds and have many jobs and roles. They also have different needs. It is important not to make assumptions about either the nature of a person's disability or their abilities. If you do not know the most appropriate way to communicate or what a member needs...ask.

### **Types of technology, equipment or other resources a person who is deafblind may use**

Many of the tools used by people who are deafblind are the same as those used by people with vision or hearing loss. They may be adapted to accommodate the individual's amount of hearing and vision. Some of the resources can include:

- Large print
- Braille
- White cane
- Service animal
- Support person such as an intervenor
- Closed circuit televisions (CCTV) and other magnification equipment such as a monocular or magnifier
- Braille TTY's or TTY's with large print displays
- Hearing aid with built in FM system.

## What are some common communication methods that people who are deafblind use?

People who are deafblind use many different ways to communicate. They use sign language (adapted to fit how much they see), tactile sign language, tracking, tactile finger spelling, print on palm, tadoma, Braille, speech, and speech reading. There are also a number of assistive technologies that people who are deafblind use to communicate. The communication methods vary with each person and depend on the degree of hearing and/or vision loss.

### Intervenors:



Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor: a professional who helps with communication. The intervenor may also assist with guiding the person. Intervenors can translate conversations. Intervenors help with communication through the use of sign language (adapted to fit how much they see), tactile sign language, tracking, tactile finger spelling, print on palm, or tadoma.

### Electronic Communicators



Some people who are deafblind use portable communicators. These electronic devices have two parts: a keyboard and an LCD screen on one side, and a Braille display and a second keyboard on the other. The sighted person types short text on the keyboard and the person who is deafblind reads the text through the Braille display. The person who is deafblind responds by using the keyboard on his/her side. The sighted person can then read the text on the screen.



Other types of communicators use a display pad that features blocked letters instead of Braille characters. This is particularly useful for people who are deaf and who are unable to use Braille. The sighted person types text on the keyboard, with each letter appearing briefly on the pad. The deaf blind can understand the message by feeling the letters that are typed.

### Braille Notetakers



Braille notetakers are electronic devices that feature Braille keys for entering information and a refreshable Braille display that allows text on the screen to be read in Braille.

Some notetakers allow for a USB keyboard to be plugged into the device. Others can be connected with personal digital assistants (PDAs) used by others.

## Braille Display



Braille displays are electronic devices that are used to read text that a computer sends to the monitor. Braille characters are displayed usually by means of raising dots through holes in a flat surface. A Braille display can be hooked to a PC or laptop, translating text into Braille and making electronic information accessible to people who are blind or deafblind. A Braille display enables individuals who are deafblind to independently access information sent electronically.

## TTY with Braille Display and Phone Relay Service



TTY machines can be adapted to include a Braille display, thereby enabling phone communication with a person who is deafblind. If both parties have a TTY the sighted person types a message on their TTY machine and the deaf blind user receives the message on a Braille display. The person who is deafblind responds by typing on a standard or Braille keyboard and the sighted person reads the message on the screen.

People who are deafblind can also communicate with non-TTY users through the free relay service offered by the major phone companies. A relay operator reads the message sent on a TTY and verbally relays it to a non-TTY user. The operator also listens to a telephone and types the message on a TTY in order to relay the message to the TTY user.

## The Internet



The Internet provides a platform for people who are deafblind to access resources that are otherwise inaccessible to them. The Internet also provides a way for people who are deafblind to communicate, email and send and receive information. These can all be done with a computer that has a screen reader and a Braille display. A screen reader is software that acquires the text that appears on the screen. The screen reader sends the acquired information to the Braille display so a deaf blind user can read the text with his or her fingers.

## SMS



Texting has become a frequent form of communication. People who are deafblind, with no useful hearing or sight, can access a mobile phone or PDA through a pocket size portable electronic device. It consists of a Braille display and keyboard that is linked to a cell phone or PDA via Bluetooth. Using the Braille display, the person who is deafblind can send and receive text messages by reading the text through the Braille display.

## Tips for Interacting and Communicating with a Member who is Deafblind

### GENERAL TIPS:

- ✔ Don't assume what a person who is deafblind can or cannot do. Some have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- ✔ A person who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with him/her or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with him or her.
- ✔ If a person is using an intervenor, identify yourself to the intervenor, but then speak directly to your member as you normally would, not to the intervenor.
- ✔ If the person has a service animal, remember don't touch or address the service animal – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- ✔ Use the tips under the Section about people with vision and hearing loss to help you identify other ways to support your interactions with your members. This can include tips on guiding an individual, lighting and reducing background noise, etc.
- ✔ Don't suddenly touch a person who is deafblind or touch them without permission.
- ✔ Most people who are deafblind know the letter X drawn on a deafblind person's back, from shoulders to waist, means "Emergency... Take my arm. I will guide you to safety." The individual will follow you and not ask questions until you have reached a safe place. It is important to keep the person aware of what is happening once in a safe location.



## **Understanding the Needs of People with Physical and Mobility Disabilities**

Physical and mobility disabilities occur widely and may be visible or non-visible, temporary, occasional or permanent. Physical disabilities include minor difficulties moving or coordinating a part of the body, muscle weakness, tremors and in extreme cases, paralysis in one or more parts of the body.

Physical and mobility disabilities may restrict a person's ability to:

- control the speed of movements
- control balance and coordination
- perform manual tasks such as hold a pen, grip and turn a key, type on a keyboard, click a mouse button, and twist a doorknob
- move arms and legs fully
- reach, pull, push or manipulate objects
- move about independently
- have strength and endurance.

### **Types of technology, equipment or other resources a person with a physical disability may use**

People with physical and mobility disabilities may use a range of technology, equipment and resources.

- Mobility devices (i.e. wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches)
- Reaching/grasping devices
- Support animal
- Support person
- Elevators

## MOBILITY DEVICES



Most people think about mobility devices when they think about people with physical disabilities. Mobility devices help people walk or move from place to place. They include crutches, canes, walkers, wheelchairs and motorized scooters. A person may use a walker or cane if they are at risk of falling. A wheelchair or a scooter may be required if an injury or disease has left a person weakened or unable to walk.



