



# BIA Handbook on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)



August 2015

This document is provided as a guide to BIAs in Ontario for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

This handbook was produced by the Ontario BIA Association's "Go ON: Building Accessible Communities" Project, an EnAbling Change Project with the Government of Ontario.

The Handbook is not legal advice and should be read together with the official language of the AODA and its regulations. If there is any conflict between this Handbook and the AODA, the AODA is the final authority.



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Foreword	2
<b>About This Handbook</b>	<b>3</b>
Purpose	4
<b>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)</b>	<b>6</b>
Introduction	7
<b>Customer Service</b>	<b>10</b>
Summary of Requirements	11
Best Practices for Accessible Customer Service	13
Words Matter	13
Accessibility Checklist	14
<b>Information and Communications</b>	<b>15</b>
Summary of Requirements	16
Best Practices for Accessible Marketing and Promotions	19
Accessibility Checklist	21
<b>Employment</b>	<b>22</b>
Accessibility Standard for Employment	23
Summary of Requirements	23
Best Practices for Accessible Hiring Practices	24
Accessibility Checklist	25
Accessibility Smart Businesses Project	26
<b>Bricks and Mortar</b>	<b>27</b>
Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces	28
Summary of Requirements	28
Best Practices for Accessible Spaces	28
Accessibility Checklist	30

<b>General Requirements - Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)</b>	<b>31</b>
Summary of Requirements	32
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>34</b>
Accessibility Standard for Transportation	35
<b>FAQ</b>	<b>36</b>
General	37
What are the deadlines for compliance?	41
Training	41
Websites	42
Service Animals	42
Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)	43
Accessible Documents	44
Funding	44
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>45</b>
Keeping Accessibility Alive	46
How Business Members Can Become More Accessible	48
<b>Resources</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Aknowledgements</b>	<b>53</b>



# Introduction

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## Foreword

Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) understands Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) and their members. Many if not most, BIAs in “Main Street” Ontario began organically and represent Ontario’s historic, economic and cultural core. There is therefore, a great deal of misunderstanding of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). This guidebook has been developed to dispel myths and help BIAs and their businesses gain an understanding of the requirements under the AODA.

Physical upgrades and renovations to heritage buildings are a common BIA concern. As one BIA stated: *“For our members, the AODA compliance has been a challenging one as some businesses are not in a geographic position on the sidewalk to get the regulated ramps and doorways needed to be compliant and they are having trouble finding solutions as the flexibility is not present for them to do so.”* How does a small business owner, especially those who lease, meet the AODA standards on a heritage building? And, if the standards are ‘grandfathered’ for heritage buildings, who is communicating and assuaging the fears of the small business?

Businesses must be in compliance with the Customer Service Standard. As a Local Board of Council, it was felt the local BIAs could play an active and unique role in helping their members understand and comply with AODA requirements.

OBIAA has successfully completed a project in partnership with the government of Ontario under the EnAbling Change program.

In 2014 and 2015, under the Go ON: Building Accessible Communities project, OBIAA, held 25 workshops across the province with businesses and BIAs in attendance. Additionally, we held four (4) webinars and many templates are available on our website; [www.obiaa.com/accessibility](http://www.obiaa.com/accessibility). Through the EnAbling Change program OBIAA has been proactive in engaging and communicating with members by distributing information, templates, best practices, and training on the AODA.

This project has concluded, but the message and the lessons learned will be sustained via a second project to be conducted in 2015 and 2016. OBIAA continues to provide education, resources and training to Ontario’s BIAs, and their businesses. We proudly end this current project with the BIA Handbook on the AODA for our BIAs to use as a helpful guide.

OBIAA looks forward to building on our previous success with additional webinars and workshops, aimed at educating our over 60,000 business members on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

**- OBIAA Board of Directors**

# About This Handbook

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## Purpose

This is the first AODA guide developed specifically with BIAs in mind – it has been developed for you - Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) in Ontario! This handbook is written with BIA staff in mind and highlights essential information in an easy-to-understand format; answers commonly asked questions; and summarizes the AODA requirements and deadlines that relate directly to you and your business members. It also offers a multitude of tips, best practices, and resources to inform and expand your knowledge.

