

Customer Service Standard



Office of Human Resources
Lakehead University



Lakehead University Policy Statement

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In fulfilling our mission, Lakehead University strives at all times to provide its goods and services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. The University is committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access the University’s goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as others;

unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with a disability to access goods or services.

This brochure provides you with information and tips for assisting persons with disabilities.

This brochure can be made available in alternate formats upon request.

Background

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province.

One of the specific standards that has been developed, and made law, is the **Accessible Customer Service Standard**. This standard details specific requirements for all service providers.

The AODA allows government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

In the coming years we will see additional regulations covering;

- **Transportation**
- **Information and Communications**
- **Employment**
- **Built Environment**

What is a Disability?

AODA defines a disability as:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or 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*.

Did you know ?

- 3.4 million Canadians report having a disability that restricts them in their daily activities (about 1 in every 10 people)

Talk about Disabilities – Choose the Right Word

Words can influence and reinforce perceptions of persons with disabilities. They can create either a positive view of people with disabilities or an indifferent, negative view.

Here are some tips that can help make your communication with or about persons with disabilities more successful:

- Use “disability” not “handicap”. **Disability** refers to a restriction in a person’s ability to participate in a specific activity. **Handicap** refers to an environmental or attitudinal barrier that prevents the person with a disability from participating to their maximum potential. e.g. a disability is the restriction a person who is deaf has in their ability to hear

spoken conversation, a handicap would be another person’s reluctance to use means other than speech to communicate with this person.

- Put people first. “Person with disability” puts the focus on the person instead of their disability.
- Be specific. For specific disabilities, say “person with epilepsy”, “person who uses a wheelchair” or “person with schizophrenia”.
- Avoid statements that make it seem like a person with a disability should be pitied such as “victim of”, “suffers with”, or “stricken with” a particular illness or disability.

- Don’t assume. If you’re not familiar with the disability, wait until the individual describes his/her situation to you, instead of making assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.

For more information on choosing the right word go to:

<http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/mcscs/english/how/howtochoose.htm>

General Communication Tips

Disabilities can be both visible and non-visible: while some disabilities are immediately recognizable, others are not.

Did you know ?

- Disability rates increase with age, and of the population 65 and over – 40% report having some form of disability

- **Focus on the person**, rather than the disability.
- **Approach the person from the front, where they can see you.** This position allows you to communicate with expressions or body language that often speak louder than words.
- **Speak directly to the person**, rather than to an attendant, companion or interpreter.
- **Speak in your normal voice.** To speak loudly or slowly to a person with a disability, can be offensive; they will let you know if they have difficulty hearing or understanding you.
- **Avoid actions and words that suggest the person should be treated differently.** It is fine to invite a person in a wheelchair to “go for a walk” or to ask a person who is blind if they “see what you mean.”
- **Listen to what people say.** Do not assume you know what they want or what is best for them.
- **Don’t hesitate to offer assistance if the situation warrants.** Respect the person’s right to accept or refuse your offer.
- **If you are unsure how to act or what is appropriate – ask the person; “May I help you?” or “How can I help you?”**



Learning Disabilities

- The term “learning disability” describes a range of information processing disorders that can affect how a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains and understands verbal and non-verbal information.
- In many cases the individual has average or above-average intelligence
- May affect: Language based learning, mathematics, writing, fine motor skills
- Examples include **dyslexia** (difficulty understanding written words), **dyscalculia** (difficulty solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts) and **auditory or visual processing disorders** (difficulty understanding language despite normal hearing and vision).

When communicating and interacting with someone with a learning disability:

- Take time, be patient
- Demonstrate a willingness to assist
- Speak naturally, clearly and directly to the person
- Be prepared to explain any materials you provide
- Provide information in a way that works best for that person. For example, even if the information is written, it may also be helpful to verbalize the information. If you are not sure, ask the person if there’s a different way you can provide the information that would be helpful.

Did you know ?