## DEXTERITY DEVICES

Some people with disabilities have a reduced ability to use and control their hands and body. Restricted manual dexterity may be temporary, recurring or permanent, and may be caused by a wide range of conditions - from repetitive strain injury (RSI), a wrist sprain or a fractured arm to arthritis, a tremor-inducing condition such as Parkinson's disease, or cerebral palsy. The following is a sampling of assistive dexterity devices.

### Specialized pens



These low tech devices can assist people in holding a pen and in writing. Specialized pens help improve the handwriting of people with Parkinson's, arthritis, hand tremors, or other hand limitations that make holding and using a pen difficult.



### Grasping Tools



Some people with physical disabilities or medical conditions have limited reach or have difficulty grasping. Grasping devices help people reach for or pick up items that are high or low or on the floor.



## Door Knob and Large Handle Turners



People with limited hand dexterity, weak hands or fingers due to arthritis, MS, Carpal Tunnel, recovery from stroke or surgery, may



have difficulty opening doors and using keys. Devices such as Door Knob Turners and key turners can help with these basic activities.

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES - COMMUNICATION



Individuals with limited motor abilities may use a range of tools and technologies to help them communicate and access information electronically. For individuals with limited or no use of their arms and hands, or who lack fine motor skills typing aids, mouth sticks, an alternative mouse, adaptive or on



screen keyboards, and voice recognition software can help ensure access to electronic information and communications. Voice activated phones provide hands free dialling and operation for individuals with fine motor disabilities, upper extremity disabilities, severe physical disabilities, or spinal cord injury.

## Tips for Interacting and Communicating with Members with Physical Disabilities

### GENERAL TIPS:

- ✔ Ask before you help. Not everyone who has a physical disability requires assistance. People with physical disabilities often have found their own ways of doing things.
- ✔ Speak naturally and directly to your members and the public. Having a physical disability does not necessarily mean the person has another disability such as hearing loss.
- ✔ People who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices have different disabilities and varying abilities. Some can use their arms and hands. Some can get out of their wheelchairs or off their scooters and even walk for short distances.
- ✔ Don't push or touch a person's wheelchair, scooter or other mobility device without permission, unless it's an emergency. It's part of his/her personal space.
- ✔ Wheelchair and scooter users are people, not equipment. Don't lean over someone in a wheelchair or scooter to shake another person's hand or ask a person who uses a wheelchair or scooter to hold things.
- ✔ When talking to a person who uses a wheelchair or scooter, where possible sit at his/her level. If that's not possible, stand at a slight distance away, so that the individual isn't straining his/her neck to make eye contact with you.
- ✔ People who use canes or crutches need their arms to balance, so never grab them. People who have limited mobility may lean on a door for support as they open it. Pushing the door open from behind or unexpectedly opening the door may cause them to fall. Even pulling out or pushing in a chair may present a problem. Always ask before offering help.
- ✔ If the service counter in the office is too high for a wheelchair or scooter user to see over, step around it to provide service. Have a clipboard handy if filling in forms or providing signatures is expected.
- ✔ People with disabilities use a variety of transportation services when traveling to and from appointments. When scheduling a meeting, be aware that the person/ applicant may be required to make a reservation 24 hours in advance. Provide the person with an estimated time to schedule their return trip when arranging appointments.
- ✔ Some people with physical disabilities may have a support animal. Remember that a person with a physical disability has the right to have his/her support animal with them in all public areas of your facility and areas open to members, except where exempt by law, such as in food preparation areas.

- ✔ Some members with physical disabilities may be accompanied by a support person. When meeting, ensure you speak directly to the member, not the support person.
- ✔ If a support person is present, create an opportunity for the member to indicate whether he/she wants the support person there for the full appointment. Obtain consent if confidential information is going to be shared.

### MOBILITY TIPS:

- ✔ Keep the ramps and wheelchair-accessible doors to your building unblocked. Remove and minimize obstacles in the lobby and hallways, in garbage and laundry rooms so that people with physical disabilities can access these areas.
- ✔ Try to ensure there is all-round space and unobstructed access for people who use wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility devices in the office, member meeting rooms and other public areas of the building.
- ✔ If there are different routes through your building, ensure signs and staff can direct people to the most accessible ways around the building and grounds.

- ✔ Falls can be a big problem for people who have limited mobility. Be sure to set out adequate warning signs after washing floors. Also put out mats on rainy or snowy days to keep the floors as dry as possible. (Make sure they don't bunch up and make the floor impassable for people who use wheelchairs, scooters, or walkers.)
- ✔ Some people have limited use of their hands, wrists or arms. Offer help, as appropriate, with reaching for, grasping or lifting objects, opening doors and garbage chutes, etc.
- ✔ Be aware of "reach limits" of a person who uses a wheelchair or scooter. Place as many items as possible within their grasp and at a height that facilitates access, for example: notices, the location of a member's mailbox, the location of entry buzzer systems, etc.
- ✔ If you offer a seat to a person who has limited mobility, or if seating in public areas of your building is available, keep in mind that benches, chairs with arms or with higher seats are easier for some.





## Understanding the Needs of People with Mental Health Disabilities

Like many other disabilities, mental health disabilities are not visible. You may not know that a person has a mental health disability unless you are informed of it.

Mental illness includes many different disorders that can range in severity. These can include:

- mood disorders, including sadness and depression
- anxiety disorders where the individual is in a heightened state of nervousness or fear related to stressful events or feelings
- psychotic disorders, such as schizophrenia, in which a person has trouble telling the difference between what is real and what is not
- personality disorders, in which a person experiences the world and behaves quite differently from how society expects
- eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, which affect how a person feels about food and her or his body image
- substance abuse and dependence.