This BIA Handbook on the AODA was written at the conclusion of the Go ON: Building Accessible Communities project to support BIAs and their business members to learn about, and comply with, the AODA. Over the course of the project, BIAs have shared their questions, challenges, and needs regarding accessibility and the AODA and, while the Go ON: Building Accessible Communities project is now completed, this handbook captures all the key information BIAs need to understand the AODA and support their new and existing members to become compliant with the Act.

We have gathered information from a variety of sources, including government, academic, nonprofit, and public sector organizations. These resources can be found at the end of the handbook and reflect the best references that we have found over the years and should save you many hours of Internet searching.

### How to use this Handbook

Some BIA staff said they wanted a digital handbook, while others said they wanted a hard copy version. To meet both requests, we have designed this handbook to work easily in both formats. The PDF version, which can be found in the OBIAA Resource Binder, is formatted to be accessible and has clickable links in the Table of Contents and throughout the handbook.

For those who prefer a printed copy, the handbook was designed so that it can be included in an AODA binder and includes shortened urls for most links.

#### At A Glance:

This handbook includes:

- Easy-to-understand information on the AODA
- The business case for accessibility
- Best practices and useful tips
- Suggestions for how to keep accessibility “top of mind”
- Resources and links to templates, research, and guides



This handbook serves as a central guide to accessibility and the AODA as it applies to you. If, however, there is additional information you need, you can contact:

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OBIAA

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[www.obiaa.com](http://www.obiaa.com)

647-521-5341 | 1-866-807-2227

**Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Website**

[www.Ontario.ca/accessibility](http://www.Ontario.ca/accessibility)

**AODA ServiceOntario Contact Centre**

1-866-515-2025

TTY: 416-325-3408 / Toll-free: 1-800-268-7095

# Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

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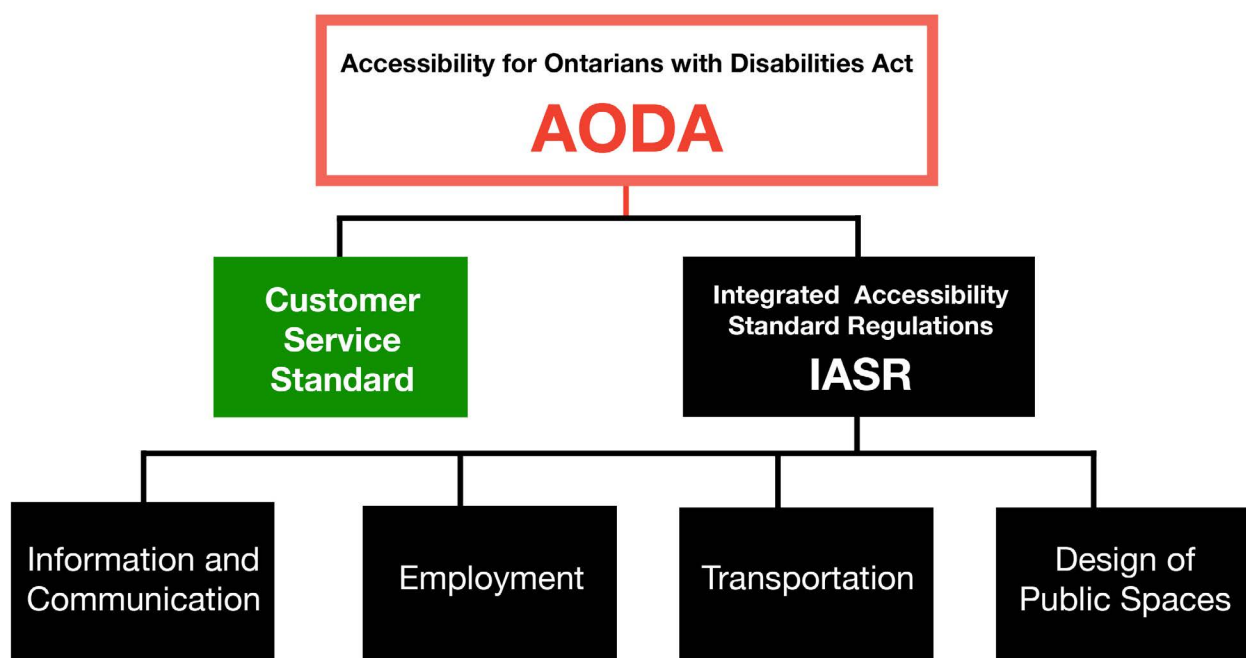


## Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) came into legislation in 2005 with the goal to make Ontario accessible to people with disabilities by 2025. It is composed of steps for businesses, non-profits, and the public sector to take in complying with the Act. The standards and timelines take into account small, medium, and large private and public sector organizations and government. The standards are rules that businesses and organizations in Ontario must follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers so that people with disabilities will have more opportunities to participate in everyday life.

There are five AODA standards. The Customer Service Standard was the first standard to become law in 2008. The information and communications, employment, transportation, and design of public spaces standards have been combined under one regulation called the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). These five standards are now law and the requirements are being phased in over time. The phased-in approach gives businesses and organizations time to make accessibility a part of their daily business.

The AODA applies to all businesses and organizations, both public, private, and not for profit that provide goods or services either directly to the public or business to business (third parties such as manufacturers, wholesalers, or providers of professional services) and that have one or more employees in Ontario. Depending on the size of your organization there are requirements that will be phased in over the next several years. For a list of the accessibility requirements that your organization needs to comply with and by when, visit [www.ontario.ca/accessibility](http://www.ontario.ca/accessibility).



## **Why does Ontario need accessibility standards?**

As Business Improvement Association members and staff, we have an invested interest in making our neighbourhoods and businesses reflect our communities. The AODA is designed to make Ontario a better place to live, work, and play for everyone. Most know someone with a disability and many of us will experience disability first hand, whether it be a broken leg as a young child or poor eye sight as we age.

The AODA was passed with the goal of implementing standards to improve accessibility across the province. Several laws in Ontario address accessibility, such as the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Ontario Building Code, and some requirements have existed since the 1960s. Since then, progress on accessibility has been made in some areas and by some organizations. Despite this, accessibility remains limited. People with disabilities still do not have equal access to services, employment, transportation, information or buildings that other people in Ontario enjoy.

The purpose of the accessibility standards is to help organizations in Ontario become more accessible. The standards set requirements in a number of key areas and are to be reviewed at least every five years, with the possibility of new requirements being added. Step by step, Ontario as a whole will make accessibility widespread and commonplace. We as a province, as business staff and owners, consumers, and as community members, will fully benefit from the contributions, involvement and spending power of people with disabilities.

## **Business Case for Accessibility**

Ontario is an exciting place to be a BIA or business. We have unique opportunities to impact the lives of many, including persons with disabilities. Today, approximately 1 in 7 people have a disability in Ontario, and that is expected to rise to 1 in 5 over the coming years as the population ages. As we age, our sight, hearing, and mobility abilities decrease – most of us may have a disability at some point in our lives. It is important that organizations that work with the public can accommodate the needs of its customers, clients and peers.

Improving accessibility is the right thing to do for your community and business. According to the Royal Bank of Canada, people with disabilities have an estimated spending power of about \$25 billion annually across Canada<sup>1</sup>. People with disabilities also represent a large pool of untapped employment potential. When we make Ontario accessible to people with disabilities everyone benefits!

Increasing accessibility will help prepare Ontario for the future. As the population

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1 “Case Studies: Delivering Your Business Goals by Creating an Inclusive Environment”. International Summit on Accessibility. Carlton University, Ottawa.

ages the number of people with disabilities will increase. Visitors and tourists, along with their friends and family will need to travel, shop, use programs, services, and information and they will want to access buildings, parks and other places in ways that are accessible.

