

Accessible Service: Strategies and Requirements

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Ontario Reg. 429/07 and 191/11



www.accessibility.uwo.ca

The AODA and Western's Commitment to Accessibility

Western University is committed to increasing accessibility for persons with disabilities who study, visit, or work at Western. Accessibility is about identifying and removing barriers so persons with disabilities can receive service in a respectful way; for employees, accessibility is about creating a workplace where everyone is able to achieve their full potential.

The goal of the AODA is an accessible Ontario by 2025 through the development and implementation of accessibility standards. For public sector organizations like universities, schools, hospitals, and government offices, four standards are now law: (1) Customer Service, (2) Information and Communications, (3) Employment & (4) Transportation. Each person who interacts with students, alumni, visitors, retirees, other organizations, or other members of the public on behalf of Western is required to know and follow these standards.

The AODA works together with the Ontario Human Rights Code ("the Code"). The Code offers protection of rights, equal opportunity, and freedom from discrimination based on protected grounds. Under the Code, we have a duty to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability as fully and as promptly as possible in order to access services or, in the case of an employee, fulfill his/her role. In the event that, there is a conflict between the AODA and the Code, the Code has

General Principles of Accessible Service

Under the AODA, we are required to communicate with persons with disabilities in a manner that takes their disability into account, and make reasonable efforts to align our practices with four principles of accessible service:

- **Dignity** (person is able to maintain their self-respect and the respect of others)
- **Independence** (person is able to do things on their own without unnecessary help)
- **Integration** (person is able to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar ways as others)
- **Equal Opportunity** (person is able to have the same opportunity as others to benefit from the way we provide goods and services)

Consider this example:

Pat works in an administrative office in a faculty. Alice, a graduate student in Pat's faculty, has progressive loss of hearing. Alice's professor asks the class to attend a special lecture by a visiting researcher that will be held in a large lecture hall. Alice knows the lecture hall has an FM system and goes to Pat's office to ask where she can borrow a headset. Pat doesn't know of any service that provides headsets on campus, so Pat suggests that Alice ask a fellow student to take notes for her.

Will this solution honour the four principles of accessible service?

Turn the page to find out!



Western

Example Response: No. It would not meet the principles of accessible service. Here's why...

Alice would not be able to participate in the lecture in the same way others do, which compromise the principles of Integration and Equal Opportunity. Asking another student to take notes would not maintain Alice's Independence and Dignity.

So what should Pat do?

Pat should advise Alice to contact the office of Accessible Education in Student Experience to arrange for the loan of a headset. That way, Alice can take part in the lecture in the same way as everyone else. Pat's willingness to help and her knowledge of resources at Western contribute to a culture of accessibility.

Providing Accessible Service

Pay calm, individual attention to the other person

- Avoid making assumptions about a person's capabilities.
- Adjust posture/sit down as needed for face-to-face service

Ask "How May I help?"

- Usually, a person with a disability knows what works best for him/ her.
- Before ending your interaction, ask "Does this information answer your question?"

Communicate clearly and patiently to ensure shared understanding

- Allow the person to finish what he is saying without interrupting.
- Provide one piece of information at a time; repeat or rephrase as necessary.
- If you don't understand what's being said, don't pretend, ask again.
- As needed, ask if another method of communicating would be easier - e.g. always have a pen and paper available.

Treat the other person with respect

- Focus on the person as a unique individual.
- Pay attention to her dignity, independence, sense of integration and equality.

Try to see the world in terms of accessibility

- Take into account the ways persons with disabilities experience your services.
- Know the location of nearby ramps, elevators, automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.

Terminology

- Use "disability," not "handicapped" or "impaired."
- Say "person with a learning disability" rather than "learning disabled." Put the person first.

Telephone

- Concentrate on what's being said, not how the person's voice sounds.
- Address the person with a disability directly, even if the person is using an interpreter over the phone.
- If communication is very difficult, make arrangements to call a support person.

Physical Space

- Ensure the area is well-lit so faces are visible for lip-reading.
- Clear aisles, remove obstacles.
- Keep furniture layout the same over time, if possible.
- Reduce background noise.