The most visible aspect of a person's mental illness may often be the side-effects of medication, such as difficulties in speaking clearly due to a dry mouth or swollen tongue, difficulties in focusing, physical tics or a shuffling walk.

With most mental health disabilities, the symptoms are not static. They can improve or worsen over time. People living with mental illness may have long periods of health and recovery in which they need no assistance.

At times, circumstances may change and the person may experience mental health symptoms. People with mental health disabilities may at times have difficulty coping with the tasks and interactions of daily life. Their disorder may interfere with their ability to feel, think or relate to others.

## Types of resources a person with a mental health disability may use

In some situations, a person with a mental health disability may use a:

- Support person
- Service animal

A support person or service animal must be allowed to accompany a person with a mental health disability on all parts of your premises open to the public or to members.



## Tips for Interacting and Communicating with Members with Mental Health Disabilities

### GENERAL TIPS:

- ✔ Do not attempt to categorize or identify the disability, but listen to and respond to the need for service expressed by the member and the public.
- ✔ Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration as you have for all members and the public.
- ✔ Be flexible in your approach.
- ✔ Listen carefully to the person's request and do your best to respond.
- ✔ Be patient and calm during interactions; do not be confrontational or allow a situation to escalate.
- ✔ If the person is in crisis, ask how you can help, or seek assistance.





## Understanding the Needs of People who have a Learning Disability

“Learning Disabilities” is a general term that describes a number of information processing disorders. Learning disabilities affect how a person takes in, organizes, expresses, retains and understands all types of verbal and non-verbal information.

Learning disabilities range in severity. They can affect a person’s ability to pay attention and focus, collect and coordinate information, remember, reason, speak, read, write, spell, calculate or organize time and information.

Learning disabilities are not due to hearing or vision impairments, intellectual disabilities, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching. People with learning disabilities generally have average or above average intelligence and are capable of learning. In many cases it means they learn and process information in different ways.

Examples of different types of learning disabilities include: dyslexia (difficulty reading and understanding written words); Dyscalculia (difficulty solving math problems and understanding math concepts); Dysgraphia (difficulty with writing); and a range of hearing and visual disorders (difficulty understanding language despite normal hearing and vision).

Housing co-ops rely upon many different types of written information to communicate with members. These include the occupancy agreement, member handbook and fire safety information. Housing co-ops also provide various legal and other types of notices such as temporary disruptions in service and notices of entry into a unit for repairs. For an individual with a learning disability this can present a variety of challenges.

**dyslexia affects people in different ways. The way their brains process information may make it difficult for them to interpret text, images and sounds. The difficulties experienced are found in young children acquiring literacy. It is the persistence of these difficulties, which does not coincide with achievements in other areas that indicates dyslexia**

This is a paragraph as someone without a learning disability might see it.

**bylexia affects people in different ways. The way their brains process information may make it difficult for them to interpret text, images and sounds. The difficulties experienced are found in young children acquiring literacy. It is the persistence of these difficulties, which does not coincide with achievements in other areas that indicates dyslexia.**

An individual with dyslexia might see a mirror image of the text.

**dyslexia affects people in different ways. The way their brains process information may make it difficult for them to interpret text, images and sounds. The difficulties experienced are found in young children acquiring literacy. It is the persistence of these difficulties, which does not coincide with achievements in other areas that indicates dyslexia**

An individual with dyslexia might reverse letters such as d – b and p –q within the text.

The above examples are taken from the "Sim-dis" a web site that contains a collection of computer based artifacts that simulate aspects of disability [http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/techdis/pages/detail/online\\_resources/SimDis](http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/techdis/pages/detail/online_resources/SimDis)

"Would a text-only sight be ideal for someone with a reading disorder? Hardly. Images are not bad for accessibility. They actually increase comprehension and usability for most audiences.

What many people do not know, though, is there is much more to the accessibility of an image than just its alt text. Some people wrongly assume that images are bad for accessibility, since alt text essentially replaces the image with a text-only version of that image."

by Paul Bohman

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@ copyright, 2003, WebAIM, All rights reserved. <http://webaim.org/simulations/dyslexia-sim.html>

This paragraph demonstrates common symptoms of dyslexia. The letters in the paragraph are reversed, inverted, transposed and spelling is inconsistent

This is the unmodified version of the paragraph.

## How Will I Know if a Person has a Learning Disability?

Learning disabilities are non-visible disabilities. As such, you may not know that a person has a learning disability unless you are told.

The variety of types of learning disabilities makes it difficult to identify a specific set of characteristics. If, during your interactions with a member, you see several of these characteristics over a period of time, consider the possibility that the member has a learning disability.

- Continues to spell incorrectly when completing forms or providing written documentation, frequently spelling the same word differently in a single document
- Consistently transposes numbers or places words or numbers in the wrong spaces on a form
- Misreads information
- Repeatedly requests that information be clarified or repeated
- Trouble with open-ended questions
- Weak memory skills
- Poor grasp of abstract concepts
- Either pays too little attention to details or focuses on them too much.



Don't make assumptions about members and their abilities. Many people with learning disabilities have learned how to manage their specific disability, and have developed strategies for reading, writing and calculating. The individual will know what help they may need, if any. They will let you know, if asked and if you listen.

## Types of technology, equipment or other resources members with a learning disability may use

People with learning disabilities may use many types of technology, equipment and resources in their daily lives. These can include:

- Assistive technology for writing
- Scanning and reading technology
- Tape recorders and mini pocket recorders, and PDA's
- Calculator

## WRITING DEVICES:

### Word Processors and Word Processing Software



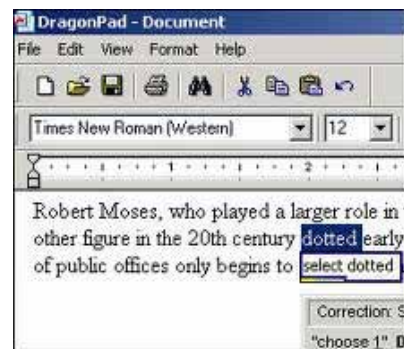
Desk-top and portable word processors and word processing software like WORD are commonly used by people with some types of learning disabilities to help with writing. For example, a person with Dyslexia can use word processor features such as Spell checking, Grammar checking, Font size and color changes to help. A person with Dysgraphia can use the keyboard as an alternative to using handwriting. Word prediction or voice recognition software can also be used to help with writing and spelling.