Going beyond the province's boundaries, the Canadian market of people of disabilities is the same as the combined population of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba<sup>2</sup>. The international market is even greater – the size of China!<sup>3</sup> People with disabilities want the same products and services that people without disabilities enjoy. What business can afford to ignore a market this size? The AODA provides a unique opportunity to businesses on a local, national, and global level to become leaders in inclusive goods and services.

Businesses and communities thrive through inclusion, engagement, and active participation. Together, we can make BIAs that includes everyone – from our children to great-grandparents, and everyone in between. Accessibility benefits all - its good for our communities, our businesses, and us.

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2      [“Publications: About the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(AODA\)”](#) Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2008). Web. 31 August 2015.

3      Donovan, R. [“Mining the disability market.”](#) BBC. (2011). Web. 29 April 2013.

# Customer Service

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## Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

The Customer Service Standard was the first standard to become law under the AODA. Customers and clients are vital to the success of an organization. Accessible customer service will help ensure everyone has access to the goods and services you provide.

Persons with disabilities may require assistance or accommodation in the way that goods and services are provided to them. The type of accommodation provided may vary depending on the customer's unique needs. In every case, you need to provide people with disabilities equal opportunities to access goods and services with the respect, dignity, and independence that people without disabilities enjoy.

The Customer Service Standard is about providing appropriate service to people with disabilities. A large component of that is ensuring that you and your staff know how to communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

### Summary of Requirements

BIAs and their business members with one or more employees must comply with the 11 Customer Service Standard requirements summarized below.

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.
2. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that your policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
3. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access your goods and use your services and any other measures your organization offers (assistive devices, services, or methods) to enable them to access your goods and use your services.
4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises you own or operate that are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.

6. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.

7. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

8. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted.

9. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the Customer Service standard.

10. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing your policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities and how you will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the information about your feedback process readily available to the public.

Note that organizations with 20 or more employees have three additional requirements to meet.

12. Document in writing all your policies, practices and procedures for providing accessible customer service and meet other document requirements set out in the standard.

## **Accessibility makes businesses money**

When Tim Hortons renovates a new store, franchise owner Mark Wafer usually sees a 1.4% drop in sales. However, when he renovated with accessibility in mind and provided his staff with accessible customer service training Wafer saw an 8% increase. More people could access the Tim Hortons than before while being served in a respectful way that was reflective of their needs.<sup>4</sup>

## **Research shows...**

"Disabled people don't want 'special' products ... but they are hungry to be included in the mainstream consumer experience." – Richard Donovan, 2011.

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4 "Case Studies: Delivering Your Business Goals by Creating an Inclusive Environment." (2014). International Summit on Accessibility. Carlton University, Ottawa.



13. Notify customers that documents required under the customer service standard are available upon request.
14. When giving documents required under the customer service standard to a person with a disability, provide the information in a format that takes into account the person's disability.

## Best Practices for Accessible Customer Service

**Integrated service:** Provide goods and services to persons with disabilities in an integrated manner with those who do not have disabilities, unless an alternative measure is necessary.

**Responsive Communication:** When communicating with a person with a disability, do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability.

**Speak to and look at the person with a disability,** even if they are accompanied with a support person who communicates on their behalf.

**Never touch or move an assistive device without permission,** such as a wheelchair or cane. The same rule applies to service animals.

**Ask "How may I help you?"** instead of jumping to conclusions about what the person with a disability may need.

**Wait for a customer or client to finish their sentence** instead of cutting them off or jumping ahead.

## Words Matter

"Person first" terminology has grown in popularity in recent years. It puts the person before their disability. An example would be "a person with a disability". Avoid using words like "victim", "challenged", "stricken" and "unfortunate".

When talking about people who use mobility devices, avoid using phrases such as "wheelchair-bound" or "confined to a wheelchair". Do not label people by their disability, such as calling someone an "epileptic", "autistic" or "a paraplegic" for example. However, the Deaf community consider themselves a minority group, and refer to themselves as "Deaf", with a capital D.

