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Guidebook For Retailers



EnAbling Change for Retailers: Make your Store Accessible

Developed by



Prepared in
conjunction with



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About Retail Council of Canada

Retail Council of Canada (RCC) is the Voice of Retail™ in Canada representing more than 45,000 store fronts of all retail formats, including department, specialty, discount, and independent stores, and online merchants in general merchandise, grocery and drugs. Its membership represents over two thirds of all retail sales in Canada. RCC is a strong advocate for retailing in Canada and works with all levels of government and other stakeholders to support employment growth and career opportunities in retail, to promote and sustain retail investments in communities from coast-to-coast, and to enhance consumer choice and industry competitiveness. RCC also provides its members with a full range of services and programs including education and training, benchmarking and best practices, networking, advocacy, and industry information.

Retail Council of Canada acknowledges the support of the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility.



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Message from Retail Council of Canada



In Canada, over half the population is affected with some form of disability. You may have a friend or family member with a disability, or you may have a disability yourself. Because more than half of the country's population is affected by various disabilities, retailers need to ensure that their stores are meeting and exceeding the community's needs.

To ensure that your store is accessible, Retail Council of Canada has prepared this Guidebook, which has been funded by the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility. This Guidebook focuses on improving accessibility standards to benefit your customers, your employees and your overall business. As a retailer, you understand that treating all your customers with respect and courtesy is at the heart of excellent customer service, and your customers and staff deserve to be treated that way.

As you review this Guidebook, I urge you to gain a thorough understanding of how hiring people with disabilities can improve employee engagement and morale, and improve your business.

If you have any questions about making your store accessible for your customers or employees, please feel free to reach out to Sonny Brar, Vice President, Member Relations and Education, at sbrar@retailcouncil.org, or call toll-free at (888) 373-8245, ext. 230.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane J. Brisebois". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Diane J. Brisebois



Introduction

Did you know that over 50% of Canadians are affected with some form of disability every day?

Some individuals are born with disabilities; others will develop them over time. Anyone could become a person with a disability due to accident, illness, or age. The odds are that we already know someone or are working with someone who has a disability, but we just don't know it.

As the population of Canada ages, the number of people with disabilities will increase because the prevalence of disabilities increases as people age.

In addition, the person with a disability's family and friends understand the disability and the impact it can have on the lives of people close to them. This group has witnessed, firsthand, the "challenges" of interacting with mainstream infrastructure and attitudes that people with disabilities encounter in their daily lives.¹ As such, people are ready to support stores and businesses that accommodate their family and/or friend's disability and avoid businesses that don't.

This guidebook is a reference for retailers to ensure their store is accessible in all areas. The disability market in Canada is an untapped market. People with disabilities, along with their friends and loved ones, represent more than half the population with purchasing power that tops \$40 billion and \$1 trillion globally.²

¹Source: www.rod-group.com/content/rod-research/edit-research-2016-annual-report-global-economics-disability

² Source: www.rod-group.com/content/rod-research/edit-research-2016-annual-report-global-economics-disability



1. Accessible stores

1.1 People with disabilities: facts and figures

According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability Report (published in 2018)

- 6.2 million (1 in 5) Canadians, aged 15 years and over, have one or more disabilities.
- More than 1 in 10 youth in Canada have one or more disabilities.
- More than 4 in 10 Canadians with disabilities have a severe or very severe disability.
- Mental health-related and learning disabilities are the most common types of disabilities among youth.
- Youth with disabilities are at a higher risk of not attending school or becoming unemployed, and this increased with the severity of the disability.
- \$113.3 billion in annual income is generated by Canadians with disabilities.
- \$55.4 billion in annual disposable income is generated by Canadians with disabilities.³

³ Source: Canadian Survey on Disability Reports, 2017

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018002-eng.htm>

According to the *2016 Annual Report: The Global Economics of Disability, Return on Disability, 2016*, some of the global statistics on people with disabilities are as follows:

- 1.31 billion people have a recognized disability (which is equal to the population of China).
- \$1.971 trillion is the annual income of people with disabilities.
- \$1.2 trillion is the in annual disposable income of Canadians with disabilities.
- In Canada, the number of friends and family members of people with disabilities is 6.2 million.
- The disposable annual income of people with disabilities, and their friends and family is \$311.1 billion.⁴

Retailers in Canada must work to find new ways of creating value for this significant and influential community of people with disabilities.

1.2 Types of disabilities

Disabilities can be visible as well as non-visible. There are many kinds of disabilities, including physical, vision, hearing, mental health, developmental and learning disabilities.

Invisible vs. visible disabilities:

Visible disabilities are disabilities that are immediately evident. For example, one is able to notice if someone is using a wheelchair, reading Braille or communicating via sign language. Individuals with visible disabilities constitute less than 29% of the amount of people with disabilities.

Many disabilities are non-visible. Over 70% of people have non-visible disabilities. These can include learning, mental or cognitive disabilities.

Types of disabilities:

People with vision disabilities

Vision disabilities reduce a person's ability to see clearly. Few people with vision disabilities are completely blind. Many have limited vision, such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some people can see the outlines of objects, while others can see the direction of light.

Vision disabilities can restrict your customers' ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. Sometimes, it can be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Some of your customers with vision disabilities may use a guide dog or white cane, while others may not.

⁴ Source: www.rod-group.com/content/rod-research/edit-research-2016-annual-report-global-economics-disability

People with hearing disabilities

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. Remember, customers who are deaf or hard of hearing may require assistive devices while communicating, such as a hearing aid.

People who are deaf-blind

A person who is deaf-blind cannot see or hear to some degree. This results in greater difficulties to access information and manage daily activities. People who are deaf-blind might be accompanied by an intervenor: a professional who helps with communicating.

Intervenors are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may act as a guide and interpret for their client.

People with physical disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting. In some instances, it may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities

A person with an intellectual or developmental disability may have difficulty doing many things that most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you may notice the way the person acts, asks questions or uses body language.

People with learning disabilities

The term "learning disability" describes a range of information-processing disorders that can affect how a person acquires, organizes, retains, understands or uses verbal or non-verbal information. Examples include dyslexia (difficulties with reading and related language-based learning), dyscalculia (difficulties with mathematics), and dysgraphia (difficulties with writing and fine motor skills). It's important to know that having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means that they learn in a different way.

People with mental health disabilities

It's likely that you won't know that a customer has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. You might not be able to know by seeing them in person. Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, and bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.

People with speech or language disabilities

Some people have difficulties communicating because of their disability. Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions can make it difficult to pronounce words or can cause slurring or stuttering. They may prevent the person from expressing themselves or understanding written or spoken language. Some people who have severe speech or language disabilities may use communication boards or other assistive devices.



1.3 Legislation

In Ontario, making your store accessible is law. Businesses must provide people with disabilities with the right customer service so that they can access their goods, services and facilities. Staff must also be trained in providing accessible customer service.⁵ Other provinces in Canada that are following what Ontario has accomplished include Manitoba, British Columbia and Nova Scotia.

In Ontario are two branches of laws:

Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) (enacted in 1962): This code is administered by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The Code is an individual, complaints-based legislation that addresses discrimination. The Code requires organizations to accommodate people with disabilities to the point of undue hardship to demonstrate due diligence.

According to the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)](#) and its [Integrated Accessibility Standards](#), Ontario's accessibility law serves as the province's primary legislative authority for accessibility. The law applies to all organizations with one or more employees in Ontario (public, private and not-for-profit).

For more information on Ontario Accessibility Laws, please visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>

For more information on other provinces, please visit the specific province's website on accessibility.

In Ontario, making your store accessible is law. Other Canadian provinces that are following what Ontario has accomplished include Manitoba, British Columbia and Nova Scotia.

⁵ Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-what-you-need-to-know>



1.4 Skilled talent pool

In Canada, the talent market is shrinking. Retail workers are getting older and there are fewer skilled people in the current labour pool to fill jobs as they become available.

The 2016 Canadian Census indicated an upcoming labour shortage as Canada’s population ages. Retailers must look for talent everywhere in the community and be more open about who they will hire. People with disabilities are part of an untapped market: people with various skills at a variety of levels.

Statistics: People with disabilities and employment

	General Population	With Disability
Educational Attainment Above High-School	80.1%	40.7%
Unemployment Rate	7.6%	16%
Employment Rate	72.8%	59.4%
Labour Market Participation Rate	66.4%	52.7%
Average Employment Income	\$44,864	\$39,710

Source: Canadian Survey on Disability Reports, 2017

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018002-eng.htm>

Myths about making employment practices more accessible

There are a lot of myths about on hiring people with disabilities. Here are a few:

- Employees with disabilities won't do as good a job as other employees.
- People with disabilities can't be fired or disciplined.
- A person with a disability won't be reliable and will miss a lot of work.
- Employees with disabilities are more likely to get injured on the job.
- There will be a lot of turnover among employees with disabilities.

Hiring people of with disabilities can benefit business

Employment practices that are inclusive for people with disabilities are good for business and the community. People with disabilities – along with their friends and loved ones – represent more than half the population,⁶ with a buying power that contributes \$40 billion domestically and \$1 trillion globally.

Research indicates that retailers who invest in accessible employment practices report a number of business benefits:

- Better job retention/lower turnover: Statistics Canada research indicates that organizations with accessible employment practices have a 72% higher retention rate among people with disabilities.
- Higher attendance: 86% of people with disabilities rate average or better on attendance than their colleagues without disabilities.
- Enhanced job performance and work quality: 90% of people with disabilities rate average or better on job performances compared to their colleagues without disabilities.
- 75% of Ontario small- and medium-sized businesses that employ people with disabilities report that they meet or exceed workplace expectations.
- Better safety records: 98% of people with a disability rate average or better in work safety than their colleagues without disabilities.⁷

Another misconception of hiring a person with disabilities is that the additional required resources (Braille keyboard, TTY phone, etc.) are expensive. However, the cost to retailer for to obtain additional resources for a person with a disability is usually less than \$500.00.

People with disabilities – along with their friends and loved ones – represent more than half the population, with a buying power that contributes \$40 billion domestically and \$1 trillion globally.

⁶ Source: www.rod-group.com/content/rod-research/edit-research-2016-annual-report-global-economics-disability

⁷ Source: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018002-eng.htm>

2. Accessible customer service

Treating all customers with respect and courtesy is at the heart of excellent customer service. All customers deserve to be treated equally and with dignity and respect.

What retailers can do to ensure that all customers are properly served.

- If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "May I help you?" Your customers with disabilities may know whether they need help and how you can best provide it.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to their support person or companion.
- Avoid stereotypes and don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities the person has. Remember that your customers are not required to tell you what disabilities they have.
- Take the time to get to know your customer's needs and focus on meeting those needs just like you would with any customer. Some disabilities are not visible.
- Be patient, optimistic and willing to find a way to communicate. People with some disabilities may take longer to understand and respond. A good start is to listen carefully.
- If you can't understand what your customer is saying, just politely ask again.
- Don't touch or address service animals – they're working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission unless it's an emergency.
- Make sure your business has emergency procedures for customers with disabilities and that you fully understand these procedures.

Speak directly to the person with a disability, not to their support person or companion.

Avoid stereotypes and don't make assumptions about what type of disability or disabilities the person has. Remember that your customers are not required to tell you what disabilities they have.



What retailers need to know about serving customers with vision disabilities

Vision disabilities reduce a person's ability to see clearly. Few people with vision disabilities are totally blind. Many have limited vision, such as tunnel vision (where a person has a loss in peripheral or side vision) or a lack of central vision (they cannot properly see straight ahead). Some people can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Vision disabilities can restrict your customers' abilities to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some of your customers may use a guide dog or white cane, but others may not. Sometimes, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability.

Types of assistance that customers with vision disabilities might use:

- Guide dog
- White cane
- Magnifier
- Large print
- Braille
- Support person

What you can do:

- Don't assume the individual can't see you.
- Identify yourself when you approach your customer and speak directly to them.
- Speak naturally and clearly.
- Never touch your customer without asking permission, unless it's an emergency.
- Offer your elbow to guide the person. If they accept, walk slowly, but wait for permission before doing so.
- If you're guiding your customer towards stairs:
 - Let them know if they have to walk up or down.
 - Approach the stairs head on, not at an angle and come to a full stop in front of the stairs.
 - Make sure your customer is on the rail side and allow them to take hold of it.
 - Let them find the first step and then start to climb or descend the stairs.
 - Try to be one step ahead and always announce the last step.
 - Identify landmarks or other details to orient your customer to the environment around them.
- Don't touch or address service animals; they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- If you're giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you're approaching a door or an obstacle, say so.
- Don't leave your customer in the middle of a room. Show them to a chair or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Don't walk away without saying "Goodbye."

Don't touch or address service animals; they are working and have to pay attention at all times.



What you need to know about serving customers who are deaf or hard of hearing

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. Remember, customers who are deaf or hard of hearing may require assistive devices (e.g. hearing aids) while communicating.

Types of assistive devices that customers who are deaf or hard of hearing might use:

- TTY (Telephone Teletype)
- Relay service
- Hearing aid
- Personal amplification device (e.g. Pocket Talker)
- Phone amplifier
- Sign Language interpreter
- Service animal
- Paper and pen

What you can do:

- Get the customer's attention before speaking. The best way is with a gentle wave of your hand.
- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where your customer can see your face.
- Don't put your hands in front of your face while speaking as some people may understand by reading your lips.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier; for example, using a pen and paper.
- Be patient if you are using a pen and paper to communicate.
- American Sign Language (ASL) may be your customer's first language. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.

