

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)



An Introduction to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

An Introduction to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) is a summary only. It is not legal advice. If there is a conflict between this introduction and the AODA, the Act prevails.

Why does Ontario have this legislation? Ontario needs to be more accessible to people with disabilities. It is the right thing to do. It also makes good sense economically and socially. Ontario's population is getting older. Twenty years from now, 20 per cent of the people living in the province will probably have a disability of some kind. When barriers get in the way of people with disabilities participating fully in society as a result of their disabilities, everyone in Ontario loses. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) provides a way for Ontario to become barrier-free.

All businesses with at least one employee will have to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Customer Service Standard taking effect Jan. 1, 2012.

What do you need to do?

- develop customer service policies and procedures for serving people with disabilities;
- ensure policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity;
- have a policy on allowing people to use their own assistive devices (e.g. screen reader, cane, wheelchair, oxygen tank) to access your goods and services.
- communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that considers his or her disability;
- allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in areas of your business open to the public;

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- permit people with disabilities who rely on a support person to bring that individual with them while accessing your goods or services;
- post information about your policy regarding what fee, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability (in operations where admission fees are charged);
- let people know when facilities or services for people with disabilities (such as an elevator or accessible washroom) are out of order;
- train staff, volunteers and contractors to serve customers with disabilities; and
- let customers with disabilities provide feedback on how you met their needs, and establish a process to respond and take action on any complaints.

If you have *20 or more employees*, you must also:

- complete an online report on your compliance by the reporting deadline (to be determined);
- document in writing all policies and procedures on how you provide accessible customer service;
- notify customers that all documents required by the standard are available on request; and
- provide documents required under the standard in a format that takes into account the person's disability, if applicable.

* Requirements taken from Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services website.

For more information or to get this document in an alternate format, contact:

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario

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To read the Act, visit the e-law website of the Ontario government:

www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/05a11_e.htm.