## READING DEVICES:

### Scanning and Reading Technology



People with learning disabilities can use a variety of tools to assist with reading and writing. These can range from a pen that can scan and read aloud text, to software that can read text aloud as it highlights each word. These tools when combined with scanners make both electronic and paper-based text accessible.



## CALCULATION DEVICES:

### Talking Calculators



A talking calculator may be used by people with Dyscalculia. The calculator provides voice feedback to the user that helps them identify any input errors.

Additionally, hearing the calculated answer can provide a check against the transposition of numbers commonly reversed in reading by people with Dyslexia or Dyscalculia.

## ORGANIZING DEVICES:

### Pocket Recorders and Electronic Organizers



Tape-recorders and mini pocket recorders, electronic organizers and personal assistance devices (PDA's) can assist some people with learning disabilities. They allow a person to verbally store and retrieve telephone numbers, appointments, and individual notes, as well as record instructions and detailed information.

## Tips for Interacting and Communicating with a Member who has a Learning Disability

Depending upon the type of learning disability, a member may have difficulty in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, reading skills, reading comprehension, math calculations, organization, or problem solving.

### GENERAL TIPS

- ✔ If you know that a member needs assistance, politely ask how you can best help.
- ✔ Be flexible with your approach. There are a variety of different ways to complete a task.
- ✔ Some tasks may take longer to perform or complete for members with a learning disability. Have realistic expectations with respect to deadlines.
- ✔ When a new or altered routine is necessary, notify the individual, provide an explanation of what can be anticipated and reduce surprises and confusion.
- ✔ What appears to be a simple way to carry out a task for you may not be the most logical way for a person with a learning disability. Conversely, what might appear to be a complicated way of doing something may be the easiest way for the person with a learning disability. The important point is to find a strategy that works best for the individual.
- ✔ Be aware that as situations change, so may the person's ability to process information and communicate. Just because a person's learning disability affects them in a particular way in one setting, does not mean that it will affect them the same way in another setting. Do not be rigid.

### COMMUNICATION TIPS

- ✔ Communication is a two-way street: be patient and give the member the opportunity to explain what information or assistance they require. Keep in mind that people with some kinds of learning disabilities may need more time to express themselves.
- ✔ Speak naturally, clearly and directly to your member. Use everyday language when speaking to a person with an auditory learning disability. Use short and simple sentences. Avoid using complex language. Remember simplifying the language you use does not mean treating adults like children. Use an age-appropriate tone of voice and language.
- ✔ Don't assume that a person with a learning disability has understood, or conversely, failed to understand you. Politely ask whether or not you provided sufficient information. Clarify what you have said by summarizing the information. Be brief and to the point.
- ✔ When giving instructions, breaking large tasks into small and clearly defined sequential steps can be helpful to some individuals with a learning disability.

- ✔ People with learning disabilities may use alternative technology for writing, text to speech systems, tape recorders and mini pocket recorders, or assistive software programs. Ask the person with the learning disability whether they use assistive technologies and the best way to incorporate them into your communication.

- ✔ Consider offering information in different formats. A written notice followed up by a phone call, an audio version of a lease agreement in addition to a print version, and using drawings, diagrams, photographs or symbols to support written information are a few examples that may help ensure members with certain types of learning disabilities receive and understand the information.





## **Understanding the Needs of People who have a Developmental or Intellectual Disability**

A developmental or intellectual disability can significantly affect a person's ability to learn and use information at the same pace or to the same extent as others. It can also affect a person's understanding of abstract concepts such as time and money and the subtleties of interpersonal interactions. It is a disability that is present during childhood and continues throughout one's life.

A person who has a developmental or intellectual disability is capable of participating effectively in all aspects of daily life, but sometimes requires more assistance than others in learning a task, adapting to changes in tasks and routines, and addressing the complexity of our society.

Each person is unique and as such each person will have their own personality and areas of ability and areas of difficulty. Developmental or intellectual disabilities can mildly, moderately or severely affect a person's overall functioning including language and communication, learning, reasoning and problem-solving skills. People who have a developmental or intellectual disability may also experience varying degrees of difficulty with a range of practical and social tasks relating to everyday needs.

### **Types of technology, equipment or other resources a person who has a developmental or intellectual disability may use**

- Hand-held devices that provide reminders
- Communication boards and systems
- Speech generating devices
- Support person
- Support animal

## ORGANIZING AND SCHEDULING DEVICES

### Personal Device Assistants (PDA's) and Voice Recorders



Handheld devices can be used to remind individuals with developmental disabilities of daily appointments and tasks. Digital pictures, video, and verbal instructions can provide details on how to complete a task, as well as reminders on when to complete certain tasks. These devices can help manage time, sequential and non-sequential tasks, lists, notes, instructions, phone calls, and more.



## COMMUNICATION DEVICES

### Picture-based Phones



Phone calls are easy with the picture based dialling system and the user cannot accidentally delete their vital contacts. This can be very important for some people who might be worried about accidentally pressing something that might take them into a menu they don't want or mistakenly delete or edit their contacts list.

### Communication Boards



Communication boards are sometimes used for individuals with intellectual disabilities who have limited verbal skills. "No-tech" boards are simple printed pages with pictures and symbols.



Electronic boards allow the user to use picture symbols, letters, and words and phrases to create messages. A person can point to pictures and words in a book in order to express themselves.



Some people may have extensive books with many options, and others may have much smaller books.