- Look at and speak directly to your customer. Address your customer, not the interpreter.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you are being understood.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- Discuss any personal (e.g. financial) matters in a private setting to avoid people overhearing.

What you need to know about serving customers who are deaf-blind

A person who is deaf-blind cannot see or hear to some degree. This results in greater difficulties for accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deaf-blind will be accompanied by an intervenor: a professional who helps with communicating. Intervenors are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.



Types of assistance that customers who are deaf-blind might use:

- TTY (Telephone Teletype)
- Large print
- Braille
- Support person, such as an intervenor
- Service animal
- Print on paper (using black felt marker on non-glossy white paper or using portable white and black boards)
- Communication boards

What you can do:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A customer who is deaf-blind is likely to explain how to communicate with them, or give you an assistance card, or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Speak directly to your customer as you normally would, not to the intervenor.
- Identify yourself to the intervenor when you approach your customer who is deaf-blind.
- Don't touch or address service animals; they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission unless it's an emergency.

Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people who are deaf-blind have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.

What you need to know about serving customers with physical disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Types of assistance that customers with physical disabilities might use:

- Mobility device (wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches)
- Elevator
- Lift
- Support person

What you can do:

- Speak naturally and directly to your customer, not to their companion or support person.
- Try to put yourself at your customer's eye level by sitting, kneeling or standing at an increased distance if you are having a long conversation.

- Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things.
- Be patient. Customers will identify their needs to you.
- Respect your customer's personal space. Do not lean over them or on their assistive device.
- Don't move items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of the person's reach.
- Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission unless it's an emergency. If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to wait for and follow the person's instructions.
- To make sure your customer is ready to be moved, describe what you are going to do before you do it. Avoid uneven ground and objects.
- Never leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
- Let your customer know about accessible features in the immediate environment (e.g. automatic doors, accessible washrooms, elevators, ramps, etc.).
- Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to ensure clear passage.

Ask before you help. People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Don't touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission unless it's an emergency. If you have permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to wait for and follow the person's instructions.

What you need to know about serving customers with mental health disabilities

You may not know that your customer has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, and bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.

Some of the most common features of a mental health disability are listed below. An individual may have difficulty with one, several or none of these:

- Inability to think clearly
- Hallucinations (e.g. hearing voices, seeing or feeling things that aren't there)
- Depression or acute mood swings (e.g. from happy to becoming depressed with no indication of the change)
- Poor concentration, difficulty remembering
- Apparent lack of motivation.

If someone is having difficulty controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help them out. Be calm and professional and let the customer tell you how you can help.

You may not know that your customer has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, and bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.

Types of assistance that customers with mental health disabilities might use:

- Support person
- Service animal

What you can do:

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with your customer to meet their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.

What you need to know about serving customers with intellectual or developmental disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit the person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way the person acts, asks questions or uses body language.

As much as possible, treat your customers with intellectual or developmental disabilities like anyone else. They may understand more than you think they do, and they'll appreciate you treating them with respect.

Types of assistance that customers with intellectual or developmental disabilities might use:

- Support person
- Service animal
- Communication board
- Speech generating device

What you can do:

- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language and speak in short sentences.
- Make sure your customer understands what you've said.
- If you can't understand what's being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Be supportive and patient.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or support person.

Treat your customers with intellectual or developmental disabilities like anyone else. They may understand more than you think they do, and they'll appreciate you treating them with respect.

What you need to know about serving customers who have learning disabilities

The term “learning disability” describes a range of information processing disorders that may affect how a person acquires, organizes, retains, understands, or uses verbal or non-verbal information.

Examples include dyslexia (difficulties with reading and related language-based learning), dyscalculia (difficulties with mathematics), and dysgraphia (difficulties with writing and fine motor skills).

It’s important to know that having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means that they learn in a different way.

Learning disabilities can result in many different communication difficulties for people. They can be subtle (i.e. having difficulty reading) or more pronounced, but they can interfere with your customer’s ability to receive, express or process information. You may not know that a person has a learning disability unless you are told. Be supportive and patient.

It’s important to know that having a learning disability does not mean a person is incapable of learning. Rather, it means that they learn in a different way.

Types of assistance that customers with learning disabilities might use:

- Support person
- Tape recorders/mini pocket recorders
- Large print
- Communication board
- Speech generating device

What you can do:

- When you recognize that a customer with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can help.
- Speak naturally and clearly, and directly to your customer.
- Take some time; people with learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Try to provide information in a way that works best for your customer. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- Be patient and willing to explain something again if needed.

What you need to know about serving customers with speech or language impairments

Some people have problems communicating because of their disability. Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult to pronounce words or may cause slurring or stuttering. They also may prevent the person from expressing themselves or understanding written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Types of assistance that customers with speech or language impairments might use:

- Communication board
- Speech-generating device
- Support person
- Pen and paper

What you can do:

- Don't assume that just because a person has one disability, they also have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking, it doesn't mean they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well.
- Ask your customer to repeat the information if you don't understand.
- Ask questions that can be answered "yes" or "no" (if possible).
- Be patient and polite. Give your customer the time they need to get their point across.
- Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences. Wait for them to finish.
- Be patient, respectful and willing to find a way to communicate.

Don't assume that just because a person has one disability, they also have another. For example, if a customer has difficulty speaking, it doesn't mean they have an intellectual or developmental disability as well.

What you need to know when visiting or delivering to your customers with disabilities at home

- Confirm the details of your arrival time in advance. Don't arrive unexpectedly.
- Be patient. You may need to wait a few moments for your customer to open the door.
- Introduce yourself clearly. Some customers may not be able to read identification cards and may want you to use a password. Check before you visit.
- Keep your customer informed of what you're doing.
- If you need to move some of your customer's possessions, make sure that you leave the house exactly as it was when you arrived. For example, someone with a vision disability will expect that their furniture is in the same place and could trip because you moved the sofa.
- If you can't complete the job, clearly explain what will happen next. Make another appointment and leave a contact number in case there are problems.

What you need to know when talking to customers with disabilities over the phone

- Speak naturally, clearly and directly.
- Don't worry about how the person's voice sounds. Concentrate on what's being said.
- Be patient, don't interrupt and don't finish your customer's sentences.
- Give your customer time to explain or respond.
- Don't try to guess what your customer is saying. If you don't understand, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- If you're not certain what your customer said, just repeat or rephrase what you heard.

- If a telephone customer is using an interpreter or a Relay Service, speak naturally to the customer, not to the interpreter.
- If your customer has difficulty communicating, plan to call back when it's convenient to speak with someone else.

2.1 Barriers to accessible customer service

When you think about making your stores services accessible, it's important to be aware of both visible and invisible barriers. A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from fully participating in the social or economic life of our communities.

Architectural or structural barriers may result from the design of a building, such as stairs, doorways, hallway widths and even room layout.

Information and communications barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low-colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials, and the use of language that is not clear or easy to understand can all cause difficulty.

Technology, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can present barriers.

Systemic barriers can occur through policies and procedures. These include any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities. For example, denying access to a person with a service animal.

Attitude is the one thing all of us are responsible for since it relates to the way people think or behave. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or non-visible disabilities. Or they tend to form certain ideas about them because of stereotypes or a lack of understanding about different types of disabilities. For example, they may believe that people with disabilities are helpless and can't do anything for themselves. Some people may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering help, or they ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether.

2.2 Support persons

A customer who comes into the store may have either a support person or service animal with them. Here are a few guidelines for dealing with people with disabilities who use support persons or animals.

What does Ontario's customer service standard say about support persons?

The customer service standard says that providers must allow people with disabilities who use a support person to bring their support person with them while accessing goods or services. If an admission fee is usually charged, the provider must give notice ahead of time if an admission fee will be charged for the support person.

What is a support person?

Support people help those with various types of disabilities. A support person is a trusted individual chosen by a person with a disability who helps with communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs, or with access to goods and services. Personal care needs may include physically transferring the individual from one location to another, or helping with eating or using the washroom. Medical needs may include monitoring someone's health or providing injections.

The support person could be a paid personal support worker, a friend or a family member. They do not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

The support person could be a paid personal support worker, a friend or a family member. They do not necessarily need to have special training or qualifications.

Types of support persons

- Communication Support Attendant: Communication support attendants help people with intellectual disabilities access information presented orally at meetings, conferences and public events.
- Intervenor: Intervenor are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.
- Personal care attendant: A personal care attendant accompanies a person with a disability who cannot travel independently. A personal care attendant may also provide services and assistance to the person with a disability.
- Sign Language Interpreter: A sign language interpreter facilitates communication between people who can hear and people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

How do you serve a customer who has a support person?

- A customer with a disability might not introduce their support person. If you are not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting your goods or services or simply ask.
- Once you have determined who your customer is, speak directly to them, not to their support person.
- Remember that under Ontario's Customer Service Standard, your store is required to have policies, practices and procedures in place about providing accessible customer service. Make sure you know what they are.
- Remember that customers with disabilities who have support persons must be permitted to use them while accessing your goods or services. Make sure you know what your store's policy is regarding admission fees for the support person.

2.3 Guide dogs and other service animals

What Does the Ontario's Customer Service Standard Say?

The Customer Service Standard says a person with a disability must be allowed to enter the public areas of a provider's premises with their guide dog or service animal, except when another law specifically states animals must be excluded.

What is a service animal?

Service animals are used by people with many different kinds of disabilities. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who are blind, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety.

According to Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides, people may also use service animals to assist with seizure response, Autism assistance, Diabetes and other issues.

How do you serve a customer with a service animal?

1. Speak directly to your customer and don't treat the animal as a pet.
2. Don't touch or address service animals; they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
3. Don't make assumptions about the animal. Not all service animals wear special collars or harnesses. If you're not sure whether the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.
4. Remember that your customer is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. You are not expected to provide care or food for the animal. However, you should be willing to provide water for the animal if your customer requests it.

Don't make assumptions about the animal. Not all service animals wear special collars or harnesses. If you're not sure whether the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.



5. Be prepared to let your customer know where to walk the service animal. Know your local regulations about picking up after the animal and offer a garbage bag if necessary.

How does a retailer serve a customer if their animal is not allowed in your store's premises because of law?

If an animal is not allowed on your organization's premises because of another law, a retailer still must make sure that you provide the goods or services to the person with a disability.

Explain to the person why the animal is not allowed, and offer another way to provide them with the goods or services.

If the person with the service animal agrees, this might mean leaving the animal in a secure area where it is allowed by law. It might also mean offering to serve the person outside or in another location where the animal is allowed.

The sales associate needs to consider the needs of the person with a disability if his or her service animal is not allowed. For example, a person with a vision disability might need someone to guide them if their service animal is not allowed. The important thing is to explore other ways to serve the customer when their person's service animal is not allowed.



2.4 Assistive devices

What does Ontario's Customer Service Standard say about assistive devices?

The Customer Service Standard states that a retailer must provide instructions for how to use assistive equipment or devices located on the premises to help your customers with disabilities access goods or services.

What is an assistive device?

An assistive device is anything that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities such as moving, communicating and lifting. It helps the person maintain his or her independence at home, at work and at play.

Here are some examples of assistive devices:

- wheelchairs and scooters
- Telephone Teletype (TTY) and Relay Service
- canes, crutches and walkers
- communication boards (e.g. Bliss board)
- elevators and lifts
- hearing aids and amplification devices
- magnifiers
- automatic door openers

Many of a retailer's customers with disabilities will have their own personal assistive devices such as wheelchairs, scooters or walkers. Never touch or handle an assistive device without permission, unless it's an emergency.

How does a retailer serve a customer who requires an assistive device?

Many of a retailer's customers with disabilities will have their own personal assistive devices such as wheelchairs, scooters or walkers. Never touch or handle an assistive device without permission, unless it's an emergency.

If a retail employee has permission to move a person in a wheelchair, remember to:

- Wait for and follow the person's instructions.
- Make sure the customer is ready to be moved.
- Describe what you're going to do before you do it.
- Avoid uneven ground and objects.

- Never leave the person in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.
- Refrain from moving items or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your customer's reach.
- Respect your customer's personal space. Do not lean over him or on his assistive device.
- Let your customer know about accessible features in the immediate environment (e.g. automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to ensure clear passage.

Depending on the kind of goods or services offered, a retailer may offer specific types of assistive devices to your customers with disabilities. Be sure to find out how to operate devices that can assist your customers in accessing your goods or services, such as lifts, TTY or motorized scooters.

Know how to operate assistive devices on your premises.

The store may offer specific assistive devices (e.g. retractable wheelchair ramps) to your customers with disabilities, depending on the type of goods and services you provide. The assistive devices your business organization provides will come with operation manuals. Make sure the retail employees know how to operate all assistive devices on your premises.

What are some commonly used assistive devices?

Depending on a person's disability, there are a variety of assistive devices that some of your customers may use. Many will be personal assistive devices, while others may be provided by your organization.