Many areas at Western organize and

Accessible Event Hosting

host events for members of the Western community. When doing so:

- Add a standard line to invitations such as "Please contact (name) if you require information in an alternate format, or if any other arrangements can make this event accessible to you.
- In the invitation, describe the location of ramps, automatic doors, elevators, etc.
- Include a link to the campus accessibility map: <http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca/resources/maps/index.html>

How can I help someone who is having difficulty accessing my services?

- Ask the person how you may best help him or her.
- If you see that a service or facility isn't working, contact the unit responsible.
- Seek help from Western resources listed below.
- Inform the person of the Accessibility at Western **feedback process** if the issue is unresolved.

Resources

Advice Regarding Students:

Accessible Education (formerly Services for Students with Disabilities)
<http://success.uwo.ca/academics/sas/index.html> or
aew@uwo.ca ext. 82147

Advice Regarding Staff and Faculty:

Rehabilitation Services:
ext. 85578

Advice Regarding Teaching Practices:

Centre for Teaching and Learning
<https://teaching.uwo.ca>
ext. 84622

Alternative Format Inquiries:

web@uwo.ca

Building Inquiries (e.g. lights, ramps, elevators): Facilities Management:
fm-help@uwo.ca, 519-661-3304 or
ext. 83304

Advice on the Use of Service Animals in Labs or Other Sensitive Environments: Occupational Health and Safety
ext. 84741

Classroom Technology; Accessible Desks: Classroom Management Group (CMG):
<https://wts.uwo.ca/ctg/index.html>

Accessibility Feedback:

accessibility@uwo.ca
ext. 81458

AODA Requirements

1. Documentation of Accessibility Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures on providing goods or services to persons with disabilities are to be established and documented. Western's accessibility policy and guidelines can be found at:

<http://accessibility.uwo.ca/>

- Ask your supervisor if your faculty or department has additional practices and procedures.
- If you create new practices and/or procedures for providing service to persons with disabilities, work with your supervisor to document them.

2. Learning and Records of Training

Learning about accessibility is required for (a) all staff members, faculty, contractors, volunteers and others who interact with members of the public and (b) every person involved in the development of policies, practices, and procedures regarding goods and services (including education). Our public includes students, alumni, visitors, retirees and other organizations.

Learning is to take place for each person as soon as practicable after duties have been assigned and must occur whenever there are changes to policies, practices, and procedures.

Training records are to be kept. Western Human Resource Services tracks HR-sponsored in-person and on-line learning.

- Complete Western's online learning module "AODA-Accessibility in Service" or "AODA-Accessibility in Teaching" to fulfill this requirement

3. Assistive Devices

Allow persons with disabilities to use their assistive devices unless their use compromises academic integrity. Assistive devices include wheelchairs, walkers, canes, hearing aids, listening devices (e.g. FM systems), laptops with screen-reading software, etc.

- If your unit provides assistive devices or offers special practices for serving persons with disabilities, ensure you know how they work. Communicate the availability of the devices and practices to those you serve.

4. Support Persons

Support persons are to be welcomed provided the interaction does not compromise academic integrity. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or friend who provides physical assistance, personal care, interpretation, note taking, or other services to the person with a disability.

- Speak directly with the person with a disability, not the support person.
- Plan for support persons; provide space for them and provide both parties with written materials.
- Waive fees for support persons when possible. If a fee is charged, provide notice of the amount in advance.

5. Service Animals

Service animals are to be welcomed except in areas prohibited by law. Service animals include guide dogs, hearing alert animals, and animals who help calm anxiety or alert their owner to oncoming seizures. The owner is responsible for the care and control of the animal.

- If, by law, you believe the animal is not allowed in your area (e.g. health and safety reasons), review the situation with Occupational Health & Safety. You are required to work with the person with a disability to find an alternative way to provide assistance.
- Avoid touching or distracting a service animal – it is working and has to pay attention at all times.
- If you bring your pet to campus, you must ensure that it does not have contact with a service animal.