Terms like "differently abled" and "physically challenged" are used in some circles but discouraged by others who see them as clichés and euphemisms. Similarly, just because someone has a disability, it doesn't mean they are "courageous," "brave," "special." People with disabilities are the same as everyone else and we all have talents, skills, and abilities.

<b>Avoid</b>	<b>Use Instead</b>
The disabled	Person with a disability
Cripple	Person with a motor disability
Retard	Person with an intellectual disability
Handicapped	Person with a disability
Lame	Person with a mobility disability
Spastic; spaz; epileptic	Person with a motor disability
The Blind	Person with a vision impairment (not everyone who has trouble seeing is blind)
Special needs; special-ed	Person with a disability
Dumb; mute	Person with a communication disability
Disturbed	Person with an emotional disability
Dwarf; midget	Person of short stature; Little Person
Downs kid; a Mongoloid; a Mongol	Person who has Down syndrome
Moron, idiot, imbecile	Person with a cognitive impairment
Insane; crazy; demented; psycho; maniac; lunatic	Person with a psychiatric illness/ disability; person with a mental health issue

## Accessibility Checklist

- ☑ Establish Customer Service policies, practices and procedures for providing services to people with disabilities
- ☑ Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public on your behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the AODA Customer Service Standard.
- ☑ Provide goods and services to persons with disabilities in an integrated manner with those who do not have disabilities and alternatives when needed or requested
- ☑ Ask “How may I help you?” instead of jumping to conclusions about what the person with a disability may need
- ☑ Use “Person first” terminology, eg. Person with a communication disability
- ☑ Create a way(s) for people with disabilities to give you feedback

# Information and Communications

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## Information and Communications

### About the Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications

In the information age, we all rely on easy access to information. Communication is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. The Information and Communications Standard outlines how organizations are required to create, provide and receive information and communications in ways that are accessible for people with disabilities. It requires that you communicate with an individual with a disability in a way that takes into account their disability.

Taking someone's disability into account requires you to consider that particular individual's needs and circumstances. This means not making assumptions based on his or her disability. What may be a very effective way of providing information for one person with a disability may not be for another. Different people with the same type of disability may communicate in varied ways because of different skills or resources. Where possible, it is helpful to ask the person directly how best to communicate with them.

### Summary of Requirements

#### 1. Accessible formats and communication supports

Organizations must provide, or make arrangements for, accessible formats and communication supports when a person with a disability requests them. The accessible formats and communication supports must be made available in a timely manner and at no additional cost other than the regular price charged to everyone for the same information. Organizations must notify the public about the availability of accessible formats and communication supports and must consult with the person making the request regarding the suitability of the format or support provided.

#### What are accessible communications available in alternate format?

Depending on the situation and the person's needs, there are a variety of ways to make communications more accessible. These include:

- Making the original communication more accessible (use fonts 12pt or higher in size, use built-in document formatting such as Styles in Word)
- Changing the usual method of communication (exchanging written notes or reading written information aloud)
- Using assistive devices or services (accessible recorded audio, magnifier, captioning or audio description)

## 2. Accessible websites and web content

As of January 1, 2014, if you are an organization with 50 or more employees that is launching a new public website and web content or doing a significant site refresh, the site and its content must conform to the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, Level A.

### More than screen readers

Web accessibility often focuses on screen reader accessibility, but accessibility is much more than that. Not everyone can use a computer in the same way. There are many types of assistive technology that people with disabilities may use to access your website. This can include switches, screen magnification, keystrokes, and voice control to operate computers. Colours, fonts, and layout all affect the accessibility of a design – in addition to clean developer coding! When designing a webpage, think about the different ways users maybe accessing your content and the design reflects different vision, mobility, and cognitive needs.

For more technical information on website accessibility, visit the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) website from the Resource section at the end of this chapter.