The following are examples of some you may come across when serving customers with disabilities:

Vision:

- White cane (to help with wayfinding)
- Magnifier (to magnify print and images)

Hearing:

- TTY (to help with telephone communication)
- Relay system (to help with telephone communication)
- Hearing aid (to amplify sounds)
- Personal amplification devices (to amplify sounds closest to the listener while reducing background noise)
- Tablet or Cell Phone (to help with communication)

Physical:

- Mobility devices, such as wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches (to help with mobility)
- Elevator (to lower or elevate a person to another floor in a building)
- Lift (to lower or elevate a person using a mobility device)
- Automatic door opener (to open doors for people using a mobility device)

Learning:

- Tablet or smartphone (to help with organizing and keeping on schedule)
- Tape recorders (to record information for future playback)

Intellectual/developmental:

- Communication boards (e.g. Bliss board)
- Speech-generating devices
- Mobility device such as wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane crutches (to help with mobility)
- Tablet or smartphone (to help with organizing and keeping on schedule)



2.5 Customer service policy

A customer service policy outlines a retailer's roles, responsibilities and legal obligations for providing accessible customer service to persons with disabilities. In Ontario, it is law that each store must have their policy accessible to anyone that asks to see it.

Here is an example of a customer service policy:

Customer Service Policy

Our Service Commitment

(Company Name) ___ is committed to providing all customers with a remarkable shopping experience. Each and every time you visit our stores, you will be greeted as a friend, treated with respect and offered a complete solution to your specific needs. All of our efforts are focused on ensuring your long-term satisfaction.

At ___ (Company Name) ___, we value dignity, respect, relationships, high ethical standards and equal access for all customers. These values are reflected in our policies, operations and behaviours. When dealing with our staff, you can expect them to be friendly, respectful, enthusiastic, attentive to your needs and entirely focused on your best interests.

We will also ensure that our shopping experience is integrated and accessible to all people with disabilities. Active steps have been taken to reasonably accommodate the needs of customers with disabilities by offering services and facilities that provide equal opportunities for participation. At _____, anticipating the diverse requirements of shoppers visiting our stores and offering assistance wherever possible is our priority.

Customer Service Standards

1. Your Shopping Experience

When visiting our stores, you will feel welcomed. Our staff will be friendly, enthusiastic and very knowledgeable about our products and services. If you need help, we are available to assist you. We will thank you for trusting us with your business and we invite you to return.

2. Price Adjustments

If the item(s) you bought from us is subsequently reduced in price within (# of days), we will offer you a one-time price adjustment in the form of (store credit), (original method of payment) when an original receipt is presented.

3. Refunds or Exchanges

We are committed to your complete satisfaction. If you are unhappy with your purchase, simply return any unused or defective items in the original vendor packaging within (# of days) and we will be pleased to offer you a (full refund), (exchange) or (store credit) for the price you paid.

4. Resolving Problems

Despite our best efforts, sometimes problems can occur. Please report all issues to one of our staff; we pledge to handle issues in the following manner:

You will be greeted warmly and asked for all relevant details.

The person you speak to will try to resolve the issue right away. If additional assistance is required, the store manager will be called immediately.

If our service has been unsatisfactory in any way, we will apologize and do our best to provide you with an acceptable solution.

All customer issues will be resolved within (“x” period).

Our staff will be friendly, courteous, calm and supportive at all times.

5. Communication

From initial greeting through the sales process and follow up, our communications will demonstrate our commitment to serve customers with disabilities.

6. Assistive Devices

Our customers are welcome to use their own personal assistive devices to access our merchandise and services. In addition, we offer the following facilities and assistance during their visit to our stores:

7. Support People and Service Animals

Support people and guide dogs or other service animals are also welcome to accompany our customers with disabilities while shopping in our stores. Wherever service animals are prohibited by law, we will provide personal assistance during the store visit.

8. Interruption of Services

If we are temporarily unable to offer any special facilities or services that assist customers with disabilities, we will immediately provide notice of this interruption and the anticipated time when these services will be resumed.

9. Training

Our entire staff receives ongoing and documented training in order to properly communicate with and provide assistance to people with various disabilities. This includes accommodating support personnel and assistive devices or animals, as well as resolving any challenges that may arise during the shopping experience. We are committed to ensuring that our merchandise and services are available to all.

10. Customer Feedback

We actively encourage the participation of all shoppers in our feedback process. Your comments, suggestions and compliments will play a central role in our ongoing store planning processes. Any concerns brought to our attention will be addressed quickly and fairly (please see “Resolving Problems” above). In addition to sharing your feedback in person, you may also contact us by telephone at _____, by mail at _____ or electronically at _____.

11. Handout

We are pleased to offer a summary of our customer service and accessibility policies. To receive your copy in a format that is most useful to you, please contact _____.

If you feel that these standards have not been maintained in your situation, please feel free to let us know by calling _____.

Your business means everything to us!

This Customer Service Policy template is available for download on Retail Council of Canada’s website at: <https://www.retailcouncil.org/resources/accessibility/accessible-customer-service/>

3. Accessible recruitment and retention

In Canada, the talent market is shrinking. Retail workers are getting older and there are fewer skilled people in the current labour pool to fill jobs as they become available.

Retailers must look for talent in every corner in the community and be more open about who they hire. People with disabilities are part of an untapped market: people with a variety of skills at a variety of levels.

3.1 Job posting notices

When posting jobs internally or externally, a retailer should include a statement in job postings that, when requested, accommodations will be made to support applicants with disabilities during the interview/assessment process. Be sure to include the statement within the career section of the retailer's website.

Each job posting must notify applicants that accommodations will be made available to support applicants during the interview/assessment process. It is recommended that this information be posted in an obvious place on a document, in bold text.

Additionally, this statement could be posted in the career section of a retailer's webpage or intranet.

While retail employees will be able to access these statements, if they apply to an internal posting, it's important to communicate to all employees through email, staff meetings, and company newsletters that accommodations will be made available to applicants with disabilities should they request specific accommodations. The reason for this is to:

- Ensure that retail employees are aware of accommodations should they make a request for them while applying.
- Inform an outside party of an available position. A retail applicant who is informed about the availability of a retailer's accommodation policy may increase the number of applicants as well as the quality of job seeking candidates.

When posting jobs internally or externally, a retailer should include a statement in job postings that, when requested, accommodations will be made to support applicants with disabilities during the interview/assessment process.

Here are a few examples you can use for your job postings:

Sample 1:

"Company Name is committed to providing accommodations to applicants with disabilities. We will work with applicants selected for the interview/assessment process to accommodate all accessibility needs."

Sample 2:

"Company Name is an equal opportunity employer. If selected for an interview, please advise our Human Resources team if you require accommodation during the interview/assessment process."

Sample 3:

"Accommodation is a shared responsibility and we will work with our Applicants, who let us know of their accommodation needs, as per the Company Name Employment Accommodation policy."

3.2 Reviewing job descriptions

Prior to posting, job descriptions should be reviewed to ensure that:

- They clearly state requirements of the job.
- The duties and responsibilities have been reviewed and are current.
- They ensure that the stated requirements are necessary for the job.
- They determine if there are “bona fide”* job requirements.

Because the elements of a job description may change over time, when starting the hiring process, it is wise to review a job description to make sure its details are current. A review may result in the addition or removal of responsibilities that may be either essential or non-essential to the performance of the job.

When preparing for the hiring process, a retailer should check for:

- Language that clearly states the requirement of the job in question. Avoid using jargon and short forms in the posting.
- Consider if the tasks to be completed as part of the job have changed, and if so, modify the job description accordingly.
- Ensure that requirements in the description are actually necessary to perform job tasks. As an example, if the retailer is posting a cashier position, and the job description states that they must be able to lift 25 pounds, evaluate whether this is necessary to perform the key tasks in the job description itself.
- On the other hand, if the job posting is for a retailer’s shipping and receiving department, all employees working in the department must be able to unload truck trailers using a pump cart due to limitations on a forklift while receiving. The employee must now be able to generate 25 pounds of lateral pulling force to the pump cart to do the essential task. Consider this a “bona fide” job requirement and note it within the job description.

When preparing for the hiring process, a retailer should check for language that clearly states the requirement of the job in question. Avoid using jargon and short forms in the posting.

3.3 Job requirements

Bona fide* occupational requirements are defined as “Necessary for proper and efficient performance of a job.”⁸

It’s necessary to give serious consideration as to whether a bona fide job requirement must remain in a job description. A bona fide job requirement does not necessarily mean that an applicant with a disability who cannot perform a function should be removed from the selection process; however, these requirements should be discussed during the interview/assessment phase of the selection process.

When assessing whether a job requirement, task or duty is essential, a retailer should consider:

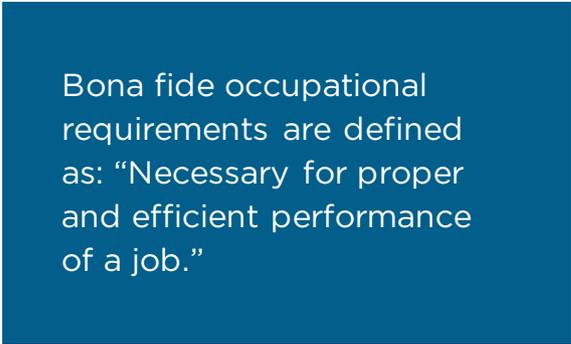
- How often the duty is performed
- Time spent on each duty
- How the duty fits with others performed in the job
- How the job would change if the duty were removed
- Would removing the requirement create a health and safety hazard?

The test for bona fide job requirement must be established on the balance of probabilities that it:

- is rationally connected to performing the job
- was adopted in good faith and is necessary to fulfill a legitimate work-related purpose, and
- retailers must show that it is impossible to accommodate individual employees sharing the characteristics of the claimant without imposing **undue hardship** upon the retailer.⁹

In the instance that an employee or applicant is not able to complete a job a requirement due to a specific disability, a retailer can claim “undue hardship.” Retailers must be able to demonstrate that the specific standard, factor, requirement and/or rule is necessary to properly perform the job. Retailers must also prove that the standard, factor, requirement and/or rule was adopted in good faith, and in the belief that it is reasonably necessary to fulfill a legitimate, work-related purpose. To show that the standard is reasonably necessary, retailers must show that it is impossible to accommodate individual employees without imposing undue hardship upon the retailer.

As a result of this test, the rule or standard must be inclusive and must accommodate individual differences up to the point of undue hardship. It is not enough to maintain discriminatory standards and supplement them by accommodating people who cannot



Bona fide occupational requirements are defined as: “Necessary for proper and efficient performance of a job.”

⁸ Source: <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/bona-fide-occupational-requirements-and-bona-fide-justifications-under-canadian-human-rights>

⁹ Source: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/2-setting-job-requirements>

meet them. This means that each person must be assessed against his or her own personal abilities, instead of being judged against presumed characteristics.

3.4 Undue hardship

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* considers three elements with respect to an accommodation causing undue hardship:

1. Cost beyond the means of the retailer
2. Whether outside sources of funding are available
3. Accommodation creates a health and safety risk

Retailers should always seek legal counsel on matters of this nature before claiming for undue hardship.

Retailers should always seek legal counsel on matters of this nature before claiming for undue hardship.

The *Code* sets out only three considerations. This means that no other considerations, other than those that can be brought into those three standards, can be properly considered under Ontario law. There have been cases that have included such other factors as employee morale and/or conflicts with a collective agreement.¹⁰

Accommodating someone with a disability is seldom as expensive or difficult. Over two-thirds of job accommodations cost less than \$500; however, many job accommodations are free to implement. Accommodations can include TTY Phone, Braille readers, large computer screens, among others.

If available, post job opportunities on the retailer's website and ensure the website is in an accessible format (e.g. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, WACG) in which a prospective applicant with a visual disability can use text-to-speech software to read the posted information.

3.5 Accessible job postings

When posting job opportunities, retailers should use different marketing tools to reach out to a broad pool of candidates. Examples include:

- Company website/career webpage
- Job search website (e.g. Indeed, LinkedIn)
- Newspapers, journals, professional associations
- Inform your own employees (i.e. referrals)
- Job fairs
- Stakeholder organizations

If available, post job opportunities on the retailer's

¹⁰ Source: www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-and-guidelines-disability-and-duty-accommodate/5-undue-hardship



website and ensure the website is in an accessible format (e.g. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, WACG) ¹¹ in which a prospective applicant with a visual disability can use text-to-speech software to read the posted information. All retail employees should be informed through email or staff meetings as to how they may be able to communicate job opportunities to a job applicant.

3.6 Interview and/or assessment process

Notifying selected applicants for interview

Once candidates have been selected from the pool of applicants, retailers must advise the candidates that they've invited for interviews/assessment that accommodations are available upon request. It is recommended that the retailer contact candidates to schedule an interview/assessment through email first, as it is a dynamic communication tool that can be read visually and/or through a screen reader (i.e. text-to-speech software).

If applicants have not responded to an email in a reasonable period of time, hiring managers or recruiters should attempt to contact them by phone or letter (if appropriate) to schedule a time for the interview/assessment.

While not legally required, it is recommended that the retailer provide applicants with a contact person in order to:

- Receive information about any accommodation requirements.
- Work with the applicant to determine specific accessibility requirements based on the interview/assessment.
- Have a checklist available.

If the candidate does reach out to the retailer's contact, the contact should listen to the candidate's accommodation needs first. Then review the agenda with the candidate for the

¹¹ Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible>

interview/assessment, as the candidate may determine that they require accommodations as part of an assessment based on their disability. To ensure that candidates don't get placed at an unfair advantage, it's best not to reveal specific questions that will be asked during the interview. Simply provide a structure for the interview, such as review of the job, employment history, situational/behaviour-based questions, job tasks, etc.

It's extremely helpful to have a checklist available for the contact person. This list can remind them of specific items they need to review with to the candidate, whether they have a disability or not. Reviewing specific items with the candidate can help to determine whether they'll require specific accommodations to fully participate in the interview/assessment process.