- 70% of all persons with disabilities report needing support with daily activities

Mental Health Disabilities

- Mental Health Disabilities are usually not visible. Most of the time, you will not know that a person has a mental health disability. Sometimes, a mental health disability may present itself through “odd” or very different behaviour although again, you may have no way of knowing for sure.
- People become anxious or agitated for a variety of reasons. Some may be under a great deal of stress; some may have experienced a loss and are grieving; others may have a mental illness and are experiencing symptoms.
- Mental health disabilities cover a wide range of disorders and include depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic attacks and dissociative disorder.

Did you know ?

- Over half a million adult Canadians report having some form of vision loss and over a million report some form of hearing loss – not corrected by eyewear or hearing aids.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a mental health disability:

- Use clear, straightforward language, rephrase if necessary.
- Be clear about who you are and your role.
- Be patient. A person with a mental health disability may have difficulty concentrating, mood swings, poor memory and lack of motivation.
- Check to make sure they understand, do not try to talk over them.
- Recognize the individual’s stress level and try to help calm them.
- Eliminate (if possible) physical or sensory barriers which may be causing a problem. If the person seems agitated or uncomfortable, try to relocate to an area where there are fewer onlookers.
- If the request is beyond your control, explain that to the person and ask how you can best help them; avoid involving too many people.

Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

- Intellectual or developmental disabilities are those characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviours, which are required in many everyday social and practical skills.
- Persons with developmental disabilities learn and process information more slowly and may have difficulty with receptive language, expressive language, abstract concepts and subtleties of interpersonal interactions (communicating and understanding what is being communicated).
- Sensory issues (over or under stimulated senses) are a problem for many who have various forms of developmental disabilities.

Did you know ?

- 57% of adults with disabilities require some type of aid or device.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a intellectual or developmental disability:

- Be patient, do not be offended by lack of/inappropriate response(s) or unconventional behavior.
- Speak more slowly and leave pauses for the person to process your words.
- Do not use complex terminology or jargon, use plain language.
- Ask one question at a time, giving the person time to formulate and give their reply.
- Speak directly to the person. Maintain eye contact.
- Make sure the person understands what you've said. You can be direct and ask, "Do you understand **this?**"
- Clearly identify yourself, your role and that you are trying to assist/help them.
- Offer physical assistance and direction when necessary.
- Address any inappropriate behavior immediately – explain any rules/regulations or behavioral expectations.

Hearing Loss

Did you know ?

- Many terms are used for hearing loss; familiarize yourself with the commonly used terms.

- A person who is **hard of hearing** has a mild to profound hearing loss. A person who is **deafened** has a significant hearing loss and may have lost their hearing gradually or suddenly. People who are deafened or hard of hearing may use devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM systems or they may rely on speech-reading (also known as lip reading).
- A person who is **deaf** has little or no functional hearing and may depend upon visual rather than auditory communication. **Deaf** spelled with a capital D is used to refer to people who are deaf or hard of hearing and who identify with the culture, society and language of Deaf people, which is based on Sign Language. Their preferred mode of communication is Sign.
- **Oral deaf** refers to a person who is deaf and whose preferred mode of communication is verbal and auditory. The person may or may not use sign language.

When communicating and interacting with someone with a hearing loss:

- Calmly get the person's attention before speaking, attract their attention with a discreet wave of your hand or a gentle tap on the shoulder.
- Speak clearly, pacing your speech and pauses normally, maintaining eye contact. There is no need to shout, exaggerate or over-pronounce your words.
- If possible, find a quiet place to converse; background noise can be hard to filter out.
- Don't stand in front of a window or light as it shades your face; poor light and shadows can make it difficult to speech read.
- Don't put your hands or other objects in front of your face when speaking. This too, can make speech reading difficult.
- If interacting with a person accompanied by an interpreter, be sure to face and speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- If necessary, ask the person for suggestions on how to improve the communication. He or she may ask you to move away from the light, speak a little more slowly or perhaps even use a pen and paper.

Vision Loss

- Vision loss reduces a person's ability to see clearly.
- Few persons with vision loss are totally blind. Some have limited vision, such as the loss of side, peripheral or central vision. Some can see the outline of objects, while others can see the direction of light.

