

## ATTACHMENT B

### **INTERACTING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES GUIDELINES**

Following are a few simple tips to be kept in mind when interacting with persons with disabilities:

- Ask "May I help you?"
- Speak directly to the student or customer
- Take the time to understand their needs
- Avoid stereotypes - don't make assumptions
- Be patient

#### **1. RESPONDING TO SPECIFIC DISABILITIES**

##### **a) Deaf or Hard of Hearing:**

- Attract the person's attention before speaking by a gentle touch on the shoulder or a wave of your hand.
- Never shout to try to make yourself understood.
- People with hearing loss may use assistive devices including hearing aids, alternate telephone systems such as TTYs, sign language interpreters, various amplifiers, or a pen and paper.
- When addressing a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, make sure they can clearly see your face.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.

##### **b) Deafblind:**

(Persons who cannot see or hear to some degree)

- Persons who are deafblind may be accompanied by an intervenor, (a professional who helps with communicating). Identify yourself to the intervenor when you approach.
- When addressing the person with the disability, speak directly to them and not to their intervenor.
- The person may not necessarily be completely deaf and blind. Persons who are deafblind may have some residual vision and/or hearing.
- A person who is deafblind may be able to explain to you how to communicate with them.

##### **c) Intellectual/ Developmental:**

(Developmental or intellectual disabilities, ranging from mild to profound, can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, perform everyday activities, and live independently)

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language and make sure the person understands what you've said. You can be direct and ask: "Do you understand this?"
- Provide one piece of information at a time. Break down the information into simpler concepts but avoid exaggerated speech or gestures.
- You may want to ask if the information needs to be repeated.

*It may be difficult to recognize someone who has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way the person asks questions, or uses body language.*



**d) Learning:**

(A variety of disabilities that affect how a person processes information)

- Take your time – people with learning disabilities may require more time to process, understand and respond.
- Provide information in a way that best suits the student/customer. Using a pen and paper may help them review and absorb the information. Explain the information clearly and be prepared to repeat it.
- Be prepared to explain any materials you provide

*Learning disabilities can be associated with language-based learning, mathematics, or fine motor skills. The person may have difficulty reading material or processing information.*

**e) Mental Health:**

(Includes several disabilities ranging widely in severity including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder)

- Be confident and reassuring. As with all customers, listen carefully and focus on meeting the person's needs.
- If the person appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.
- If a person appears to show signs of a mental health disability, it may be helpful to keep in mind that their reactions are not connected to you personally as a service provider. The person is simply showing symptoms of mental illness.
- Try to help the person reduce their stress levels. e.g. A student may choose to take fewer courses each semester (a reduced course load) in order to reduce stress.

*Remember, not all disabilities are visible. Non-visible disabilities can be difficult to understand.*

**f) Physical/ Mobility:**

(A wide range of disabilities that restrict body movement to varying degrees)

- Physical disabilities may require people to use wheelchairs, walkers, canes, or other assistive devices.
- Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things
- Respect the person's personal space. Don't lean over them or on an assistive device.
- When speaking to a person in a wheelchair for more than a minute, sit or crouch down to their eye level.
- Never move devices such as canes or walkers, out of the person's reach.
- If you are assisting a person in a wheelchair, make sure they are ready to be moved and describe what you are going to do before moving them.
- Additionally, in the case of students:
  - Consider the physical access of your classroom. Make sure there are no items that would be in the way of a person who uses a wheelchair or walker.
  - If class activities are planned to be held outside, provide advance notice so transportation can be arranged. Ensure the location of the class activity is accessible.

**g) Speech/ Language:**

(Difficulty in communicating verbally such as word finding difficulties or stuttering)

- Be patient. Give the person the time they need to get their point across.



- A person with a severe speech or language disability may use a communication board or other assistive device. If possible, ask questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no".
- Don't interrupt or finish sentences. Give them time to express themselves.

**h) Vision Loss:**

- Don't assume that persons with this disability cannot see you at all. While most individuals with this disability have some residual vision, they may have trouble reading signs, locating landmarks, or seeing hazards.
- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them.
- Some persons may use a guide dog or white cane while others may simply need to use a magnifier to view written materials.
- Offer your elbow to guide the person and wait for permission before starting to move. If they accept, walk slowly.
- Identify landmarks or other details to help orient the person.
- Make written materials available in large print if required.
- In the case of students in a new classroom, guide them to a desk or a comfortable location. Let them know when you are ready to leave or walk away.

**i) Other Disabilities:**

(Other disabilities may be temporary or permanent, visible or non-visible include fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, arthritis, kidney disease, allergies, cardiovascular problems, cancer, diabetes, HIV infections and seizure disorders.)

In the case of students with these disabilities:

(there may be instances of absence due to the effects of medication, fatigue, and pain.)

- Provide access to a note taker. Allow break periods for rest and taking medication.
- Provide alternative methods of evaluation and allowances for absences for medical reasons such as rescheduling of tests or exams.

**2. SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:**

Persons with disabilities may require assistance in the form of service animals, support persons, or assistive devices.

**a) Service Animals are working animals.**

- It is best not to touch, call, or make eye contact with the animal to avoid distracting them from their job.
- Service animals are allowed into public places where their owner goes including restaurants, elevators, and offices. The owner of the service animal is responsible for the supervision of the animal at all times.
- Service animals assist people with a variety of disabilities. e.g. Dogs can help guide people with vision loss, alert a person who is deaf or hard of hearing to alarms, open automatic doors for the people with physical limitations, and warn people with medical disabilities, for example epilepsy, of impending seizures.

**b) Support Persons can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member, or a friend who assists with communications, mobility, personal care, or medical needs.**

- Always speak directly to the person with the disability first and not the support person.
- Ask if you are not sure which person is the support person.



- A support person normally accompanies a person with a disability anywhere they go. When discussing confidential matters, confirm with the person with the disability whether or not they want the support person to be present.

c) **Personal Assistive Devices** includes the following equipment.

- Wheelchair, walker, cane
  - Hearing aid, amplification device
  - Magnification devices
  - Keyboard and pointing device
  - Screen readers
  - Voice to text software programs
  - Digital recorders
- Personal assistive devices are part of the personal space of the people using them.
  - It is inappropriate and sometimes dangerous to lean on, reach over, or restrict the movement of an assistive device.
  - Ensure that the employee responsible knows how to operate the device properly when giving a Tyndale provided assistive device to a person with a disability.

### 3. **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students with disabilities may be eligible for academic accommodations. In order to receive accommodations, students must register with the Student Life Department.

- Students should be actively involved in accessing their accommodations.
- Students are responsible for notifying their professor in advance of a test or exam if they wish to use test accommodations.
- A faculty member may remind students to make arrangements for accommodations, however, the responsibility for doing so ultimately lies with the student.

**Note:** Academic accommodations are not part of the AODA Customer Service Standard but are mentioned here as they play an important role in creating accessible classrooms.