Guidelines for contacting applicants

1. Thank the applicant for applying and introduce yourself.
2. Determine if they are still interested in the position.
3. Advise applicant of the interview/assessment process and what they can expect.
4. Ask all applicants if they require any accommodations for the interview/assessment.
5. Arrange the meeting time and location.
6. Ensure that the applicant is given appropriate instructions on parking, entry, etc.
7. Provide an escort to meet the applicant (if required).
8. Thank the applicant and ask if they have any questions.

If the candidate has advised the retailer that they have a disability, the interviewer should work with the candidate to identify if there are specific parts of the interview/assessment where they would require adjustments to effectively demonstrate or articulate their knowledge, skill and/or experience.

Retailer advised of accommodation needs

If the retailer is advised by an applicant that they require accommodations:

1. Ask the applicant what is required to accommodate them during the interview/assessment.
2. Collaborate with the applicant.
3. Adjust the interview/assessment process accordingly.

Working with applicants to meet accessibility needs

There are several ways that retailers can help to meet general accessibility needs:

1. Educate and train store managers about how to make the hiring processes accessible.
2. Minimize bias in the interviewing process through clear policy, procedure and recruitment guides and checklists.
3. Teach interviewers how to interact with applicants with disabilities.

3.7 Interview/assessment

While interviewing applicants with disabilities, a retailer should consider alternate methods for conducting the interview. The applicant may need to have the interview conducted:

- By phone,
- In person: on-site and/or off-site, or
- Via video conferencing (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, etc.)

Minimize biases during the interview process

Retailers should attempt to standardize the interview process as much as possible:

- Use scripts to lay out questions, such as a standard interview/assessment guide.
- Scripts should be tailored to the organization and the specific job.
- While there is no legal requirement, standardizing the process helps to remove biases and ensure the interview/assessment is consistent.

Standardized responses for interviews and/or assessments

During the interview/assessment stage, applicants may identify whether a disability might prevent them from completing a specific task as part of a job. Evaluate the situation and accommodate as needed. At this stage, it is prudent for all applicants to be assessed as to whether they can perform key tasks in the job. The assessment should be the same for each applicant without discrimination; however, the timeframes and the method in which the assessment is carried out may vary.

All applicants should be assessed on whether they can perform key job tasks. This assessment should be the same for each applicant without discrimination.

During the interview/assessment, maintain the following practices:

1. Document responses to interview questions as well as performance assessments.
2. Ensure the applicant's availability of accommodations are communicated.
3. Do not state that the applicant is unfit for the position because of a disability.
4. Demonstrate that all reasonable efforts are made to accommodate an applicant with a disability during the interview/assessment stages.

Tips and best practices

Here are a few general tips for interacting with applicants with disabilities during the interview/assessment process:

- Be patient, respectful and professional.
- Treat the applicant as a person.
- Ask the applicant for clarification on preferences.
- Use language that focuses on the individual and not the disability.
- Offer to assist, but wait for your offer to be accepted.
- Provide them the freedom to make their own choice.
- Use your usual tone and volume of voice.
- Check to make sure the person understands what you are saying periodically.
- Make sure there is access to washrooms.
- Have a scent-free location for the interview.
- Offer them a beverage (if necessary).
- Adjust chair heights so that everyone is at the same eye level.
- Do not touch their assistive device and/or service animal as this is part of their personal space.
- Provide more time for the interview/assessment (if requested).
- Use meeting rooms or spaces with enough room for applicants as needed.
- Explain the reason for additional individuals attending an interview.

Ask the applicant if there is anything you can do to assist in improving communication.

For applicants with vision loss:

- Position the interviewer to be in front of the person.
- Have the interviewer identify themselves at the start of a conversation.
- Tell them when you are handing something to them.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. Do not shout.
- If statements are not understood, rephrase or ask them to repeat comments.
- Be prepared to read documents not available in Braille.

For applicants having difficulty communicating:

- Refrain from using technical terms or jargon.
- Be professional and give time for the applicant to answer.
- Ask the applicant if there is anything you can do to assist in improving communication.
- Interviewers may need to write down key words or use pictures to help communicate messages.



- A person with a form of intellectual disability may require the interviewer to use short and clear sentences.
- Applicants may request that questions be asked where they can provide a “yes” or “no” response.
- For those that have difficulty writing, a note taker may be needed, or computer-based test taking methods.
- Interpreters may be required to accompany the applicant to assist with communicating.

To assist in making documents accessible:

- Adjust documents to have plain language as needed.
- Enlarge font sizes.
- Provide documents in electronic format.
- If Braille is not available, assist in reading documents out loud for applicants.

3.8 Selecting the successful applicant

When determining the successful applicant, recruiters/hiring managers must select applicant(s) based on their skills and experience, and not on the applicant’s disability.

During the employment offering stage, retailers should use multiple methods to communicate to successful applicants about their accessibility accommodation policies.

Consider the method that the applicant prefers to be communicated in. These may include:

- Through a preferred method that is communicated by the applicant.
- Through email, where documents can be reviewed using text-to-speech software
- During the job offer (by phone or in person)
- Providing a physical letter

Sample Notification Letter to Successful Applicants

Dear **(insert successful applicant name)**,

We are pleased to announce that you have been selected to work for **(company name)** as **(name of the position the company is hiring for)**. This offer is contingent upon the receipt of **(documents that would apply)**. As the **(title of position)**, you will report to **(title of manager)**.

You will be expected to carry out the duties and responsibilities described in the attached job description, which is updated periodically. Your base salary will be **(insert)**, which will be subject to deductions for tax purposes.

We would like you to start your employment on **(insert date)**. Please report to the human resources department where you will be during your onboarding process at **(insert time)**.

PLEASE NOTE: **(Insert company name)** has an accommodation process in place and provides accommodations for employees with disabilities. If you require a specific accommodation due to a disability or a medical need, please contact **(name and title of appropriate company contact)** at **(insert phone)** or by email **(insert email)** so that accommodations can be made prior to beginning your employment.

Please sign the enclosed copy of this letter and return it to me by **(insert date)** indicating your acceptance of this offer. This offer is valid for five business days.

We look forward to you joining our team and the contributions you will make toward **(insert company)**'s success.

Sincerely,

(insert name of authorized person)

(insert position)

(insert company name)

This template is available for download on Retail Council of Canada's website at:
<https://www.retailcouncil.org/resources/accessibility/recruitment-and-retention/>

Unsuccessful applicant sample notification letter

It's important to notify applicants who were not selected for the position with a letter. This letter should include:

- A “thank you” to the applicant for participating.
- A sentence identifying the company's regrets that the applicant was unsuccessful for the specific job.
- Note of the positive elements of the applicant, but that their experience did not fit the job posting criteria.
- Encouragement to apply in the future

Sample Notification Letter to Unsuccessful Applicants

Dear **(insert applicant name)**,

I want to thank you for your interest with **(insert company name)**.

We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to meet with many talented individuals for the position of **(insert title of position)**. At this time, we have hired a candidate whose skills and experience most closely match the qualifications required for the role.

Thank you again. I wish you continued success in your future endeavours.

Kindest Regards,

(insert name of authorized person)

(insert position)

(insert company name)

This template is available for download on Retail Council of Canada's website at: <https://www.retailcouncil.org/resources/accessibility/recruitment-and-retention>

3.9 Manager training on assessable hiring process

When training store managers on accessible hiring practices, special consideration should be given to the following:

Location of the interview

- Consider if the applicant with a disability can access your facility or the meeting room where interviews are normally conducted. Is the location or room accessible to an individual who uses a mobility aid, such as a walker or wheelchair? If not, consider moving the interview to an accessible room or location to accommodate.

Format of the skills assessment test

- Are assessment tests accessible to an applicant with a disability? Does the test allow a candidate to demonstrate their knowledge and skills? For example, are computerized tests accessible for an individual with vision loss who uses a screen reader? If not, consider switching technology, or the method in which the test is provided. If the candidate has challenges with reading, consider conducting an oral test or using speech-to-text software, which is available for free on most mobile devices.

Room setup for in-person interviews

- Is the interview room set up in an accessible fashion? Individuals with hearing loss may require a brightly lit room in order to read lips and expressions, or a room that is quiet to minimize distractions and allow complete focus.

Interviewing timelines

- During the interview/assessment, can the individual with a disability perform within the timelines expected? For example: a health issue can sometimes make it difficult for a person with a disability to perform successfully during short, timed interviews, which can involve a considerable amount of stress. Consider stretching out your timelines for individual interviews, extending the time between interview rounds, or providing additional time on skills tests. Also, consider the job that the individual is applying for. If it is a part-time position, does the interview/assessment process last longer than a regular shift the individual would work?

Support persons or animals

- Can an individual with a disability bring a support person or support animal to an interview? For example: a person with a developmental disability may have support workers or family members for assistance. Consider allowing a support worker/family member to attend the interview to provide additional or more detailed information about the candidate's abilities and may ask questions that the applicant has not had a

When training store managers on accessible hiring practices, special consideration should be given to the following:

- Location of the interview
- Format of the skills assessment test
- Room setup for in-person interviews
- Interviewing timelines
- Support persons or animals

chance to consider. Similar considerations might be necessary if a person requires a service animal.

Paperwork

- Can the individual fill out any paperwork that is required? For example: an individual with vision loss or a learning disability may have trouble filling out a written form. Consider having a staff member available to assist the applicant in filling out any required forms.

Keep in mind that the accommodations provided during the interview/assessment may also need to be implemented if/when the successful candidate is working in the workplace.



4. Accommodation process and return to work

4.1 Duty to accommodate

Under Ontario's Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation's Employment Standard,¹² retailers must accommodate applicants and employees with a disability. This legislation does not replace any obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code related to accommodations and non-discrimination.

4.2 Developing a written accommodation process

The process of developing an accommodation process must identify how employees:

- Can participate in the development of their individual accommodation plan,
- Are individually assessed, and
- Can seek representation from their workplace or bargaining group (if applicable) to help in developing a proper accommodation plan.

In addition, the process must identify how retailers can request an evaluation by an outside medical or other expert to determine if/how an accommodation can be achieved. This is completed at the expense of the retailer. Steps should be taken to protect the privacy of the employee's personal information during this process.

Other items that must be listed in the written accommodation process:

- The frequency of reviewing and updating individual accommodation plans and how this will occur.
- If accommodations are denied, how the reasons will be communicated to the employee:
- Documented, in a form appropriate to the employee, identifying alternative accommodations?
- Provide the plan in a format that meets an employee's accessibility needs.

¹² Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/how-comply-integrated-accessibility-standards-regulation>

Sample Accommodation Process Template

An example of an accommodation process is described below. It can be modified to meet your organization's needs.

The Accommodation Process

[Insert organization name] is committed to providing accommodations for people with disabilities. When an employee with a disability requests an accommodation, we will follow this process:

Step 1: Recognize the need for accommodation

The need for accommodation can be:

Requested by an employee through a supervisor or human resources representative.

Identified by the employee's manager or the hiring manager.

Step 2: Gather relevant information and assess needs

The employee is an active participant in this step.

[Insert organization name] does not require details on the nature of the employee's disability to provide an accommodation; it only needs to know about the employee's abilities.

Step 3: Write a formal, individual accommodation plan

Once the most appropriate accommodation has been identified, the accommodation details are written down in a formal plan. Details should include:

Accessible formats and communication support (if requested).

Workplace emergency response information (if required).

Any other accommodation that is to be provided.

The employee's personal information will be protected at all times. If the employer denies the employee's accommodation requests, make sure that the employee knows the reasons for the denial.

Step 4: Implement, monitor, and review the accommodation plan

The employee and manager must monitor the accommodation to ensure that the issue has been effectively resolved:

Formal reviews happen according to a regular schedule.

The accommodation plan is reviewed if the employee's work location or position changes.

The accommodation is reviewed if the nature of the employee's disability changes.

Accommodation is no longer appropriate; the employee and the manager can work together to gather information and reassess the employee's needs for [Organization name] to find the best accommodation measure (Step 2).

This template is available for download on Retail Council of Canada's website at:
<https://www.retailcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SAPT.pdf>

4.3 The accommodation process

Step 1: Recognizing the need for accommodations

The duty to accommodate exists for disability related needs that that retailer is aware of:

- Often initiated by the retail employee with a disability who requests an accommodation.
- This may be the easiest way to determine which accommodations need to be implemented.

The following are retail examples where the employee may communicate accommodation needs based on existing knowledge of a disability.

Mental illness examples

- Schizophrenia: A diagnosed employee may indicate they need for schedule modifications in order to attend medical appointments.
- Anxiety Disorder: A new employee that has an may have a service animal that supports them during panic attacks, but their workplace has a “No Pet” policy.

Physical disability examples

- Cerebral Palsy: An employee may have difficulty bagging clothing for a customer or entering information on a register.
- Spina Bifida: An employee may require additional breaks in work due to lack of normal bowel and bladder control.
- Broken Leg: An employee with a broken leg (even if the injury is temporary) may not be able to stand for extended periods of time in a retail environment – even with the use of crutches for assistance.

Retail managers may notice that employees require additional assistance through accommodations. In addition, some employees may not be aware of a co-worker’s disability or accommodation needs because they have not performed specific tasks, used equipment or been exposed to specific situations. Employees may also not be able to communicate their needs due to the nature of their disability.

Learning disability examples

- Dyscalculia: An employee may have difficulty making change
- Dysgraphia: An employee may have difficulty writing clearly or performing fine motor skills, such as entering customer information at the register.