When communicating and interacting with someone with vision loss:

- Identify yourself, do not assume the person will recognize your voice, speak directly to him or her, not to his or her companion.
- Do not touch the person without permission.
- When offering to guide someone with a vision loss, stand on the side they direct you and hold out your elbow. When they've taken it, walk at a normal pace and the person will usually walk a step behind. Announce handrails, doors (e.g., to the left, right, push/pull to open) and describe the surrounding areas. If you're not sure how to give directions, ask the person what would be most helpful.
- Don't be afraid or embarrassed to use words such as "see", "read" or "look". People with vision loss also use these words.
- Do not touch or speak to service animals. They are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Let the person know when you are leaving and if possible leave them in contact with a tangible object such as a table or a wall. This will eliminate the problem of leaving them in an open space with no point of reference.
- When giving printed information, offer to read, summarize or describe it.
- Give clear and precise directions. For example, "a metre to your left" is better than "over there".

Deafblind

- Most people who are deafblind have a combination of vision and hearing loss. They usually have some useful but not always reliable vision and hearing.
- Persons who are deafblind use many different ways to communicate including sign language, tactile sign language, tracking, tactile fingerspelling, Braille, speech and speech reading.

When communicating and interacting with someone who is deafblind:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deafblind may have some hearing and/or vision.
- If you are not sure how to begin, ask the person what will be helpful.
- Many people will explain what you need to do, perhaps giving you an assistance card or note explaining how to communicate.
- Often people who are deafblind are accompanied by an intervenor. Again, speak directly to the person with a disability and not the intervenor.
- Identify yourself both to the person with the disability and the intervenor.
- Some people who are deafblind use service animals. Again, do not pet or interact with the animal.
- You can give a gentle touch on the arm to get the person's attention. However, do not touch a person who is deafblind on the shoulder or back as they may not have enough vision to orient your location to them.
- Suddenly touching a person who is deafblind can be alarming and should only be done in emergencies.

Speech and Language Disabilities



- A person with a **speech disability** is unable to produce speech sounds correctly or fluently, sometimes due to voice strength or aphasia.
- Some people with speech disabilities have difficulties with articulation and stuttering. Stuttering is a pattern of speech where the speaker repeats or prolongs sounds for an unusually long time. Stuttering may be aggravated by anxiety or stress. People who were born with insufficient hearing to enable them to acquire speech normally, or who lost their hearing prior to the age at which speech is required, have difficulty forming the words the way they are commonly heard.
- A person with a **language disability** has trouble understanding others (receptive language) or sharing thoughts, ideas and feelings (expressive language).

When communicating and interacting with someone with a speech or language impairment:

- Be patient and allow the person to complete what they are saying without interruptions. Listen to what they are saying, rather than how they are saying it.
- Attempt to create a relaxed environment where both of you feel at ease. Remember that anxiety can often aggravate a speech disability, your being relaxed will help reduce the other person's anxiety.
- If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information. Sometimes it is helpful to use "yes" or "no" questions.
- If the individual is accompanied by a support person, speak to and look at the person with the disability and not the support person.
- Some people with speech disabilities use a communication board, symbols or cards to help them communicate. When asked, use these devices as instructed.

Physical/Mobility Disabilities

- There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, not all require a wheelchair.
- People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or temporary disabilities may have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting.
- Physical disabilities cannot be generalized because each person will have different causes, symptoms and management strategies. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability

When communicating and interacting with someone with a physical or mobility disability:

- When meeting a person using a wheelchair or walker, do offer to shake their hand, even if they appear to have limited use of their arms. This common action of personal contact creates a warm environment for communication.
- If the person uses a wheelchair and the conversation is expected to last longer than a few moments, find somewhere nearby to sit down. This enables you to make eye contact on the same level and reduces neck strain for the person having to look up at you.
- Don't make assumptions about a person's capabilities. Some people can walk with assistance but use a wheelchair or scooter to conserve energy or move around quickly.
- Remember that the person's assistive device is part of his or her personal space. Don't lean or rest your foot on the wheelchair, walker or other equipment.
- Don't move items or equipment, such as canes or walkers, out of the person's reach.
- Don't move a person's wheelchair without permission – moving them without warning can cause the person to lose their balance.
- If the person is accompanied by a support person or companion, speak to the person directly.



Services for Persons with Disabilities – *Support Persons*

The University is committed to welcoming persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. For events at which an admission charge is levied, fees may be charged for support persons who accompany people with disabilities. Lakehead University will provide advance notice of the amount payable.