### Accessible websites

An accessible website takes into account the variety of ways that people with disabilities navigate and understand web content. The AODA requires obligated organizations to design their websites using the WCAG 2.0 guidelines. WCAG 2.0 is an internationally accepted standard designed for web developers to ensure accessibility as agreed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), an international team of experts. WCAG 2.0 sets out guidelines for organizations to make their websites more accessible. Each guideline has three levels of accessibility: A, AA and AAA. Level AAA is the highest level of accessibility.

The WCAG 2.0 guidelines include:

- Writing web content in clear language
- Providing alternate text for images
- Making sure your website can be navigated with just a keyboard.

## User Testing and Feedback

Review your site using assistive technology like screen readers to make sure the design and technical aspects of the site are accessible. If possible, ask people with disabilities to test your new or redesigned site before you launch. Get feedback from customers and other site users to find out if there are any improvements needed. You can also conduct an automated accessibility test yourself, using tools such as AChecker (<http://achecker.ca/checker/index.php>) or WAVE ([wave.webaim.org](http://wave.webaim.org)), but note that automated testers only catch about 30% of accessibility issues. Another option is to hire a company to do a website accessibility audit as they will use both automated and manual testing tools.

Use the following link to learn more about how people with disabilities use the web: [www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web/Overview.html](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/people-use-web/Overview.html)

## Finding the Right Web Developer

Make sure your web developer has the expertise needed to make your website more accessible. Here are some questions to ask when looking for a developer:

- Are you familiar with WCAG 2.0, Level A and AA?
- Have you developed/redesigned a website that is accessible in accordance to WCAG 2.0 Level A or higher?
- Do you have links or references for accessible sites you have made or maintained?
- Do you code manually or with the assistance of a program. If using a program, does it support accessibility?
- Do you test the website for accessibility using automated and manual assessments and assistive technology?

## 3. Emergency procedures, plans or public safety information

Organizations that have publically available emergency procedures, plans or public safety information need to make them available in accessible formats or with communications supports, on request. BIAs need to consider what publically available emergency information they have at events.

## 4. Accessible feedback processes

Processes for receiving and responding to feedback need to be provided in accessible formats and with communication supports, upon request.

## Best Practices for Accessible Marketing and Promotions

We can communicate through body language, movement, voice, text, and image. How people communicate varies with culture and ability. Accommodating different communication needs and styles is especially important at events and presentations to ensure the message reaches the audience. Keeping in mind mobility, cognitive, hearing and sight differences can help shape your presentation style.

In order for marketing and communications to be effective they should be accessible to everyone. Organizations want to reach the broadest audience possible – whether that is within a niche or broad global market. The needs of people with disabilities are often overlooked when designing marketing and communication material.

### Know Your Audience

Knowing your audience is key to successful marketing and communication. Your audience needs should be included, considered, heard, and understood by your organization in order for you to gain their trust and business. If your message does not resonate with your audience or is misunderstood, then it is lost on them. Consider testing out your materials with a small target group first to ensure that the key messages you are trying to convey are, in fact, what people understand from reading them.

## Best Practices for Documents

- **Express the identity of a person with disabilities as a positive identity:** If referring to disability in marketing material, consider using a disability-positive approach rather than making the person with a disability appear to be a victim or second-class citizen.
- **Use imagery to express diversity:** Organizations usually feature idealized persons in promotional material, often white, young, slim men and women. Alternatively, use images that show people of various abilities, cultural and economic backgrounds to more accurately reflect the community you serve.
- **Use universal imagery that is easily recognizable by people of different cultural backgrounds and abilities:** Visual and auditory associations vary with culture and ability. To avoid confusion or unexpected interpretation, use universal symbols as appropriate.
- **Avoid using language that excludes or makes presumptions about your audience:** When giving presentations, making statements such as “As you

can see here, we are almost always on target...” excludes people with vision impairments. Clarity can increase the accessibility of your message. Instead, describe imagery or actions on screen for people with vision impairments or who are sitting far away from the slides/screen by saying; “The graph of target sales and customer transactions shows that we are almost always on target.”

- **Use plain language:** Avoid using uncommon words and jargon. Short sentences are easier to read and if you use abbreviations, spell them out the first time they are introduced.