Some employees may not be aware of a co-worker’s disability or accommodation needs because they have not performed specific tasks, used equipment or been exposed to specific situations. Employees may also not be able to communicate their needs due to the nature of their disability.

- Dyslexia: An employee may have difficulty processing bills of lading and/or entering inventory.
- Auditory Processing Disorder/Language Processing Disorder: An employee may not understand the meaning behind a customer's statements as they are unfamiliar.
- Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities: An employee may not recognize non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions or the body language of a frustrated customer returning a product.

Tips for retailers to recognize accommodation needs:

- Do not attempt to diagnose an employee.
- Identify whether employees are facing challenges where accommodations may assist with representation as needed.
- Maintain an employee's privacy.
- Do not automatically assume there is a performance improvement issue without first considering accommodations.
- Offer to work with the employee to accommodate their needs.
- Inform the employee of the next steps.

Step 2: Gather information and assess the need

At this point, an employee may be asked to provide medical information to assist the accommodation process. Keep in mind:

- Information needs to be documented and maintained in confidence.
- This could include information from functional capacity evaluations.
- Experts may be required to match accommodations to the results of assessments.
- Assessments are to be completed at the retailer's expense.

While gathering such assessment information, there are a number of roles and responsibilities that will be shared by key stakeholders. Responsible assessment and documentation requires the participation of the retail employee and the retailer, and may also involve the union representative (if applicable), and/or other stakeholders in the employee's accommodation plan.

Retail employee

The role and responsibility of the employee may include:



- Providing details about relevant restrictions.
- Working with the retailer to find appropriate accommodations within the restrictions.
- Participating in the development of an accommodation plan.
- Assisting the retailer to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodation plan.

Retail employer

The role and responsibility of the retailer may include:

- Participating in the accommodation process.
- Documenting each accommodation request and actions taken.
- Working with the retail employee, physician to find the appropriate accommodation.
- Maintaining privacy and confidentiality.
- Consulting experts and researching alternative accommodations (if necessary).
- Providing accommodations as required.

Union representative (if required)

The role and responsibility of a union representative may include:

- Participating in the accommodation process.
- Working with the retailer to facilitate the accommodation.
- Supporting the accommodation regardless of the collective agreement.

Other stakeholders

The “other stakeholders” category may be as important if not more important than the first three to assist in gathering/providing information during the creation of an accommodation plan. Stakeholders may include Human Resources professionals, accessibility professionals, family doctor(s) and other specialists.

Retailers are required to identify the most appropriate accommodation, short of undue hardship. Accommodations should result in an equal opportunity for the employee with a disability. If accommodations would result in undue hardship, retailers may implement accommodations in phases as long as they become fully implemented when full funding is available. Alternative accommodations may be used for the short-term until the appropriate accommodation can be implemented.

While looking at job accommodations, consider:

- Accessible formats and communications support for information
- Physical or structural modifications
- Changes in work demands and schedules
- Use of assistive devices
- Whether accommodations may be temporary or permanent

If accommodations would result in undue hardship, retailer may implement accommodations in phases as long as they become fully implemented when full funding is available.

Here are a few accommodations assessments that can be applied to retail positions.

For general physical accessibility accommodations.

Physical modifications for the retailer's workplace may include:

- Adjustable point-of-sale screens
- Task-specific lighting/adjustment of lighting levels
- Ergonomic mats
- Adjustable chairs/stools
- Redesigning work areas/storage areas supplies and products
- Installation of ramps and handrails
- Additional communication devices such as phones and computers
- Reducing noise levels/installing barriers

Job and schedule modifications for retailers may include:

- Providing carts to move heavy materials
- Reassigning specific duties to other workers
- Breaking down large tasks into individually trained components
- If accommodations create undue hardship, consider agreed-upon job reassignment
- Job enrichment
- Allowing employees to work less hours per week to accommodate medical appointments
- Creating flexible hours for scheduled work/split shifts
- Increasing the number of breaks/micro pauses
- Holding brief weekly meetings between employees and managers to measure progress
- Increasing frequency of employee training
- Increasing preparation time for training and meetings
- Providing written job instructions
- Job sharing and shadowing to increase confidence and transfer of learning

Assistive devices may be another modification that retailers can implement. Some examples may include:

- Volume control devices for phones
- Providing training through different or multiple mediums to meet learning needs
- Provide recording devices to assist with memory
- Ear plugs
- Screen-reading software

Additional resources for specific disability accommodations strategies:

- [Canadian National Institute for the Blind \(CNIB\)](#)
- [Canadian Hearing Society \(CHS\)](#)
- [Learning Disability Association of Ontario \(LDAO\)](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association \(CMHA\)](#)
- [Ontario Disability Employment Network](#)

Step 3: Writing a formal individual accommodation plan

After the retail employee and retailers have established appropriate, agreed-upon accommodations:

- Details must be documented, except for small organizations (less than 50 employees).
- Include information on accessible formats.
- Provide communication supports.
- Post appropriate workplace emergency response information.
- All other accommodations agreed upon during Step 2.

Sample written accommodation plan

Sample Accommodation Plan Template

Employee Name _____ Date _____

Title/Department _____ Supervisor _____

Limitations	Job-Related Tasks/ Activities Affected by Limitations	Is this an essential job requirement?

Sources of expert input into accommodation plan (e.g., HR Manager, family doctor, specialists):

Accommodation measures to be implemented from [start date] to [end date].

If no end date is expected, the next review of this accommodation plan will occur on [review date].
(It is recommended that the accommodation measure(s) be reviewed annually, at a minimum.)

Description of Accommodation Measure(s):

List job requirements and related tasks that require accommodations	What are the objectives of the accommodation? What must the accommodation do in order to be successful?	What accommodation strategies/tools have been selected to facilitate this task/activity?

Roles and Responsibilities

Outstanding Actions to Implement Accommodation	Assigned To	Due Date

Employee's Signature

Manager's Signature

This template is available for download on Retail Council of Canada's website at:
<https://www.retailcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SAPT2.pdf>

Sample written accommodation plan

Limitation:	Job Related Activities Affected	Essential Job Requirement
Partial hearing loss	Communication with customers	Yes

List Job Requirements Needing Accommodations:	Accommodation Objectives:	Accommodation Strategies/Tools:
Communicating with customers at the register requires the employee to be able to hear or see what the customer is communicating.	Accommodation must allow for clear and concise communication.	A headset amplifier will allow the employee to amplify the volume of a customer's voice as well as allow them to hear their own voice while communicating.

Step 4: Implementing, monitoring, and reviewing the plan

After creating an acceptable accommodation plan, the retailer must:

- Implement the plan in a timely manner.
- Monitor to verify that the accommodations have resolved the issues.
- Review the plan formally on a predetermined schedule.
- Modify the accommodation if it is no longer appropriate.
- Review the accommodation plan prior to annual review so that each review focuses solely on its topic.
- The plan must be reviewed if the employee changes work locations or positions within the company.

4.4 Accessible formats and communication support of accommodation

Retailers have two requirements when it comes to accessible formats and communication supports in the accommodation plan. First, retailers must inform employees of available supports. Second, retailers must provide accessible formats and communication supports to their employees.

Retailers can satisfy the retail employee accommodation requirements by selecting a strategy that:

- Regularly communicates the policy to their store teams
- Uses a variety of communication techniques, including employee orientations
- Ensures that necessary information is clearly stated
- Communicate revisions to employees in a timely manner

While providing employees the required information for performing their jobs, the information must be provided in an accessible, easy-to-understand format. Alternative formats may include, but are not limited to:

- Plain language text
- Accessible PDFs
- Large font sizes
- Reading documents out loud
- Text-to-speech and speech-to-text formats
- Closed captioning for videos
- Braille (if necessary)

Retailers have two requirements when it comes to accessible formats and communication supports in the accommodation plan.

1. retailers must inform employees of available supports.
2. retailers must provide accessible formats and



5. Emergency response in the store

Retailers can face many different types of emergencies. These are not limited to the need to evacuate the store due to fire. Other emergencies may also include:

- First aid situations/medical emergencies for customers
- Robbery, active situations or acts of violence
- Bomb threats
- Tornados or high winds
- Earthquakes

5.1 Providing emergency response information

During some emergencies, employees with disabilities may require extended accommodations from the retailer. Examples of emergencies that require extended accommodations include:

- A retail employee who uses a wheelchair loses access to an elevator during a fire alarm.
- An employee with an anxiety disorder has an attack upon hearing an alarm or being threatened during a robbery.
- An employee with a broken leg may require assistance leaving the premises quickly.
- An employee with a neurodevelopmental disorder may have difficulty following instructions during an emergency.
- An employee who is hearing impaired may not hear the fire alarm (could provide a vibrating pager and/or visual alarm system).

Providing emergency response information

Retailers must communicate to their store team(s) that, should there be a need by an employee, retailers will develop emergency response plans to assist an employee with a disability. Retailers should advise their store teams of this option during orientation, and periodically, during employment. In addition, a plan must be developed with the employee's consent and with their involvement in the planning process. The emergency response plan must be documented by all retailers and reviewed on a regular basis.

Emergency response plans may include:

- Additional assistive devices, e.g. collapsible transfer chairs
- Support from designated co-workers may be provided with consent to release information from the employee with a disability
- If consent is not given, the retailer must look at alternative accommodations
- Back-up plans should be developed in the event a support employee is away from the workplace

Retailers must communicate to their store team(s) that, should there be a need by an employee, retailers will develop emergency response plans to assist an employee with a disability.

6. Return to work (RTW) process

In Ontario's accessibility legislation, all retailers must create a return to work (RTW) process for their stores. To meet this requirement, retailers must document the return to work process. This process must outline the necessary steps for employees to be able to return from a leave of absence due to disability. If accommodations are required upon return, retailers must develop an individual accommodation plan with the employee. If the injury or illness is work related, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*'s Return to Work Process does not relieve retailers of obligations under Ontario's *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*.¹³

Sample return to work process template.

The Return to Work Process

At [insert organization name], we are committed to supporting employees who have been absent from work due to a nonwork-related disability and who require an accommodation in order to return to work. We will follow the process detailed below to support their safe return to work.

Step 1: Initiate the return to work process

- The employee reports a need for disability leave to supervisor or human resources.
- Information is sent to return to work coordinator ([Name of RTW Coordinator], [Phone], [Email]).

Step 2: Make and maintain contact with the employee on leave

Return to work coordinator:

- Maintains regular contact with the employee, with the employee's consent.
- Provides the employee with return to work information.
- Helps resolve any problems with treatment, if asked by the employee.
- Monitors employee's progress until fit for work.

Employee:

- Seeks and follows the appropriate medical treatment.
- Updates the return to work coordinator with his or her progress.
- Provides the healthcare provider with return to work information.

Healthcare provider:

- Provides the appropriate and effective treatment to employee
- Provides required information on employee's functional abilities, if requested

Step 3: Develop a return to work plan

¹³Source: <https://aoda.ca/return-to-work-plans-for-ontario-workplaces/>

The employee, the return to work coordinator and the healthcare provider (if needed) develop a formal return to work plan. This is included in the employee's individual accommodation plan (if applicable).

- If the employee has no residual functional limitations, the employee returns to their regular position with no accommodation required.
- If the employee has temporary functional limitations, the employee returns to work to a temporary modified job with accommodation, or to an alternate transitional position.
- If the employee has lasting functional limitations, the employee returns to work with permanent accommodations or is reassigned to another alternate permanent position.

Step 4: Monitor and evaluate the return to work process

The employee, supervisor, and return to work coordinator monitor and review the return to work plan regularly until it is completed. The return to work process will undergo modifications to overcome any challenges the employee encounters.

This template is available for download on Retail Council of Canada's website at:
<https://www.retailcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SRWPT.pdf>

6.1 The return to work (RTW) process

Step 1: Initiating the return to work process

When a retail employee goes on leave as a result of a disability, the retail employee should inform the following representatives:

- Management/Direct Supervisor
- Human Resources/Return to Work Coordinator
- Workplace Safety Insurance Board (If applicable)

Support programs can then be activated to ensure a timely and safe return for the employee.

Work-related injury or illness

If the employee's injury or disability is work related, report the incident to the immediate supervisor. Make sure they receive the necessary first aid medical attention. The retailer provides transportation to the hospital. Retailers need to ensure that the incident is properly reported to the WSIB and follows all WSIB requirements. This information is sent to the Return to Work (RTW) Specialist.

Nonwork-related injury or illness

If the employee's injury or disability is not work related, the retail employee reports the injury or disability to their supervisor or their company's human resources representative. The information is sent to the Return to Work Specialist.

Step 2: Maintaining employee contact

Contact between the retailer and the retail employee on leave should commence immediately by the RTW Specialist with the consent of the employee. The method for notification should be selected based on the employee's communication preferences. The reason for regular contact:

- Builds trust
- Increases likelihood of return and employee morale
- Helps to determine if the employee needs assistance
- Reminds the employee of the support system available
- Should be a caring act, not perceived as a "push" to return to work

Each stakeholder in the return to work process should demonstrate the following responsibilities while the retail employee is on leave:

The retail employee will obtain and follow appropriate medical treatment, and provide regular updates to the RTW Coordinator about their progress. The retail employee must also provide this return to work information to the treating physician. Finally, the retail employee advises the RTW Specialist and manager immediately if they encounter challenges during the process.

The RTW Specialist will maintain regular contact with the retail employee, and provides them with return to work information. The RTW Specialist will also help resolve any problems with treatment (if requested), and monitor the employee's progress until they are

If the employee's injury or disability is work related, report the incident to the immediate supervisor. Make sure they receive the necessary first aid medical attention.

fit to return. They can begin to plan modified work based on a functional capacity assessment.