## Tips for Interacting and Communicating with a Member who has a Developmental or Intellectual Disability

### GENERAL TIPS:

- ✔ Don't make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Remember, the person is an adult and, unless there is a legally appointed substitute decision maker, can make his/her own decisions.
- ✔ Some people with a developmental disability may bring a support person to a meeting. The person themselves should always feel that they are the primary focus of the communication.
- ✔ Be flexible, and supportive. Take time to listen to, and understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.
- ✔ It can be difficult for some people who have a developmental disability to make quick decisions. Be patient and allow the person to take their time.
- ✔ Allow the time required for the person to respond to questions or a statement. It may appear as though the person has not understood the question or statement. Often it just takes time to process the incoming information, up to 45 seconds in some cases.
- ✔ Adjust the length of conversations to maximize the individual's ability to remain attentive and decrease stress level.
- ✔ Give instructions and have discussions in a quiet, informal, distraction-free environment.
- ✔ Don't use baby talk or talk down to people who have developmental disabilities. Gauge the pace, complexity, and vocabulary of your speech according to theirs.
- ✔ Keep language simple, specific and concrete. Concrete language refers to making the meaning of a sentence very plain - the words simply mean what they say. Much of our language involves sub meanings such as sarcasm, irony or reading between the lines. Some people with developmental disabilities have trouble with anything other than a literal meaning of the words spoken.
- ✔ Describe tasks or requests clearly, concisely, and simply. Break down instructions into clearly defined small, sequential steps, keeping verbal descriptions short and direct. Keep the number of steps to a minimum to avoid confusion.
- ✔ Use concrete terms and avoid abstract ideas. Where possible give visual cues
- ✔ Be prepared to provide information in different ways (orally, in writing, or using multiple formats) to communicate with the person.





## Understanding the Needs of People who have a Speech or Language Impairment

People with speech and language impairments have difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally.

A person with a **speech disability** cannot produce sounds correctly or fluently. Depending on the cause and severity, a person can have difficulty speaking; reading and/or writing. Some people with speech disabilities have difficulties with articulation and stuttering. However, limited or no speech does not necessarily imply a lack of understanding or limited intelligence.

A person with a **language disability** has trouble understanding others or sharing thoughts, ideas and feelings. People with language impairments may use words and their meanings improperly, have difficulty expressing ideas, have reduced vocabulary and an inability to follow directions. A person may hear or see a word but not be able to understand its meaning. They also may have trouble getting others to understand what they are trying to communicate.

### Types of technology, equipment or other resources a person who has a language or speech impairment may use

When a person cannot use speech to communicate effectively in all situations, a number of tools, techniques and resources may be used. Augmentative communication devices can help them send their messages through voice or alternative methods. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems include a variety of devices from pen and paper and simple letter boards to sophisticated electronic devices or computers with voice output.

### Interpreters



A support person or sign language or oral interpreter is sometimes used by people with language and speech impairments. Gestures, body language, facial expression and the more formal use of manual sign language are used to



promote communication.

## COMMUNICATION DEVICES:

### Communication Books and Boards:



Communication books and boards are displays that help people communicate. “No-tech” boards are simple printed pages with pictures and symbols.



Electronic boards allow the user to use picture symbols, letters, and words and phrases to create messages. Electronic boards can be hand-held, attached to wheelchairs, or used on trays attached to a wheelchair.



Some electronic boards produce voice and /or written output.

### Talking Word Processors



Talking word processors and text-to-speech keyboards convert text to voice while the person types. Talking word processors can come with or without displays. Some come with a dual display to enable face- to- face conversation: one screen faces the talker and the other screen faces the listener.



### Text- to- speech applications for smartphones and tablets



The widespread use of the iphone, ipad and the itouch has led to the development of applications for use on these and other such devices. These have text-to-speech voices, use symbols, and large built in vocabulary to help with speech and communications.



## Message Devices



Hand-held recorded message devices can assist in communication. A family member or caregiver records a message, or series of messages for the user. The user can press different buttons on the device depending on the message he/she wishes to express. Words or pictures can be placed on the buttons to assist in the process.



## Tips for Interacting and Communicating with a Member who has a Speech or Language Impairment

### GENERAL TIPS:

- ✔ At the beginning of your interaction, find out how the person communicates and what you can do to make communication go smoothly. Many people with communication disabilities have written instructions that tell you what they want you to do.
- ✔ Whenever possible, choose somewhere quiet to talk. That gives you both an opportunity to concentrate and not be distracted.
- ✔ Listen attentively when you're talking to a person who has a speech or language impairment. Make eye contact.
- ✔ Many people with Cerebral Palsy have slurred speech and involuntary body movements. Do not make assumptions or discount what they have to say, based on their appearance.
- ✔ Be patient rather than attempting to speak for a person with speech

difficulty. Give the person a chance to communicate, and time to answer or make a request. Impatience on your part may have a negative effect on the other person's speech.

- ✔ Some people with speech and language impairments may be accompanied by a support person. Ensure you obtain your member's before discussing confidential matters in front of a support person.

### COMMUNICATION TIPS:

- ✔ Speak in your regular tone of voice. Do not speak loudly or slowly. Most people with impaired speech and language can hear without difficulty.
- ✔ Look directly at the person you are talking to—not at the person who may be accompanying him/her. Use first-person references; for example, say "Do *you* have any questions?" instead of "Does *she* have any questions?"

## COMMUNICATION TIPS

- ✔ If a person has difficulty understanding what you are saying, use short, clear sentences and avoid using jargon. Ask the person what you can do to help him/her understand. For some people it is useful to write down key words as you speak, use gestures, point to objects and pictures or use drawings and diagrams.
- ✔ Resist the urge to complete sentences for him/her. If you don't understand an answer or question, simply ask the individual to repeat it or to write it down.
- ✔ When necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or a shake of the head. Avoid oversimplification. If you ask a question, sometimes writing down a number of options can be a useful way for the individual to choose the answer they are looking for.
- ✔ Sometimes asking basic yes-and-no questions can facilitate communication. Be sure to phrase such questions clearly and appropriately, avoiding use of confusing statements.
- ✔ Recognize that a yes/no question approach has limitations. The member may become frustrated when wanting to answer questions more fully. Equally, you may wish more information from the person than he/she can convey in a simple yes or no answer.
- ✔ Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information or try another way of communicating such as with pen and paper or gestures. Repeat the part of the message that you understood, so that the speaker does not have to repeat his/her entire message.



