

Information for CPA Ontario Volunteers

The mission of Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario is to foster public confidence in the CPA profession by acting in the public interest and helping our Members excel.

In fulfilling our mission, CPA Ontario is committed to providing its services and programs in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Pursuant to the Ontario government's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the provision of accessible customer service to persons with disabilities is now the law. We hope that this summary will assist CPA Ontario volunteers in meeting our legal obligations for providing accessible customer service and in ensuring accessibility to all.

Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

It is CPA Ontario's goal to create an environment that is inclusive of all persons. CPA Ontario – through its employees and volunteer network – strives to maintain excellence in the provision of its services and programs to all, including persons with disabilities. If you are unsure of how to communicate with or help a person with a disability, ask him or her.

Assistive Devices

Persons with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices while accessing CPA Ontario's services and programs. Some of these devices may include wheelchairs and walkers, screen readers, recording machines, hearing devices and communication boards. If an assistive device poses a safety concern (such as blocking an emergency exit), we will attempt to make alternative arrangements. CPA Ontario volunteers will not interfere with the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities, unless permission from the owner is granted.

Communication

When communicating with persons with disabilities, do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. For example, an individual with hearing loss may prefer written communication.

If someone requests information in an alternate format, ask your CPA Ontario contact about the possibility of making the document available in the format requested.

Service Animals

Persons with disabilities accompanied by service animals are permitted access to all public areas unless prohibited by law. Volunteers will not interact with service animals unless permission is granted by the owner.

Support Persons

Persons with disabilities accompanied by a support person are permitted access to the premises together with their support person. Consent from the person with the disability is required when communicating private issues related to the person with the disability, in the presence of the support person.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

Notice must be provided if there is a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for customers with disabilities. This might include technology or any other method of providing service that people with disabilities use to access our programs, services and events. Notices must state the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and any available alternative options.

If you notice disruptions (such as an out-of-service elevator), notify on-site staff or your CPA Ontario contact.

Feedback Process

We encourage persons with disabilities and others to comment on the accessibility of our programs and locations. Feedback can be provided in person, by telephone, by mail or e-mail to CPA Ontario's office and at events. If someone offers you feedback, forward this to your CPA Ontario contact who will take appropriate action to respond.

If you have questions about providing accessible customer service to persons with disabilities, please discuss with your CPA Ontario contact.

Providing Accessible Customer Service to People with Disabilities: Helpful Tips for CPA Ontario Volunteers

October 2013

Make an effort to use positive and respectful language when referring to people with disabilities, and when communicating with people with disabilities. For example, put the person first. “People with disabilities” is more appropriate than “disabled people” or “the handicapped”. Most importantly, be patient.

People with disabilities	Tips
<p>People who have hearing loss</p> <p>People who have hearing loss may be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deaf (a person with profound hearing loss); • deafened (a person who has become deaf later in life); • hard of hearing (a person who has some hearing loss); or • oral deaf (unable to hear, but preferring to talk instead of using sign language) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a person has indicated s/he has hearing loss, ask how you can help and find out what is the preferred method of communication (e.g. pen and paper). • Use a gentle touch on the arm or wave of hand to attract a person’s attention before speaking. Don’t shout. • Make sure you are in a well-lit area where the person can see your face, mouth, and lips. Directly face the person at all times. • Use plain language and speak clearly when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. • Any personal matters (e.g. financial) should be discussed in a private room or quieter location.
<p>People with vision loss</p> <p>Visual disabilities reduce a person’s ability to see clearly. There are many degrees of vision loss (e.g. loss of peripheral vision, lack of central vision, or total vision loss). Some people with vision disabilities may use a service animal or a white cane; others may not.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t assume someone with vision loss can’t see you. • Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the person in a clear but natural voice and manner. • Never touch or address service animals. Similarly, never touch a person without asking permission (unless it’s an emergency). • Offer your elbow to guide the person and let them set the pace. • Don’t leave the person in the middle of the room, or without telling them. Show them to a chair, comfortable location, or building exit. • Ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud.
<p>People with physical disabilities</p> <p>Some individuals may use an assistive device like a wheelchair, cane, scooter, or crutches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the person directly when speaking or asking questions, not a companion or support person. • People with physical disabilities usually have their own way of doing things. Ask before you help. • Treat assistive devices as personal property. Don’t touch without permission, unless it’s an emergency. • Inform the person about accessible features in the surrounding area (e.g. automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.). • Remove obstacles and re-arrange furniture so there is clear passage.

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<p>People with intellectual, developmental and/or cognitive disabilities</p> <p>These disabilities can mildly or profoundly impact a person's ability to learn, communicate, do physical activities and/or live independently, such as Down Syndrome.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume what type of disability/disabilities a person may have, or what a person can or cannot do. • Use plain language and short sentences when giving information. Provide one piece of information at a time. Use different ways if necessary. • If you can't understand what's being said, don't pretend. Ask again.
<p>People with learning disabilities</p> <p>Learning disabilities are information processing disorders. They can affect how a person acquires, organizes, expresses, retains, understands or uses verbal or non-verbal information. One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information when reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask how you can best help, or offer help if a form needs to be completed by reading the questions and writing their responses. • Provide information in a way that best suits the individual (e.g. offer paper and pen or break down information into smaller, manageable chunks). • Speak naturally, clearly, and directly. • Take your time and be willing to explain something again if necessary.
<p>People with speech or language disabilities</p> <p>People with a speech disability may have difficulty pronouncing sounds and words, stuttering, and slurring of words. Numerous possible causes may be conditions like cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis. A person with a language disorder that may have been caused by a stroke or brain injury, may have trouble understanding others or sharing thoughts and ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume a person with speech impairment also has another disability. • Don't raise your voice. • Let the person speak in his or her own way. Do not interrupt or finish the person's sentences. Politely ask the person to repeat themselves if you don't understand what's been said. • Ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no" whenever possible.
<p>People with a mental health issue or mental illness</p> <p>For every person, mental health issues or mental illness are different. They are not as visible as other types of disabilities; some people may not show any signs at all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat the person with the same respect and consideration you would anyone else. • Interact based on your experience with the person and not on assumptions about the mental illness or a particular diagnosis. • You may need to explain things multiple times as memory and concentration may be affected (sometimes due to medication) • If the person appears to be in a crisis or is having difficulty controlling their symptoms, ask them to tell you the best way you can help.