The healthcare provider provides appropriate and effective treatment to the retail employee. As well, they provide required information on the employee's functional capacity assessment to the RTW Specialist.

If applicable, the employee's union representative will support the employee during the RTW process and provide visible support for the program.

Step 3: Developing a return to work (RTW) plan

Prior to the employee returning to work, the plan should be developed and agreed upon by all stakeholders. When considering the plan, it may consist of the following:

- Return to work might only require simple accommodation.
- Complex return to work scenarios may have a graduated set of steps.
- Return to work may incorporate elements of an individual's existing accommodation plan.

The RTW plan should be developed collaboratively in a planning meeting with the following parties:

- The Retail Employee
- Health Care Provider (if required)
- RTW Specialist
- Union Representative (if applicable)
- The retail employee's manager or supervisor

The RTW plan may include:

- Modification of the workplace based on:
 - Physical capabilities
 - Intellectual capabilities, and
 - Psychosocial capabilities
- Assistive devices
- Specialized equipment
- Modification of job tasks
- Support persons
- Additional job training
- Referral to support groups
- Information on financial counselling
- Community or stakeholder support services

Sample return to work (RTW) plan

Return to Work Plan Template

Employee Name:

Start Date:

End Date:

Job Title:

Earnings:

Goal of Return to Work Process:

Week	Functional Limitations	Workdays per Week	Work Hours per Day	Job Tasks	Accommodation	Safety Considerations
Week 1						
Week 2						
Week 3						
Week 4						

Does the return to work process involve a temporary assignment to a different position? "

- Yes (Please answer the questions below.) "
- No

What is the new position?

Length of assignment (if known): What training is required?

What safety precautions are being taken during training?

Employee's Signature

Manager's Signature

Date

This template is available for download on Retail Council of Canada's website at:

<https://www.retailcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SRWPT2.pdf>

Step 4: Monitoring and evaluating the process

As the employee progresses through the RTW plan, they must be monitored. Supervisors and RTW coordinators should watch for:

- Progress that indicates the employee is ready to move to the next step in an RTW plan
- Full return to pre-leave duties
- Deviation from the agreed-upon elements in the plan
- Employees pushing themselves too hard to return to pre-leave status causing relapse or re-aggravation

Throughout and upon successful completion of the RTW plan, the employee's experience should be evaluated by debriefing all stakeholders involved. This allows for the opportunity for RTW coordinators to refine and modify the process.

Throughout and upon successful completion of the RTW plan, the employee's experience should be evaluated by debriefing all stakeholders involved. This allows the opportunity for RTW coordinators to refine and modify the process.

6.2 Leading practices for the return to work process

The following practices can assist a retailer in developing a well-researched and effective RTW process:

Secure Senior Management Support

The key to any successful program in the workplace requires support from senior leadership. They can:

- Assist in securing sufficient resources
- Provide accommodations to remove barriers
- Assist the RTW process team
- Provide visible support to employees returning from a leave of absence

Identify an RTW Specialist

Having an RTW Specialist as the main contact is another key to the success of an RTW program. Through training or experience, an RTW Specialist should be objective, and qualified to guide employees through the plan. They should also be supported by senior leadership, managers and union representatives.

Workplace profile

Analyzing the workplace can assist retailers with understanding previous RTW and disability management practices. This analysis should include:

- Previous approaches to RTW practices following a disability leave
- Identification of supportive practices and programs
- Disability statistics, including annual numbers, nature of disabilities, lost time, number of short and long-term disabilities filed

Job task analysis

Job task analysis involves categorizing and collecting detailed information on each job type performed within an organization. The benefits of performing job task analysis includes having a permanent job inventory where job requirements can be compared to capabilities and supporting documentation.

Elements of the job inventory should include:

- Essential job functions and
- Work hours and schedules
- Equipment required to complete job tasks
- Environmental conditions
- Duration, frequency and the forces involved in completing tasks (e.g. physical and cognitive)
- Availability of modified work or modification of individual job tasks

Modified duties

The goal of return to work is to return a retail employee to the position they held prior to the disability leave. Tasks must be productive, within capabilities and meaningful to encourage the employee and strengthen their morale. RTW options should be prioritized based on:

- Posing minimal return to work barriers
- Requiring minimal adjustment by the retailer
- Requiring fewest retailer interventions

To assist in developing manager and employee conduct awareness sessions, it's important for employers to familiarize themselves with the following:

- Benefits of the RTW program
- Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders
- Supportive practices and programs in place for employees returning to work
- Name and contact information for the RTW Specialist
- Steps behind the RTW process

The goal of return to work is to return a retail employee to the position they held prior to the disability leave. Tasks must be productive, within capabilities and meaningful to encourage the employee and strengthen their morale.

7. Accessible communications

In today's online retail environment, competition is high and there is so much at stake. However, there remains an abundance of online content that has accessibility issues for people with disabilities. Retailers and businesses can benefit from creating accessible websites that help cater to the growing, global community of people with disabilities, which is comprised of approximately 20% or 1.2 billion people. A retailer that has an accessible website will have more users that can understand and access your content.

7.1 Accessible website guidelines

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are part of a series of web accessibility guidelines published by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the main international standards organization for the Internet. They are a set of recommendations for making Web content more accessible – primarily for people with disabilities – but also for all user agents, including highly limited devices, such as mobile phones.

Following these guidelines should make it easier for customers to access your store's website and content.

Levels of website accessibility.

Each guideline has three standards of accessibility:

1. A
2. AA
3. AAA

Newly created or refreshed websites must meet level A standards. Later, your website will need to meet Level AA.

Level AAA standards will come into effect in the future, and are not enforceable at present time.

In most cases, you must meet the Level A criteria before you can meet the Level AA criteria.

A retailer's website and its content must meet WCAG 2.0 standards as outlined in the [Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications Act](#). The Canadian government is currently phasing in WCAG 2.0 requirements to make it easier to build accessibility into your organization's website.

A retailer's internal website (Intranet) does not have to be accessible. In addition, content posted before 2012 does not have to be modified. If requested, a retailer must work with individuals to make the content available in an alternate format, such as large print text or in Braille.

According to Ontario's accessibility laws, new and significantly refreshed websites must meet the following standards for each level.

Accessible websites

An accessible website should be capable of being viewed by everyone regardless of disability. While designing accessible websites, retailers should keep the following standards in mind:

- Content should be functionally available using a keyboard.
- Users should be able to navigate, find and view content easily.
- Ensure that website content is compatible with current and future user tools, e.g. screen reading software, screen magnification software, speech recognition software, etc.
- Websites should be mobile friendly; accessible websites should be built to WCAG accessibility standards and primed for responsive layout displays..
- Content layout is well structured for search engine optimisation (SEO).

7.2 Assistive technology

In general, technology aims to make things easier for us. For people with disabilities, technology can help make independent living, social interactions, and pursuing education easier. Assistive technologies are specifically designed to enable and support users who have some of the impairments, disabilities and conditions mentioned in the previous sections. Adaptive and rehabilitative devices include assistive equipment, software programs, and/or product systems.

Examples Include:

- Screen reader software
- Screen magnification software
- Speech recognition software
- Braille keyboards
- Braille terminals
- Keyboard overlays
- Mouth sticks

7.3 Accessible digital content Images

Images can help make a website visually interesting. When used correctly, images with text can also assist a person with a disability access a retailer's website. According to Access Ability's A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design, here are some general guidelines to keep in mind when using images on websites:

- Images must be presented in ways that all users can perceive, even if users have impaired vision or hearing.¹⁴
- Images must be able to help distinguish foreground from background elements. Use a contrast analyzer to ensure there is enough differentiation between the text and background colours. Ensure at least a 70% difference in colour value between onscreen text and background elements. Optimize contrast between hues by pairing complementary colours (e.g. red with green, orange with blue, or violet with yellow).
- Images should not be displayed without text. People who can't see images and other visual elements must be provided with text alternatives ("alt text") that can be converted via software into speech, symbols, large print, Braille or simpler language.
- Use colour combinations¹⁵ in images that are easy to be seen:
- Many users may feel that black text on a beige background is best, while many others prefer off-white text reversed out of black.
- Some users may have difficulty distinguishing between red and green, others between yellow and blue, while some users won't be able to see the colours you've chosen at all.
- Websites must allow the user to alter the author's intended website design using their computer's own assistive technology in order to customize colour, size and typeface preferences.
- Provide an alternative, text-based format for audio and video content. Transcripts, captions and descriptive video all ensure a more accessible experience

¹⁴Source : https://www.rgd.ca/database/files/library/RGD_AccessAbility_Handbook.pdf

¹⁵Source : https://www.rgd.ca/database/files/library/RGD_AccessAbility_Handbook.pdf



7.4 Text

Online content that is easier to read can increase user retention and reduce eye fatigue. For most people, reading content onscreen can be tiring for the eyes, and many people may read text 25% slower than they would while reading from a piece of paper. In addition, most online content users read only 20% of the words on a page.

In order to ease the burden on the reader, here are some additional best practices for accessible webpage design:

- Communicate one idea per paragraph, and highlight keywords.
- Write simple, concise text that uses short paragraphs, short sentences, and short words. Cognitive limitations can be associated with learning disabilities, low literacy or numeracy skills, and/or cultural and language differences.
- Use an “inverted pyramid” writing style by communicating the most important information first, and at the top of the written content.
- Break the content into bulleted lists (if possible).
- Spell out requirements ahead of time (for example: “Passwords must be at least 6 characters with no spaces”) and write clear, simple error messages.
- People with disabilities related to hearing loss may have a different understanding of language than people who have become hearing impaired later in their lives, and their first language might be American Sign Language. A standard sign language system may have an identifiable “grammar,” and linguists emphasize that it is distinct from the grammar of spoken language.

7.5 Videos

To ensure that a retailer’s website videos are accessible, they should be produced and uploaded to the website in a way that ensures all members of the audience can access their content. An accessible video includes:

Captions: A technology that is built into the video which enables users to convert its audio content into text. Including captions in video communications can enable comprehension for all users, especially users with varying hearing disabilities. There are two types of captioning options:

1. Closed captions allow viewers the ability to turn the captions on or off.
2. Open captions remain fixed to the video and are always visible.

Closed captions are preferable because open captions can overwhelm some viewers and can be difficult for with cognitive processing challenges to understand.

The difference between subtitles and closed captions is subtitles only transcribe into text the verbal/spoken portions of a video, while captions convey the significant sounds from a video as well. Captions usually display the non-verbal information in square brackets, for example:

- [sound of sirens and car horns]
- [instrumental music]
- [background music fades out]

Transcripts: A transcript is a text-version of a video, which includes a meaningful description of narration, dialogue, and sound effects. When captioning options are not available, attaching an accessible text-based transcript document to the video might be possible.

7.6 Social media

Retailers use social media to market and advertise their business to various audiences in online communities. Social media is changing how people shop, gather information and interact with one another. However, for people with disabilities, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube can be difficult to use. For example, people who use a screen reader to read online content may have difficulty navigating social media due to



poor colour contrasts, lack of headers, keyboard shortcuts, or alternate text for images, and videos that don't include captioning.

There are best practices that can improve experience for users who have disabilities; but since social media platforms are constantly evolving, and new social media platforms are being introduced all the time, social media accessibility best practices can change frequently.

Facebook is popular website that allows retailers provides retailers the capability to connect directly with customers, and promote products to connected communities and wider audiences. Facebook posts can include text, photos, video and links to content on other websites.

Here are few overall tips for improving the accessibility of a retailer's social media profile – not just on Facebook, but for any social media profile (Twitter, YouTube, etc.):

- Ensure that your store's website URL is listed in the "About" section of your timeline/page to provide an easy point of entry for learning more information.
- Include other ways to contact your store, such as a phone number, an online "Contact Us" form, and/or a general contact email address for more information.
- After posting a photo, video, or audio, be sure to include a comment that directs users to the full caption or the full transcript in the post.
- Any videos uploaded on YouTube should have closed caption enabled and the transcripts posted in the comments.

Instagram allows users to post photos of what they are doing and send them to their network. Users are also able to create very short videos and include them in posts. For people with visual disabilities, the visual content makes Instagram difficult to use. There are few options to make Instagram posts more accessible:

- Use automatic alternative text that uses object recognition technology to generate a voice description for photos that work with screen readers.
- Offer a custom alternative text. This allows retailers to add their own description when uploading a photo to ensure accessibility for screen readers.

Twitter allows users to send a short text-based message up to 280 characters long (also known as a "tweet"). These tweets are published online to a Twitter profile page and can be viewed publicly. When writing a tweet, place hashtags (#) or mentions (@) at the end of the tweet. This allows a screen reader to voice the main content of the tweet more clearly in the beginning. Avoid using unfamiliar acronyms or "text-speak" that could be difficult to understand for users who are listening to tweets while being read by a screen reader.

If adding photos, compose a description of the images so the content is accessible to people who are visually impaired.

YouTube is a video-sharing website that allows retailers to post user-generated videos in addition to professionally created video content. For people with disabilities related to vision impairments, YouTube may be difficult to use. However, for people with related to hearing loss, the YouTube features closed captioning and described video settings for most of the videos posted on the platform. Please note, that due to a video's audio quality, background noise, and/or number of speakers, the resulting captions may not always be accurate. To ensure that everyone can view a retailer's YouTube video, add copy of the video's script with the descriptive action a video's description box.