6. Notice of Service Disruptions

Disruptions in service are to be communicated for services/facilities usually used by persons with disabilities. Notify students of local disruptions (e.g. a cancelled class or department closure) directly via email, signage, and department websites. By law, notices must indicate:

1. the reason for the disruption (e.g. department meeting)
2. the expected duration
3. a description of alternate facilities or services, if available

Note: Broad disruptions at Western in physical facilities (e.g. elevators, buildings), ITS web and data services, and Campus Recreation are posted at: <http://www.accessibility.uwo.ca/resources/disruptions/index.html>

By request, the website can post disruptions for a department if you cannot directly contact those who will be affected. Use this in addition to your local communication.

7. Emergency Procedures

Information about emergency procedures, plans or public safety information is to be communicated to the public in an accessible format upon request.

- Ensure you are aware of the emergency plans your work area and provide this information in an accessible format when asked.

Employees who may need assistance in the event of an emergency due to a temporary or permanent disability, are to have an individualized safety plan.

- If you are a supervisor, with the employee's consent to do so, contact Western's Rehabilitation Services for guidance on creating a plan.

8. Procuring or Acquiring Goods or Services

Accessibility needs to be considered when purchasing or acquiring ALL goods or services (except where it's not practicable to do so).

Ensure the good or service is:

- Accessible (e.g. Can a person with a disability use the good or service?)
- Equitable (e.g. Can a person with a disability use the product or service as quickly and easily as a person without a disability?)
- Adaptable (e.g. Can a person configure the item to meet their specific needs?)

9. Accommodation in Recruitment, Assessment and Selection Processes

For any employment opportunities, organizations are required to notify applicants of the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities. If you are recruiting for a position at Western, you are to ask the following two questions (verbally or in writing) of all applicants you plan to interview:

1. "Are there any arrangements that can be made to make the interview accessible to you or do you require any accommodations?"
2. "Do you require any information in an alternative format?"

If an accommodation is requested due to a disability, you are to consult with the applicant to provide a suitable accommodation that takes into account his/her accessibility needs.

If you are ready to make an offer of employment, all successful applicants are to be notified, at the time of offer, of the organization's policies for accommodating employees with disabilities. To meet this requirement, at Western, offers of employment (made verbally or in writing) are to include the following statement:

"Western is committed to accommodating the needs of our employees with disabilities. Further information can be found in Western's Duty to Accommodate Guidelines located on Western's Accessibility website."

10. Individual Accommodation Plans

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, employers are required to accommodate the needs of employees with disabilities. Under the employment standard of the AODA, organizations are required to have a written process in place for the development of documented individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities.

Western's Rehabilitation Services department's website provides employees and supervisors with information on our accommodation process.

http://www.uwo.ca/hr/safety/ergo_rehab_documentation.html

11. Performance Management & Career Advancement

The needs of employees with disabilities are to be taken into account by organizational processes related to performance management and career development/ advancement opportunities.

If you supervise an employee with a disability, who has an accommodation plan:

- Review the accommodation plan to understand the accommodation needs of the employee and determine if the plan requires any revisions to support the individual's performance
- Provide all performance management related documents in an accessible format
- Learn what adjustments may be needed when the employee receives new responsibilities in a new or current role.

12. Accessible Websites and Web Content

All new websites and web content are to be designed in an accessible format that conforms with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. A "new website" is a site with a new domain name or a site that is undergoing a significant refresh.

Examples of a "significant refresh" could include a new look and feel to format or layout of the website, a change in how users navigate around it or a major update and change to the content of the website.

Note: By January 1, 2021, all *existing* websites and web content must be accessible.

Western's department of Communications and Public Affairs has provided templates and accessibility best practices on their website, which can be found at:

http://communications.uwo.ca/comms/web_design/accessibility/index.html

If you have questions related to web accessibility email web@uwo.ca.

13. Accessible Educational and Training Resources

Educational institutions are required to provide educational or training resources in an accessible format that takes into account the needs of persons with disabilities. This also applies to course and program information, and student records. Purchase educational materials that include an accessible or conversion-ready electronic format (e.g. textbooks). If such a format is not available, make timely arrangements to provide a comparable resource in an accessible format that meets the needs of an individual student.