## Communicating with people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices

Augmentative communication refers to “methods of communication that enhance or replace conventional forms of expression.” You don't need special skills to communicate with a person who uses an augmentative and alternative communication system. Remember, a person who cannot speak does not necessarily have a problem hearing or understanding.

- Make eye contact.
- Speak directly to the AAC user, not to the person who may be accompanying them.
- Use everyday language.
- Do not speak loudly, slowly or in a condescending manner.
- Ask the person to show you how he/she communicates 'Yes'.
- Ask the person to show you how he/she communicates 'No'.
- Ask the person to show you how he/she communicates with the AAC system.
- Give the person time to communicate. Using an AAC system takes more time than speaking.
- Do not feel you have to keep talking. It takes time to construct a message via AAC. Try to feel comfortable with the silences.
- If you are short on time and cannot communicate with the person, be honest and make an appointment for when you do have the time.

**If the person is using a display with picture symbols:**

- Say each word selected out loud so that the AAC user knows you have the correct word.
- Do not interrupt when the AAC user is in the middle of conveying a message.
- If you are not sure when the AAC user is finished, ask him/ her "Are you finished?"
- Say the words in the order that the AAC user gave them.
- Suggest what s/he might mean using all the words.
- Write down the words the person is communicating as it often helps in remembering long messages.
- If necessary, ask the person if he/she would like a familiar person to assist them in communicating with you.

**If the person is using a device:**

- Ask the person where you should sit or stand. Some people who use devices prefer to prepare their message and then speak it out. Others prefer a communication partner to read their message as they are selecting the words.



## Guide Dogs and Service Animals



## Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Guide dogs and service animals provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people with a range of disabilities. However, at times, people who rely upon service animals have not been allowed to enter buildings and have been denied service. Public misunderstanding about the law has limited their access to goods and services. The customer service standard attempts to address the issue of accessible service for people who use guide dogs and service animals.

### What is a guide dog or service animal?

First and foremost a guide dog or service animal is NOT a pet! A service animal is any guide, hearing dog or other animal individually trained to assist a person with a disability. Under the customer service standard, an animal is a service animal if it is readily apparent that it is used by a person for reasons relating to his or her disability or if the person has a letter from a physician or nurse verifying that the animal is required for reasons relating to his or her disability.

### What do service animals do?

Service animals are trained to perform various tasks and provide a range of services.

#### Guide Dogs



Guide dogs are highly-trained working animals that help provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people who are blind or with vision loss.

Guide dogs assist people who are blind to avoid obstacles, locate objects, and safely negotiate traffic and changes in elevation. The harness and U-shaped handle helps with communication between the dog and the partner who is blind. In this partnership, the human's role is to provide directional commands, while the dog's role is to ensure the team's safety even if this requires disobeying an unsafe command.

#### Hearing Alert Animals



"Hearing" or "signal" animals are specially trained to assist people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. They alert their owner to sounds, usually by approaching their owner and then by going back to the source of the sound. They signal such noises as doorbells, phones, smoke alarms, crying babies, and microwave bells.

At home, the dog will wake up his owner when the alarm goes off by nudging him, lead the person to the front door if the doorbell chimes and bring the phone over to their owner if it rings. If traveling, they'll warn when a smoke alarm beeps by taking the person to it; or if their owner is asleep, they'll nudge the person awake. If the cell phone or beeper sounds off, the hearing dog will grab it and bring it to their owner to answer.

## Mobility Assistance Animals



A mobility assistance animal is trained to help a person with a physical disability or medical condition that affects mobility and/or dexterity.

They are commonly trained to pick up objects, open and close doors, retrieve items, carry items in a backpack, operate light switches and help the handler get dressed and undressed.



Some bigger dogs are trained to pull individuals in wheelchairs, and wear a type of harness specifically designed for pulling. Mobility assistance animals may also assist people with disabilities with walking, balance and transferring from place to place. Also, if their handler falls, the dog may be trained to act as a brace to help regain position.

## Seizure Alert/Response Animal



Seizure-alert animals assist their human companions before a seizure occurs by alerting the handler to an impending seizure. This allows the handler to move to a safe place for the duration of the seizure, or allows them to take preventive medication. Seizure-alert dogs also can be trained to stay close to their companions for the duration of the seizure, as well as fetch medications, a telephone, caretaker or to summon human assistance, if required.

## Psychiatric Service Dog



A Psychiatric Service Dog is individually trained to perform tasks which assist an individual with a mental health disability. They are trained to respond to post traumatic stress disorder, phobias, manic depression, or other stress/mental induced disabilities. They can, as examples, alert to panic attacks, help keep an individual calm, reducing physical and mental effects such as anxiety, fear, flashbacks, hypervigilance, hallucinations, intrusive imagery, nightmares, muscle tension, trembling, nausea and memory loss, and remind their partner to take medication.

## Autism Service Dog



This service dog can alert its handler of certain behaviours so that the handler may keep these behaviours to a minimum.

An autism service dog is trained to assist a person with autism, to help them gain independence, confidence, and the ability to perform activities of daily living similar to anyone else. The presence of the dog can calm the individual; reduce emotional outbursts and serves as a positive social link for the person to their home and community.