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Ontario Accessibility Laws

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>

9. Resources from accessibility community stakeholder organizations

What is Hearing Loss?

There are two different types of hearing loss: sensorineural and conductive hearing loss.

Sensorineural can be caused by aging, injury, sickness, etc., while **conductive** hearing is caused by “obstructions,” such as fluid build-up, dislocation of bones, abnormal growth or foreign objects.

Each type of hearing loss may have several different causes. Exposure to loud noise is a common cause of both hearing loss and tinnitus. Infections are also a common cause, as are birth defects, genetics and reaction to drugs, especially chemotherapy or drugs used for cancer treatment (Starkley, 2018).

Facts About Hearing Loss

- Hearing loss affects 1 in 4 adult Canadians
- About 1 in 10 people identify themselves as Deaf or hard of hearing (CHS Awareness Survey, 2002)
- Hearing loss is the 3rd most common chronic condition in older adults and the most widespread disability
- 46% of people aged 45-87 have hearing loss (Cruickshanks et al., 1998)

Tips and Information for a Barrier-Free Workplace

- Make all notes, presentations, interview questions, and information available ahead of time so everyone can be prepared and participate.
- Ensure your workplace meets all government enforced regulations and laws regarding accessibility and equality. For example, you may be required to adhere to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Human Rights Act, Employment Standards Act, etc.
- Educate yourself – Talk to people, do research, take training, be open minded and flexible.
- Talk to Deaf or hard of hearing individuals about what their needs are. Everyone has different needs.

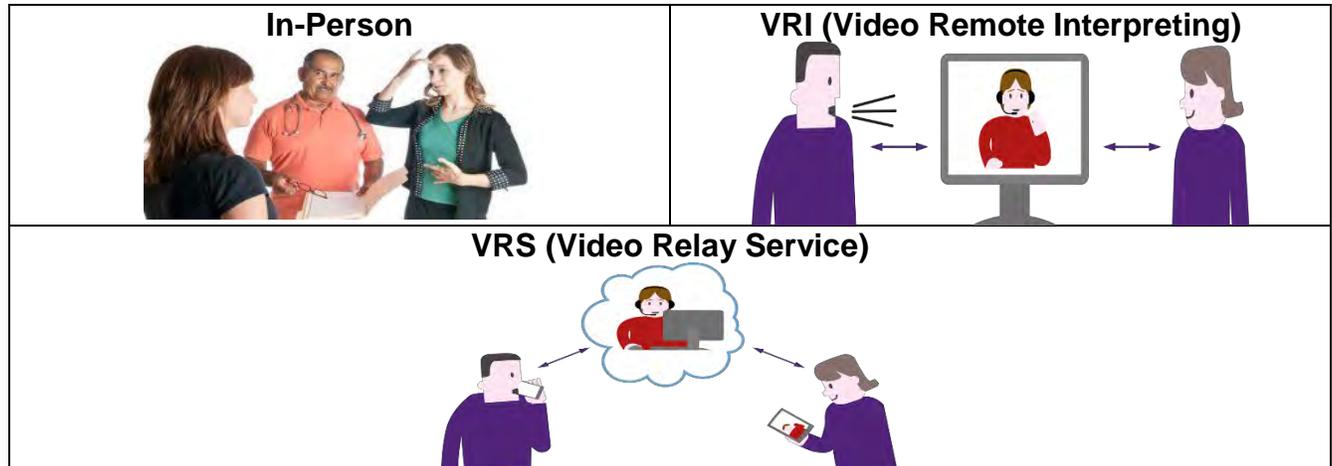
CHS Accessibility and Consulting Services

- Assessment of workplace accommodation needs for Deaf and hard of hearing employees (for a fee)
- Workplace accessibility strategies to remove communication barriers and improve employer/employee communication strategies
- Information on reasonable accommodation guidelines for Deaf and hard of hearing candidates and employees
- Awareness training for employees and management (for a fee)

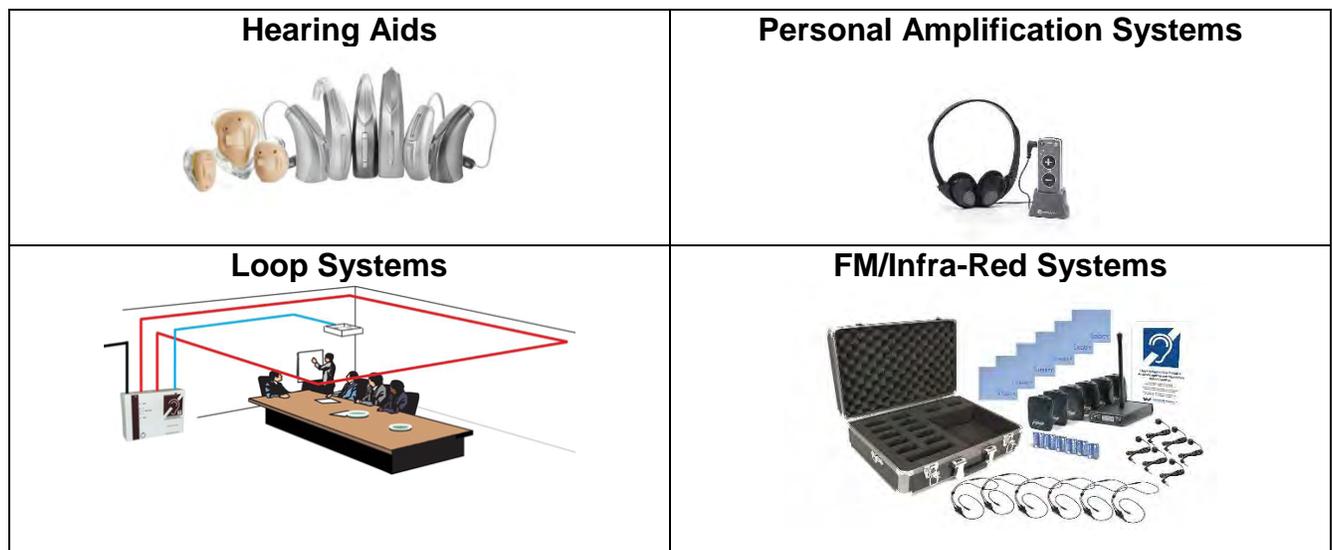
Accessibility Supports

Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing require additional accommodations and supports.

For individuals who are Deaf, you can accommodate them with Sign Language Interpretation. There are various sign language interpretation services available in Canada:



For individuals who are hard of hearing, you can accommodate them by using Assistive Listening Devices. These either amplify sounds or block out background noise that make it difficult to hear.





Resources and Contact Links:

For information on CHS services, hearing loss information, and technology, visit www.chs.ca or email info@chs.ca.

For resources for employers & the workplace, visit breakingsoundbarriersatwork.ca.

To make requests for a Sign Language Interpreter, email interpreting@chs.ca.

Visit the CHS online store and shop for Assistive Listening Devices at www.chs.ca/shop-chs.

For information on Employment Supports and Workplace Assessments, email employmentservices@chs.ca.



About the CNIB Foundation

Founded in 1918, the CNIB Foundation is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. We deliver innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion. Our work as a blind foundation is powered by a network of volunteers, donors and partners from coast to coast to coast. To learn more or get involved, visit cnib.ca.

Creating a culture of accessibility and inclusion

Think of accessibility as more of a philosophy instead of a set of standards. While resources are available to help guide you to ensure that your company is accessible, how do you ensure that you're providing a universal experience for all consumers? It's not necessarily about designing or implementing something for a specific audience; it's about removing assumptions and looking at your consumers and workforce as one. We need to shift our collective mindset away from the notion that accessibility is something for people with disabilities to the idea that accessibility is something that benefits everyone. Accessibility and inclusion are our collective responsibility, and together, we can create inclusive communities.

Engaging talent with sight loss

With the help of a few accommodations and technologies, people who are blind or partially sighted work 100 per cent independently. The cost of hiring an employee who is blind is generally about the same as the cost of hiring a person who is sighted.

Tips for fair recruiting

The recruiting process is your first opportunity to make sure you open a job to the best possible range of candidates, including people who are blind or partially sighted.

- Distinguish between nice-to-have and actual job requirements. Is it essential that employees have a driver's license? If this line is included in all job descriptions, including those where it will not actually be necessary for the role, it will exclude many candidates.
- Advertise jobs where people with sight loss can access them. Provide vacancy details to your local disability employment advisor, connect with CNIB's Come to Work Program, and post the vacancy on an accessible website that works with screen magnifying and screen reading software.
- Make sure the application form and material for candidates are available in an accessible format like large-print or as an electronic document.
- Consider including an equal opportunities or disability statement in your job ad, outlining your commitment to equality and diversity.
- Make sure that all staff involved in selection and interviews understand equality and diversity.

Interviewing tips

Here are some simple things you can do to help everything run smoothly and ensure the process is fair.

- After shortlisting candidates, ask all applicants—whether a candidate has disclosed a disability or not—if there's anything they need to be able to do their best in the interview. If they do need something, they should tell you at this stage so that you can make reasonable adjustments.
- Don't make assumptions. For example, not all people who are blind read braille and not all people who are partially sighted like a brightly lit room. Make sure you ask the candidate if they require adjustments.
- Keep the room free of clutter and obstacles, especially on the floor.
- Offer to guide the candidate to the interview room and within the building.
- Focus on the candidate's abilities, rather than their sight loss. They should be able to explain how they go about completing tasks and getting things done.

Be open to collaboration

The CNIB Foundation's Come to Work program introduces employers to an innovative talent pool of Canadians who are blind or partially sighted and provides job seekers with work experience. Our partners are committed to engaging talent with different perspectives to create a culture of collaboration and innovation. To become a partner, join our talent pool or volunteer as a mentor, visit cometowork.ca.

Creating an accessible environment

Canadians living with disabilities represent purchasing power worth \$55 billion annually. (*Ontario Chamber of Commerce 2017*). Preparing your business to be more accessible is a smart business decision. Frontier Accessibility is a CNIB Social Enterprise that provides comprehensive accessibility solutions to help businesses effectively open their doors to Canadians who are blind or partially sighted. These include digital content and website solutions, navigation and wayfinding solutions, accessibility training, workplace accommodations, product development, training and integration. Frontier Accessibility will consult, support and deploy solutions that best meet your business needs. With Frontier Accessibility's support and expertise, you can take accessibility one step further and become a champion of inclusion. To learn more, visit frontier-cnib.ca.

Phone it Forward

Many people don't realize the tremendous impact modern smartphones have in the lives of people who are blind. CNIB Foundation's Phone It Forward program gives Canadians a unique opportunity to donate their modern smartphones, receive a tax receipt for fair market value, and empower people who are blind in the process. Donated smartphones are wiped to the highest data security standards, loaded with accessible apps and provided to Canadians with sight loss who need them, along with one-on-one training. Together, our mission is to unlock the life-changing potential of mobile technology for Canadians with sight loss and eliminate barriers. For more information or to donate a smartphone(s) to the CNIB Phone It Forward program, visit phoneitforward.ca.

Get in touch

We invite you to get involved with the CNIB Foundation and help people who are blind or partially sighted in your community smash through barriers and live the lives they choose. If you have questions or want to get involved, we're only a click or a phone call away 1-800-563-2642 | info@cnib.ca.

Dog Guide Etiquette

When interacting with a person with a Dog Guide, please remember:

- First introduce yourself, then always speak to the handler and ignore the dog.
- Don't touch, talk, feed, stare or otherwise distract the dog while they are wearing their harness or vest. You should allow the dog to concentrate and perform for the safety of his handler. If a Dog Guide approaches you simply let the handler know.
- Treat handlers with sensitivity and respect. Avoid asking personal questions about the handler's disability as it's disrespectful and an intrusion of privacy.
- When walking with a Dog Guide team, ask the handler where you should walk.
- Assume the Dog Guide team is independent on their own. If you sense they could use your help, ask first. Do not take offense if your offer is rejected.
- State what you are there for and ask if the person needs any assistance. If they do, ask how you can best assist them. Use phrases like: I'm here to help you. How may I help?



Lions Foundation of Canada is a national charity whose mission is to assist Canadians with a medical or physical disability by providing them Dog Guides at no cost. Currently, it trains Dog Guides in seven programs:

[Canine Vision](#) | [Hearing](#) | [Service](#) | [Seizure Response](#) | [Autism Assistance](#)

[Diabetic Alert](#) | [Facility Support](#)

Étiquette en présence d'un Chien-Guide

Quand vous rencontrez une personne qui a un Chien-Guide, svp, vous rappeler de ceci:

- Premièrement, présentez-vous et parlez toujours au maître, ignorez le chien.
- Ne touchez pas, ni parlez, ni nourrissez, ni fixez du regard ou posez tout autre geste qui pourrait distraire le chien alors qu'il porte son harnais ou sa veste. Vous devez laisser le chien se concentrer et s'occuper de son maître. Si le Chien-Guide décide de vous approcher, vous devez en aviser son maître, tout simplement.
- Ayez du respect pour le maître. Évitez les questions personnelles à propos de sa situation de handicap, c'est irrespectueux et une intrusion dans sa vie privée.
- Si vous marchez avec une équipe Chien-Guide, demandez au maître de quel côté il veut que vous soyez.
- Assumez qu'une équipe Chien-Guide est totalement indépendante. Si vous sentez qu'ils ont besoin de votre aide, demandez d'abord. Ne soyez pas vexé pas si votre offre est rejetée.
- Présentez-vous et demandez à la personne si elle aurait besoin d'aide. Si c'est oui, demandez comment vous pouvez porter assistance. Utilisez une phrase du genre: « Je suis ici pour vous aider, comment puis-je le faire? »





La Fondation des Lions du Canada se donne comme mission d'aider les Canadiens affligés d'un handicap physique ou médical en leur fournissant des chiens-guides sans aucun frais. Actuellement, entraîne les chiens-guides dans sept programmes:

[Vision Canine](#) | [D'assistance à L'audition](#) | [De Services](#) | [Pour Personnes Épileptiques](#)

[Pour Enfants Autistes](#) | [Pour Personnes Diabétiques](#) | [De Soutien Pour Agences](#)

Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides
152 Wilson St.
Oakville, ON
L6K 0G6
(905) 842-2891
www.dogguides.com

By Carter Hammett

So it's a beautiful summer day and you're on lunch break, walking down the street talking to a friend. All around you, the streets are teeming with life. There are cars and busloads of whooping tourists. You cross the street to bypass the construction that blocks your path. Merchants and artisans stand on the corner, loudly hawking jewelry, hotdogs, clothing. Off in the distance, you hear an ambulance blaring its sirens, and periodically, a homeless person steps in front of you, hand outstretched. Suddenly, a pigeon swoops out of nowhere to attack the crumb dropped from your sandwich.