In cases where institutions develop their own educational or training materials that are circulated to students, accessible or conversion-ready versions are to be available upon request in a timely manner.

Libraries that are part of educational institutions are to provide, procure or acquire resources in an accessible or conversion-ready format of print to a person with a disability upon request. Students should not be required to pay any additional fees for accessible versions of resources.

14. Accessible Formats

Organizations are to provide information or materials (printed or electronic) to persons with disabilities in an alternative format upon request in a manner that meets their needs.

Examples of Alternative Formats:

- Provide material in alternative electronic formats such as a well-formatted MS Word document or an accessible PDF (e.g. lecture notes, presentations and email attachments).
- Add captioning or audio description.
- Describe pictures or visual aid content.
- Provide accessible audio formats of material.
- Read aloud written information Provide materials in Braille format
- Provide materials in "Large Print" (Arial font, Minimum of 18 font size, Single spaced, Minimal use of italics, bold, underlining, parentheses and hyphenation, Non-glossy paper and wide margins)

15. Communicate Effectively

We are expected to communicate in a manner that takes into account a person's disability. This includes, but is not limited to print, verbal, and interpersonal communication used in delivering service.

Specific Tips for Interacting with Persons with Disabilities

1. Learning Disabilities

Having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means s/he learns in a different way. A few examples of learning disabilities include dyslexia (problems with reading and language-based learning); dyscalculia (problems with mathematics); and dysgraphia (problems with writing and fine motor skills).

- Ask the person how he 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 information.
- Give extra time to complete a task.

2. 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.

- Ask the best way you can help.
- Be patient and respectful. A person with a mental health disability may have difficulty concentrating.
- Avoid assuming a therapeutic role. If you are concerned about a person's mental health or emotional well-being, refer the individual to the appropriate service. Students can seek resources at: https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/crisis_counselling.html
Staff or Faculty can contact Rehabilitation Services at x85578.
- If the person is in crisis and you are concerned about his or her safety or the safety of a third party, call Western's 911 Emergency Services for medical or other assistance.

3. Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disability. Some people may use assistive devices. Others may have conditions such as arthritis, or heart or lung conditions and may have difficulty with moving, standing

- 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 facilitate eye contact and reduce neck strain for longer interactions.

Specific Tips Continued...

- Offer preferential seating.
- If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, avoid leaving the person in an awkward position, such as facing a wall.

4. Hearing Loss

There are different types of hearing loss.

Commonly used terms are hard of hearing, deafened, deaf and Deaf. Persons who are deafened or hard of hearing may use devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, or FM systems; they also may rely on lip reading. A person with little or no hearing may use sign language.

- Ensure you have his/her attention before speaking. Discreetly wave your hand if needed.
- Reduce background noise.
- Keep your face visible to enable lip reading. If the person is using an interpreter, speak directly to the person not the interpreter.
- Speak clearly, pacing your speech and pauses normally. Don't shout or over-pronounce your words.
- Offer to communicate in writing (pen and paper) as needed.

5. Deafblind

People who are deafblind have a combination of vision and hearing loss. Many persons who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervenor, 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.
- Suddenly touching a person who is deafblind can be alarming and should only be done in emergencies.

6. Vision Loss

Vision loss ranges from total blindness to partial or low vision that cannot be corrected fully with lenses.

- 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 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.

7. Speech or Language Disabilities

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.
- Allow the person to complete what he 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 her lead.

8. Intellectual Disabilities

Intellectual 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.
- Speak slowly and use plain language.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Ask "Is this clear?" to check your communication.

Resources

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Advice Regarding Staff and Faculty:

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Advice Regarding Teaching Practices:

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<https://teaching.uwo.ca>
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Building Inquiries (e.g. lights, ramps, elevators): Facilities Management: :
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ext. 83304

Advice on the Use of Service Animals in Labs or Other Sensitive Environments:

Occupational Health and Safety
ext. 84741

Classroom Technology; Accessible

Desks: Classroom Management Group (CMG):
<https://wts.uwo.ca/ctg/index.html>

Accessibility Feedback:

accessibility@uwo.ca
ext. 81458

Thank you for learning about and contributing to increased Accessibility at Western.

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