## **Best Practices for Events**

- **Provide clear accessibility information** in promotional material, signage, maps, brochures and program guides, website and/or social media so that people don’t have to hunt to find it.
- **Ensure all staff and volunteers know about the accessibility features of your event**, how to direct people to accessible areas, and how to interact with people with disabilities.
- **Consider choosing an accessible venue or space with accessible entrances**, doorways, paths of travel, parking, washrooms, eating areas, and seating.
- **Ensure that accessible paths of travel** are smooth, level, wide, and well marked.
- **Offer rest areas and shelters for people with disabilities** and service animals

## **Best Practices for Meetings and Presentations**

### ***Presentations:***

- **Speak clearly, loudly, and at a normal pace:** If you speak too softly or quickly, listeners may not hear what you are saying. Instead, speak at a pace and volume that is easy to understand.
- **Offer accommodations to people with disabilities when giving presentations:** Examples of accommodations include facing the audience to accommodate people who are lip-reading, live-event captioning at presentations, and American Sign Language (ASL) translators. If you use handouts or slides, you can offer copies for attendees to read ahead of time or to follow along with.

### ***Agenda:***

- **Include breaks** to allow people to use the washroom, take medication, get food etc.
- **Keep within the allotted time** so that people can plan accordingly.

### ***Venue***

- **Consider the possible seating needs of presenters and attendees.** Is there room



for a mobility device user to navigate the room? Is there seating near the front for people who are hard of hearing or have poor eyesight?

- **Does the lighting reflect the task/presentation?** If slides are being shown, is the room dark enough to see the projector screen? If people are writing or reading content, is the room bright enough to see and to navigate the room?

## Accessibility Checklist

- ☒ Communicate with a person with a disability in a way that takes into account their disability
- ☒ Provide, or make arrangements for, accessible formats and communication supports when a person with a disability requests them
- ☒ Design new or refreshed websites to meet the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0
- ☒ Ask web developers if they developed/redesigned a website that is accessible and in accordance to WCAG 2.0 Level A or higher
- ☒ Ask for feedback on your materials from persons with disabilities
- ☒ Use imagery that expresses diversity in your materials, including a range of disabilities
- ☒ Use plain language
- ☒ Use clear fonts, such as Verdana and Arial, and large size fonts such as 14 point
- ☒ Let people know the alternative ways they can access your materials
- ☒ Provide information on accessibility features and services in your brochures, program/event guides, website, social media, signage, and maps
- ☒ Ensure staff and volunteers know about the accessibility features/services of your organization, events, and community in general

# Employment

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## Accessibility Standard for Employment

Organizations need to be reflective of the community they serve, and what better way of doing that than including people with various backgrounds and abilities on the workforce?

A restraint that many organizations face is the shortage of skilled labour: 34% skilled and 13% unskilled. It is estimated that increased workforce participation among people with disabilities will increase the GDP per capita in Ontario by \$600 per annum<sup>5</sup>. Partnering with a disability employment agency and including accommodation information in job postings and correspondence as per the Employment Standard can help organizations find the perfect employee, volunteer, or board member.

### Ontario Human Rights Code

The AODA is not the only Ontario legislation providing protections for individuals with disabilities. The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in various areas, including services, accommodation, employment and contracts, and creates a duty to accommodate such individuals to the point of undue hardship.

The Employment Standard is about making hiring and employee support practices more accessible. The standard contains a variety of requirements on how to make accessibility a regular part of hiring and supporting employees with disabilities. These obligations do not supersede the requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

**Suggestion:** *Partnering with a disability employment agency can help you achieve this goal.*

## Summary of Requirements

### 1. Recruitment.

Inform candidates that accommodations are available upon request. If an accommodation request is received, you must consult with the candidate to find a suitable solution that meets his or her needs.

### 2. Employee Notifications

Inform employees of your policies to support employees with disabilities and do

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<sup>5</sup> Kemper et al. [Releasing Constraints: Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario](#). Martin Prosperity Institute. (2010). PDF. Web. 29 April 2013.

so as soon as is practical after they begin their employment. Provide updated information to employees whenever the policies surrounding accommodations are updated.

