

Speech or Language Disabilities

- Allow the person to complete what he/she is saying without interruptions.
- If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- Ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no.'
- If the person uses a communication board, symbols or cards, follow his/her lead.

Learning Disabilities

Examples include dyslexia (problems with reading and language-based learning); dyscalculia (problems with mathematics); and dysgraphia (problems with writing and fine motor skills.) Having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means they learn in a different way.

- Ask the person how he/she would like to receive information. For example, if you have written material, offer to read the information aloud.
- Be willing to explain something again — it may take a little longer for the person to process the information.
- Give extra time to complete a task.

Mental Health Disabilities

Mental health disabilities can cause changes in a person's thinking, emotional state and behaviour and can disrupt the person's ability to work. These changes may also affect the way the person interacts with others. With most mental health problems, the symptoms are not static and can improve or worsen over time. These disabilities are often invisible.

- Ask the best way you can help.
- Be patient and respectful. A person with a mental health disability may have difficulty concentrating.

Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Intellectual or developmental disabilities such as Down Syndrome can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate and live independently.

- As much as possible, treat persons with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They will appreciate respectful treatment.
- Speak slowly and use plain language.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Ask, "Do you understand this?" to check your communication

Assistive Devices

Assistive devices help a person with a disability do everyday tasks and activities. Some devices include:

- Laptops, pocket recorders, digital audio players.
- Hearing aid, teletypewriter (TTY) for people unable to speak or hear by phone.
- Mobility devices such as scooters, walkers or crutches, magnifiers, white cane.
- Communication boards (which use symbols, words or pictures to create messages), speech generating devices.

Personal Supports

A support person or service animal may accompany a person

with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs.

- Welcome the support person, but focus service and communication on the individual.
- Service animals are welcomed at UHN.
- Do not distract the service animals — this includes talking, petting or feeding.

Contact Us:

If you are interested in receiving more information or need this information in another format, please e-mail accessibility@uhn.ca and tell us what you require.

Diversity and Mediation Services on Accessibility



About this brochure:

This brochure serves as general information about Customer Service Standard under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA). More detailed information about the AODA is provided through on-line and in-class sessions.

Ensuring Accessible Service:

UHN is committed to creating and maintaining an accessible environment for all members of our community. In order to achieve this, we are working to increase accessibility and remove barriers which might restrict people with disabilities from fully accessing and receiving the services offered by UHN in a respectful and dignified manner.

A Disability...

May include past, present and perceived conditions. Disabilities range in type and severity and include physical, psychological, learning, intellectual, developmental, cognitive and medical disabilities, as well as hearing and vision loss.

The nature or degree of certain disabilities may render them “non-evident” to others. Chronic fatigue syndrome and back pain, for example, are not evident conditions. Episodic disabilities such as Epilepsy may remain hidden or non-evident and become evident during a seizure. Other disabilities may become apparent based on the nature of the interaction, such as when there is a need for oral communication with a person who is deaf, or there is a need for written communication with a person who has a learning disability. A disability might become apparent during interactions or become known when a disability accommodation is requested, or the disability might remain “non-evident” because the individual chooses not to disclose for personal reasons.

Promoting an accessible work and learning environment: Helpful Tips

Use respectful language

- Say “person with a disability” instead of “disabled person”
- Use “disability” – not “handicap”

Physical Disabilities

Some people may use assistive devices, while others may have conditions such as arthritis, or heart or lung conditions and may have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting for long periods.

- Ask before providing help. Persons with physical disabilities often have their own way of doing things.
- If the person uses a wheelchair or scooter, sit down beside him/her, to enable eye contact and reduce neck strain for longer interactions.
- Offer preferential seating.
- If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, make sure the person is comfortable before you leave him/her.

Hearing Loss

People could be ‘hard of hearing’, ‘deafened’, ‘deaf’ or ‘oral deaf’. Persons with hearing loss may or may not use sign language, hearing devices and/or speech-reading (also known as lip reading).

- Ensure you have their attention before speaking – discreetly wave at them or tap them on the shoulder if needed
- Try to find a quiet place to converse
- Face the person you are speaking to, do not stand in front of a window or light or block your face with objects like a pen, or glasses, when speaking
- If the person with a disability is accompanied by an interpreter, speak directly to the person and not the interpreter
- Speak clearly, and pace your speech normally – do not shout or over-pronounce things; offer to communicate using a pen & paper if needed.

Vision Loss

Few people with vision loss are totally blind. Some have limited vision, such as the loss of side, peripheral, or central vision.

- Don’t assume the person cannot see you.
- To get the person’s attention, address him/her directly; say your name; do not touch the person.
- Ask the person in which format he/she would like to receive information.
- When providing printed information, offer to read, summarize or describe it.
- Don’t be afraid to use words such as “see,” “read” or “look.”
- When offering to guide someone, hold out your elbow.
- Give clear, precise directions.

Deafblind

People who are deafblind have a combination of vision and hearing loss. Many persons who are deafblind will be accompanied by a person who helps with communicating. Many different ways may be used to communicate, including sign language, tactile sign language, Braille, speech and lip reading.

- Ask the person what will help the two of you to communicate.
- Many people will explain what to do, perhaps giving you an assistance card or note.
- Try to communicate your presence before you get too close in order not to alarm him/her.

Some persons have problems expressing themselves, or understanding written or spoken language.

- Don’t assume that a person who has difficulty speaking also has an intellectual or developmental disability