A **support person** is someone either hired or chosen to help a person with a disability. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or spouse or a friend of the person with the disability. A support person, in some cases, does not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

When communicating and interacting 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 appropriate to ask, “Is this your interpreter or support person?”
- Although it can feel a little awkward, 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: “What courses are you taking this year?” as opposed to “Can you ask him what courses he is taking this year?”
- Remember that support persons, especially interpreters, communicate everything to the person. Avoid engaging in “side” conversations with the interpreter, as these will be conveyed to the person with the disability.
- Plan for the presence of support persons, e.g., ensure seating arrangements accommodate support persons in locations that will help facilitate communication.
- Where possible, provide written materials both to the person with the disability and the support person.
- During event planning, note the location of washrooms that will accommodate persons with disabilities and their support persons.

Services for Persons with Disabilities – *Assistive Devices*

Here are a few examples of assistive devices you may come across when communicating and interacting with persons with disabilities on campus.

- Persons with vision loss may use a digital audio player to listen to books, directions, art shows, etc.
- Some persons who are deaf or hard of hearing use teletypewriters (TTY). This machine enables telephone-like communication using text. Calls placed to or from a non-TTY user can be made through the Bell Relay Service.
- Persons who are blind may use a white cane to assist with safety, mobility and independence. The cane is used to check for objects in a person's path, changes in walking surfaces and dangers, such as steps and curbs.
- Some persons with breathing difficulties carry portable oxygen tanks.
- Persons with learning disabilities, or difficulties with memory, use personal digital assistants for storing, organizing or retrieving personal, school or employment information.
- Persons with physical, learning or speech disabilities may use laptops to access information, take notes or to communicate.
- Some persons with speech disabilities may use a variety of communication devices, such as voice-output systems or pictures/symbols to communicate.

Persons with disabilities who require assistive devices to access goods or services at the University shall be allowed to use such devices. When available, the University will provide assistive devices in order to allow people with the disabilities to access University programs and/or goods and services while on the premises conducting business.

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.

Accessibility at Lakehead University

Lakehead University's Policy on Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy, Services to Persons with Disabilities came into effect January 5, 2010. The policy can be found on Lakehead University's Website.

<http://policies.lakeheadu.ca/policy.php?pid=211>

The Ontario Government recognizes that persons with disabilities are no different than anyone else in terms of the services they have a right to expect. Through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards, the main objective is to have a barrier free and fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

Lakehead University has formed an Accessibility Committee in 2005. The Committee works actively during the year, to prepare the Annual Accessibility Plan but more importantly to continually address and improve accessibility on campus.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

The University will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available.

Feedback Process

Feedback regarding the way the University provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made known using various methods and will take into consideration the fact that individuals with disabilities may require access to different forms of communication depending upon their disability. This means that feedback can be given by e-mail, verbally, telephone, suggestion box, in writing or through a third party.

All feedback shall be directed to the University Accessibility Committee via the Human Resources department (feedback from those who are not students at the University) or the Vice-Provost (Student Affairs) for those who are students of the University.

Resources

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

http://www.accesson.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/what/AODA_2005.htm

**Ontario Regulation 429/07: Accessibility Standards
for Customer Service:**

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws_src_regs_r07429_e.htm

**Frequently Asked Questions about the Accessible
Customer Service Standard Regulation:**

http://www.accesson.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/questions/aodo/faqs_cusreg.htm

**Ontario Ministry of Community and Social
Services:**

General information:

<http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/mcss/splash.htm>

Accessibility terminology: *Talk About
Disabilities: Choose the Right Word.*

http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/how/howto_choose.htm

Ontario Human Rights Commission

General information: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en>

Disability issues:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/issues/disability>

Famous Persons with Disabilities

Tom Cruise: <http://www.childrenslearningcenters.org/news/tomcruise.pdf>

Whoopi Goldberg: http://organizedwisdom.com/Whoopi_Goldberg_and_Dyslexia

Stephen Hawking: <http://www.hawking.org.uk/>

Charles Schwab:

<http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/1999/marapr/articles/schwab.html>

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Questions?

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