While the vast majority of service animals are dogs, other types of animals can be used. For example, although not common, small ponies or miniature horses, and monkeys are sometimes used as mobility or special skills service animals. Birds, such as parrots can be psychiatric support animals and cats can be used as a hearing alert or seizure alert animal.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

### Service Animal Etiquette

- ✔ Do not pet or talk to a service animal without permission. The animal is working and needs to pay attention at all times.
- ✔ Do not make noises at, or startle a service animal. It may distract the animal from doing its job, placing the dog and person at risk.
- ✔ Do not feed the service animal. It may disrupt his/her schedule. If a person with a service animal is going to be present for a significant period of time, you may ask if it is OK to put out some water for the animal. This is a courtesy but is not required.
- ✔ Avoid making assumptions about the animal. Not all service animals wear harnesses or special collars. If you are unsure if the animal is a service animal, you can politely ask the person.
- ✔ People using a service animal are independent and usually want to be treated that way. They will ask if they require assistance; if you feel they may need assistance, simply say "May I help you?"
- ✔ Do not be offended if the person does not feel like discussing his/her disability or the assistance the service animal provides.

Remember that the owner is responsible for maintaining control over the animal at all times. You are not responsible for cleaning up after it or feeding it.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## 1. What do I have to do about service animals under the customer service standard?

- Under the customer service standard, you must allow a person with a disability to enter areas of your premises that are open to the public or members with their guide dog or service animal. The person must also be allowed to keep their service animal with him/her unless another law specifically excludes animals from the premises.
- The customer service standard also says if a service animal is excluded by law then there must be other measures available to provide services to the person with a disability.

## 2. Are there any locations where a service animal would be excluded?

Under the standard, housing co-ops must allow service animals in *all* areas where the public or members normally have access.

For those co-op housing providers who have dining facilities, the *Health Protection and Promotion Act (1990)* does not allow animals in places where food is manufactured, prepared, processed, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold or offered for sale.

However, **the Act does contain specific exemptions for service dogs only. Service dogs are allowed to accompany their owners into areas where food is normally served, sold or offered for sale.**

While service dogs would be allowed in the dining areas, they would not be allowed in the kitchen or food preparation areas.

## 3. How can I tell if an animal is a service animal and not just a pet?

Under the customer service standard, to be considered a service animal it must be either readily apparent that an animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a disability has a letter from a nurse or doctor confirming that it is required for reasons relating to his or her disability.

The term "readily apparent" means it is obvious by the animal's appearance or by what it is doing. Appearance could mean that the animal is wearing a harness, saddle bags, vest or sign that identifies it as a service animal. It could mean that it has documents from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General. You could also consider it "readily apparent" if you see the animal providing assistance such as opening doors, pressing elevator buttons, retrieving items, etc.

#### **4. When can I ask a member for documentation verifying an animal is a service animal, not just a pet?**

In most housing co-op situations, it is not relevant to the delivery of service, if a person has a service animal or if the animal is a pet. However, *if it is not "readily apparent" that an animal is a service animal*, some of the circumstances when a housing co-op may wish to request such a letter include:

- where there are dining facilities available on the premises and it is not readily apparent that a dog is a guide/service dog, not a pet, thereby potentially affecting if the animal can enter the dining facility;
- where either the member with the service animal or another member is requesting accommodation as a result of the presence of the service animal. For example a request for a change of unit due to allergies or another medical condition that arises due to proximity to a service animal;
- where information for emergency or evacuation plans is required and it is unclear if an animal is a service animal or pet.

If a letter from a nurse or doctor is requested, the letter only needs to identify that the service animal is needed because of a disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used.

Each housing co-op should develop its own internal policies and procedures relating to service animals including how it wants to handle receipt of confidential documents such as a letter confirming the use of a service animal.

#### **5. I have members who are allergic to or afraid of dogs. What should I do?**

You are required to meet the needs of both persons in these situations. There is no one right strategy. It will be important to come up with a plan that enables both persons to access services and goods.



## Support Persons



## **Support Persons**

A support person is someone either hired or chosen to help a person with a disability with communication, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods or services. A support person can be a paid professional like a Personal Support Worker. A support person could also be a volunteer, family member, or friend.

### **What is a Support Person?**

A support person can play an important part in helping to ensure people with disabilities maintain independence, have the opportunity and choice to participate in a range of activities, can receive required medical supports, can communicate effectively and much more.

Depending on circumstances and need, a support person assists with:

- activities of daily living such as shopping, banking, paying bills, house cleaning, and meal preparation and eating assistance
- personal care such as dressing, bathing and washing, personal grooming
- medical needs such as monitoring a person's health conditions, changing non-sterile dressings
- mobility assistance
- communication
- participation in social and recreational activities

In some situations, a member may arrange for their own paid support person. In some cases family, friends, or volunteers provide support and help informally.

Regardless of the formal status of a support person, or if they are paid or not, the customer service standard requires housing co-ops to ensure that members with disabilities and the public are allowed to use their support persons while accessing your services on the parts of the premises open to the public or members, as well as in their own units.

### **What does a support person do?**

The ways in which a support person provides help vary considerably. A few examples of ways in which a support worker can assist include:

- For a person with vision loss, a support person might assist by guiding, reading, and helping with a range of daily living activities such as housekeeping, laundry, and cooking.
- For a person who is D/deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, a support person may provide sign language or oral interpretation services translating sign language into English or English to sign language.

- For a person who is deafblind, a support person may act as a guide, assist with communication both ensuring the person who is deafblind understands what you are saying and equally that you understand what the person with a disability is saying. This communication can be through use of tactile or adapted American Sign Language, print or two handed manual signing etc. A support person may also assist a person who is deafblind with a range of activities of daily living.
- For a person with a physical disability a support person might assist with travelling and personal care, facilitate participation in recreational and social activities, monitor medical conditions, and help with shopping, laundry or other daily living activities.
- For a person with a learning disability a support person may assist with note-taking and complex communication.
- For a person with a mental health disability a support person may provide a calming influence that assists the individual when in high stress, noisy or crowded settings.
- For a person with an intellectual or developmental disability a support person may assist a person with travel, complex tasks, and a range of activities of daily living.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

### **Interacting and communicating with someone who has a support person:**

- ✔ A person with a disability may not always introduce his or her support person. If you are not sure, it is OK to ask, "Is this your interpreter or support person?"
- ✔ Speak to and look directly at the person with a disability even though the message may be coming from the support person.
- ✔ Address the person appropriately: "Can you please sign this form?" as opposed to "Can you ask him to sign this form?"
- ✔ Remember that support persons, especially interpreters, tend to communicate everything to the person. Avoid engaging in "side" conversations with the interpreter, thinking these won't be conveyed to the person with the disability.
- ✔ Plan for the presence of a support person, e.g., ensure seating arrangements for the support person helps facilitate communication.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## 1. What do I have to do about support persons under the customer service standard?

