

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

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, 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 Build 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 AODA. Its purpose is to make an organization's operations accessible to people with disabilities 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.

### **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 or 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 other customers. 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 chance, options, benefits and results of your service 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.

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