Still, with all of these distractions, you have been able to remain engaged in your conversation. You are focused and undeterred as you try to make your point. Imagine, however, what it would be like to be unable to filter out the amount of data that bombards you. The end result would be information overload, akin to living in a sonic whirlwind. Now, imagine living in that perpetual state, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Sound overwhelming? The world of some with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) might be comparable to this chaos.

ADHD is, according to the Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC), a neurobiological disorder that is a deficit of the nervous system most often due to genetic or biological factors. There's three core symptoms: the inability to regulate attention and activity and problems with controlling inhibitory behaviour, resulting in impulsivity. Symptoms can vary literally hour-by-hour, but is measured by impairment levels, degree of symptom presentation and degree of difficulty regulating behaviours that creates a diagnosis. It's the most commonly diagnosed mental health condition in childhood, affecting anywhere from five-to-12% of the population.

During the last decade, a lot of emphasis has been placed on Executive Functions (EF) and how they impact people living with ADHD. EF can be described as a self-regulation skill set that enables us to plan, execute, assess and complete a task. EF allows us to accomplish a variety of tasks, including organizing, shifting attention, managing stress, time and space, prioritizing, goal setting and problem solving. An important function of EF includes working memory, which is critical for simultaneously holding and manipulating information at the same time. This type of memory is directly linked to written expression, reading comprehension and math skills while managing distractions as well. ADHD usually co-exists with other conditions like epilepsy, learning disabilities and anxiety.

Typically, boys are diagnosed far more frequently than girls, since they are less likely to demonstrate hyperactivity and impulsivity, many women don't get diagnosed until adulthood. The great majority of people diagnosed in childhood will continue to struggle as adults. The latest edition of the "psychiatric bible of American psychology," The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5) has recently reclassified ADHD subtypes as "presentations" that are present across a variety of manifestations.

ADHD is a condition that's both invisible and episodic in nature and as such it's easy to miss diagnosing it.. Adult symptoms frequently differ from childhood issues and have the potential to impede workplace performance which can result in patterns of under-employment. Furthermore, there's still a lot of stigma attached to the condition, which might make disclosing—and thus, accommodating—the disability more difficult.

Despite that, many people living with ADHD, including actor Rick Green, Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein, have gone on to become successful, and some even flourish in their positions. For sure, ADHD traits are inconsistent, but some channel these traits into jobs that make them excellent salespersons and customer service representatives, promoters and lobbyists due to social skills and boundless energy. Others are blessed with an endless flow of creative ideas and associations which make them marvelous brainstormers and catalysts. Many hyperactive adults use their enthusiasm effectively in entrepreneurial activities. Although planning and

long-term follow-through tend to be difficult for many ADHD adults, some are able to respond superbly to situations calling for crisis intervention or immediate problem solving.” Additionally, the energy exhibited by some with ADHD may allow them to tackle shift work quite well.

While the go-to solution for managing ADHD is usually medication, tweaks to either the job description or the work environment called accommodations, can also greatly enhance an ADHD employee’s job performance. Some of the more common approaches include checklists, job or ADHD coaching, working from home, extended training periods and more frequent, informal performance appraisals to help keep workers on track.

It’s important to remember that just because someone has been labelled ADHD that no two accommodations will be the same. However, some general suggestions for dealing with common situations may prove helpful:

Organization and Memory accommodations can include: day timers, checklists, setting alarms on phone to trigger reminders for various tasks and following up verbal instructions with emails.

For workers with **short attention spans**, breaking tasks into more manageable pieces (chunking) is often helpful as is setting alarms to help with time management and frequent short breaks.

Meanwhile, workers with **distraction issues** can enhance their performance by decreasing desk and office clutter, allocating time to look at emails and return phone calls. Simply being allowed to close an office door can also do wonders for productivity.

These are just a few suggestions to help employees with ADHD succeed in the workplace. Given the chance, they will be dedicated workers who, when clear on their responsibilities, will be inspired and inspiring while offering a plethora of fresh new ideas to their employment.

Carter Hammett is the employment services manager with Epilepsy Toronto. Visit their website at www.epilepsytoronto.org

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Fact Sheet

Stigma can make it difficult for people with epilepsy to find jobs as these misconceptions exist

- The person's performance will suffer
- The employer will be unable to terminate the person without a lawsuit
- The employer is unwilling to bear the cost that comes with hiring a person with epilepsy e.g. Paid sick leave

Why Hire a Person with Epilepsy?

Persons with epilepsy are good employees and have a positive impact on the workplace as outlined below.

- Their performance is the same as a person without epilepsy
- The workplace safety is better, there is more awareness of your surroundings and safety factors
- Better retention. When a person with epilepsy finds a suitable place of employment, there is loyalty and a desire to stay in the job. The employer has a committed and passionate employee, hence less turnover.
- There is an improved organizational culture as the organization is more inclusive and aware of issues.
- The employee meets or exceeds productivity requirements for the job

Advice for Recruiting Candidates with Epilepsy

In the job posting, it is advisable to include environmental conditions so the applicant can self-select as to whether to apply or not as they are aware of their triggers and how to manage their seizures.

Environment conditions can include factors such as:

- a hot or cold environment
- standing for long hours
- use of box cutters is required
- workspace has flashing lights and/or strong smells

Employees with Epilepsy – Keep the Following in Mind

- Each person's epilepsy is unique, it is an individual condition.
- Most people's epilepsy is controlled
- Persons with epilepsy are not likely to disclose (unless they need an accommodation)
- Some seizures look like something else/another type of behavior
- Some persons may have another disability such as a learning disability

Retention Strategies for Employees with Epilepsy:

- Develop a First Aid plan
- Develop Seizure protocols for your organization
- Learning about epilepsy – host a presentation or lunch and learn about Epilepsy, educate staff
- Recovery – understand the nature of the type of seizure your employee has and what is needed in the recovery stage

First Aid Plan Development

This is a conversation to have with your employee. Basically, what do I do if you have a seizure?

- What does the seizure look like
- When do we call 911
- Emergency Contact information – phone and email
- Who can help (includes training coworkers)
- Recovery (what do you need after a seizure has taken place) e.g a quiet, dark place
- And your return to work, are you able to work after or do you need to go home?

Seizure Protocol Considerations for the Organization

What protocols should be put in place should the person have a seizure while at work. Situations to consider:

- What if they are on cash and have a seizure?
- How will it impact staffing levels, if the person needs to go home
- Can this person work alone (out of eye sight)
- Is there a process for safe guarding against (inadvertent) theft during a seizure
- Our Employment Specialist can provide guidance by doing a site assessment and making recommendations in conjunction with the employee and organization.

Epilepsy & Seizure Management While at Work

- Allow for breaks to take medication
- Avoid fluctuating shifts e.g. Try not to schedule morning shifts after late shifts
- If possible have a quiet place to recover post seizure
- Allow the employee to keep a change of clothing on site
- Implement a buddy system in which the employee is not working alone or out of sight

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“Learning Disabilities” (LDs) is an umbrella term that describes a variety of information processing disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning, in combination with otherwise average abilities deemed essential for thinking and reasoning.

LDs range in severity and invariably interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following important skills: oral language (e.g., listening, speaking, and understanding), reading (e.g., decoding, comprehension), written language (e.g., spelling, written expression), and mathematics (e.g., computation, problem solving). Learning disabilities can also cause difficulties with executive functions (self-regulation skills), organizational skills, social perception and interaction.

Frequently learning disabilities co-exist with other conditions, including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, epilepsy, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.

As an employer, you will probably develop a productive and collaborative relationship with measurable goals that need to be accomplished for your company. However, it’s helpful to understand strength-based strategies that may help employees reach their goals. These strategies (or accommodations) can be developed over the course of the relationship, and the employee can also take these strategies into their personal and professional lives.

It’s important to facilitate goal-setting by remaining patient and looking for alternative strategies. Here’s a sampling of LD-specific strategies which may help the employee with LD perform better in the workplace.

Receptive Language

People with receptive language problems may have difficulty processing oral and written language, which could include difficulties with reading comprehension, following conversations, understanding humour and remembering complex, spoken information.

Suggested strategies can include:

- Use short, simple sentences and words
- Allow sufficient time to process information
- Ask questions and ask to have information repeated back to you as understood by the individual

Expressive Language Difficulties

People with expressive language difficulties may have issues using written and oral language to interact in meaningful ways. Some indicators of expressive language issues include having smaller vocabularies, speaking in short, clipped sentences, using a lot of “filler” words, being unable to recall words or using misplaced words in conversation.

When confronted by these types of issues, try:

- Model effective listening skills, including verbal prompts and encouragers
- Use appropriate non-verbal contact; encouraging simple responses if necessary.

Reading Challenges

Most people associate reading challenges with LD, usually applying the term “dyslexia” to the condition. Dyslexia is a somewhat dated term, and is often applied to written and oral expression. In Britain, the term is often applied generically to describe all forms of LD. Reading involves decoding words, as well as blending and distinguishing sounds, in order to process and comprehend written information. Decoding challenges may result in reading comprehension problems that could affect spelling, as well as understanding job applications, written policies and procedures, or other forms of written information.

Deal with these types of issues by:

- Discussing material prior to reading it.

- Keeping reading materials short or breaking longer passages into chunks.
- Allowing extra time to process information.
- Asking for feedback on what the individual has read and understood.
- Using tape recorders, books on tape, and supplementing written information with pictures.

Dyscalculia (Mathematics Disorder)

Math problems involve difficulties with calculating or numeric reasoning that is far below the person's intellectual capacity or age. The issue may be relevant to difficulties in language processing, reading, visual or visual-motor processing. The person may have difficulty understanding sequences of mathematical steps, copying figures, counting or understanding non-verbal concepts such as time, space and quantity.

With this type of disorder, it may be effective to try the following:

- Using calculators, talking calculators and other adaptive technologies.
- Breaking learning steps into small chunks.
- Allowing for extra processing time.

Case Study:

A worker with Central Auditory Processing issues had difficulty with time management, resulting in frequent lateness to work. The problem was chronic, and the employee was persistently burdened with feelings of guilt, fatigue and anxiety, which affected her work performance. Two alarm clocks were strategically placed around the house, so she was forced to get up on time. A third alarm clock indicated when it was time to leave the house. This helped her to arrive at work on time and improved her performance. Cost of accommodation: \$20 for an additional clock.

As you can see, the majority of these strategies are either low-cost or no-cost. Also, workers with LD tend to be great problem solvers who are resourceful and creative. They tend to be “big picture” thinkers with excellent skills in areas like spatial reasoning and empathy. Many become successful entrepreneurs as well. When matched with a supportive environment, these workers can offer remarkable solutions for your workplace.

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Inclusive Hiring is Good for Business

Building Diversity and Inclusion into Your Business

Assess your space for accessibility. You can start by reviewing guidelines set out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act at aoda.ca.

***Remember:** accommodations don't have to be extensive or costly. Many are simple changes that make a big difference.*

The Benefits of an Inclusive Workforce*

72%

of employees with disabilities have higher than average staff retention.

86%

have average or better-than-average attendance.

90%

perform equal to or better than their co-workers.

- Inclusive workplaces are twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets.
- Over half of employee accommodations cost \$500 or less, and many of the most common – such as modified hours or job-redesign – are free.

Bringing People with Disabilities on Board

- Connect with organizations and post-secondary institutions that support people living with disability and tap into that talent.
- Make it clear on job postings that accommodations for applicants with disabilities are available.
- Let employees know about your accessibility guidelines, and what support they can access if they have a disability themselves. Make this part of your hiring process, so new employees are also informed.

* Source: Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities and Stats Canada – Canadian Survey on Disability and AODA

What is a Barrier?

A barrier is anything – visible or invisible – that prevents someone with a disability from fully participating in society. Barriers are often unintentional, but they still restrict access to goods, services, information, and facilities. This impacts profits.

The Benefits of an Inclusive Customer Base*

More than 50% of Canada's population lives with disabilities

They Spend \$40 billion each year in Canada alone

and \$1 trillion globally

When Someone is Using an Assistive Device:

- Don't touch or handle it without permission.
- Don't move it out of reach.
- If your organization offers assistive devices that help customers access your services, know how to use them.
- Post basic instructions where the devices are stored so employees can provide appropriate support.



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* Source: Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities



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