- Under the customer service standard, housing co-ops must allow people with disabilities to be accompanied and assisted by their support persons while accessing their goods or services.
- If you charge admission for any of your services, you are required to have a policy regarding what amount, if any, is charged for support persons. You must let people know ahead of time if a fee will be charged.

## 2. Can a support person be present during a meeting with a member where confidential information is being discussed?

If confidential, personal or sensitive information is going to be discussed, first ask the person with a disability if he/she would like the support person to be present. If the person indicates that the support person should be present, you may want to obtain a signed consent from the member, as well as a signed confidentiality statement from the support person.

You should check you own organization's specific policies and procedures about how and when to obtain signed consent.

## 3. Do we have to charge a support person admission to special events, activities or for a specific service, where we charge tenants?

It is up to your co-op to decide if you want to charge an admission fee for a support person to attend an event or activity with a person with a disability. Free access for the support person is not required but you must provide advance notice if a fee is going to be charged.





## Assistive Devices



## Assistive Devices

An assistive device is any device that is used, designed, made or adapted to assist people in performing a particular task. Assistive devices enable persons with disabilities to do everyday tasks such as moving, communicating, reading or lifting.

### What are different types of assistive devices?

There are a wide range of types of assistive devices. Some assist with mobility, dexterity, speech, vision, hearing, communication, and information. Other devices assist individuals in organizing and remembering.

While by no means exhaustive the following are some of the assistive devices and adaptive technology you may encounter while providing service to your members and the public.

Vision devices:

- Magnifiers, closed circuit television systems (CCTV), screen readers

Listening devices:

- Hearing Aids, personal amplification systems, neck loops

Mobility devices:

- Wheelchairs, scooters, walker, cane, white cane, guide dog, portable global positioning devices (GPS)

Dexterity devices:

- Specialized pens, grasping tools, door openers

Communication supports and devices:

- Amplified phones, large button phones, voice activated and picture phones, personal digital assistants (PDA's), phone relay service, TTY, TTY with Braille display, short message service (SMS texting), communication books and boards, electronic communicators and Braille notetakers, speech generating devices

Reading devices:

- Reading pens and scanning and reading technology

Organizing devices:

- Electronic organizers, schedules, PDA's, voice message recorders



The type of disability, age of the person, preferred communication styles, financial resources and available support funding can have an impact on what assistive devices an individual may have or use.

## Assistive Devices and your Co-Op

The customer service standard requires that staff and contractors who act on your co-op's behalf know what specialized equipment and assistive devices your co-op offers. The standard also requires that you can either provide assistance with the devices you offer or know whom to contact about operating them upon request.

- Make sure you find out what devices and services are available at your building. (Elevator, stair lift, TTY, pocket talker, magnifier, etc.)
- Find out how to use or operate these devices or who to contact about operating them. Gather operating instructions and manuals for these devices, making sure they are readily available if required.
- Ensure your members with disabilities are aware of the devices you offer.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

### Interacting and communicating with someone who uses an assistive device:

- ✔ Ensure that a person is permitted to enter your building with their assistive device and to use the device.
- ✔ Remove potential barriers to the use of assistive devices, whenever possible.
- ✔ Don't handle or touch a person's assistive device without permission.
- ✔ Do not move a person's assistive device such as a cane or walker out of the person's reach.
- ✔ Respect your member's personal space. Do not lean on or reach over a person or device.
- ✔ Ensure that members and others with disabilities know what assistive devices or services your co-op provides (such as a wheelchair or telephone relay service).

# **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & REFERENCES**



## Links to Accessibility Resources

There are a wide range of free resources available to enhance knowledge about legislation, accessibility practices, communication tips, information on assistive devices and general training materials.

These resources can be viewed online or in some cases downloaded for further review and use. The list below is not meant to be all inclusive. It is a starting point for individuals who want to know more.



### Ministry of Community and Social Services,

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario

ServiceOntario AODA Contact Centre:

Toll-free: 1-866-515-2025

TTY: 416-325-3408 / Toll-free: 1-800-268-7095

Fax: 416-325-3407

E-mail: [accessibility@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:accessibility@css.gov.on.ca)

Web Site: [ontario.ca/AccessON](http://ontario.ca/AccessON)

Resources include tools to help you comply:

[ontario.ca/AccessON](http://ontario.ca/AccessON)

- Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Reg. 429/07
- Compliance Manual: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Reg. 429/07
- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service: Summary of Requirements
- Compliance Manual for Small Businesses and Organizations: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Reg. 429/07
- Training Resource: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Reg. 429/07
- Training Resource for Small Businesses and Organizations: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Reg. 429/07

Legislation:

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm), [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_05a11\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm)

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**PSN – Performance Solutions Network – Accessibility Resource Centre**

416-855-7500 or [info@psncorp.com](mailto:info@psncorp.com)

<http://www.psncorp.com/customer-focus/resource-centre>

Includes a wide range of resources to assist organizations in enhancing accessibility to their goods, services and operations. Documents can be viewed online or in many cases downloaded for future reference.

- Accessibility legislation and related information
- AODA and the customer service standard
- Accessible communications
- Accessible information
- Inclusive meetings & events
- Web accessibility



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# **OUR POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