### **3. Individual Accommodation Plans.**

All organizations must create individual accommodation plans for employees with disabilities who require it. This includes accessible formats, communication supports, and any other accommodation that is to be provided.

### **4. Return to Work Process.**

All organizations need to develop a return-to-work process for employees who require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work. The process must outline the steps the employer will take to facilitate the return to work process and include an individual accommodation plan.

### **5. Performance Management, Career Development, Advancement, Redeployment**

Employers that use performance management, provide career development and advancement to their employees, or use redeployment, must take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans.

### **6. Accessible Formats and Communication Supports.**

Provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request when needed for the employee to perform their job. This also applies to general information that other employees in the workplace have access to.

### **7. Workplace Emergency Response Information.**

Create an individualized emergency plan for employees with disabilities who request one.

## **Best Practices for Accessible Hiring Practices**

- **State you are an equal opportunity employer:** In the job posting or ads, include "We welcome applications from diverse applicants, including persons with disabilities".
- **Have paper copies of the job posting and application form available** at your reception.
- **Make advertisement highly visible:** Advertise in alternative formats such as large print.

- **Give applicants advance notice** of the screening methods.
- **Let applicants know how long the interview will be** so transportation arrangements can be made. When estimating time, consider that some people may require longer periods due to mobility issues or through using assistive devices.
- **Ask all applicants whether there is anything you could do** to accommodate them during the interview, including both people with and without disabilities.

## Employment Myths

1. The percentage of people with visible disabilities is:  
a) 20% b) 30% c) 40% d) 50% e) 70%
2. A DuPont study showed that \_\_\_\_\_ of workers who have a disability scored average or above average in performance ratings.  
a) 50% b) 65% c) 82% d) 90%
3. Most job accommodations cost less than:  
a) \$5,000 b) \$3,000 c) \$1,000 d) \$500 e) \$200
4. According to a DuPont survey, \_\_\_\_\_ of employees who have a disability have average or above average attendance records  
a) 86% b) 75% c) 66% d) 44%
5. Less than \_\_\_\_\_ of people who have a disability use a wheelchair or scooter as their primary mode of transportation.  
a) 2% b) 5% c) 8% d) 12% e) 15%

## Answers:

1. B ; 2. D; 3. D; 4. A; 5. A<sup>6</sup>

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6 "Six Steps to Marketing Employment for people who have a disability", Joe Dale. October 2002.

## Accessibility Checklist

- ☑ Include in job ads and postings that you welcome diverse applicants
- ☑ Let applicants know how long the interview will be and what screening methods will be used
- ☑ Ask all applicants whether there is anything you could do to accommodate them during the interview
- ☑ Inform employees of your policies to support employees with disabilities as soon as they start
- ☑ Create individual accommodation plans, including for emergency situations, for employees with disabilities who require it

## Accessibility Smart Businesses Project

Employing people with disabilities is an effective strategy for realizing a dedicated workforce and strengthening businesses across Ontario. OBIAA seeks to help its 60,000 BIA business members to identify and remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities in communities across the province.

In September 2015, OBIAA launched a year-long provincial education and inclusion initiative that will:

1. Engage BIAs and their business members in learning more about the business benefits of hiring persons with disabilities and how to do so successfully.
2. Work with individual BIAs to identify ways that their business members can remove employment barriers.
3. Offer accessible employment related resources, tips, case studies, and more on OBIAA's website.
4. Support BIAs to understand and comply with the Employment Standard of the AODA.

This initiative is made possible with funding from the Government of Ontario. Visit OBIAA's website for more information, resources, and ways to get involved.

# Bricks and Mortar

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## Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standard (DOPS) primarily regulates outdoor spaces, such as those listed below. The standard applies on a go-forward basis – organizations are not required to renovate or retrofit existing spaces. The standard only applies to new construction and planned redevelopment. The Ontario Building Code already addresses barrier-free design in many areas inside buildings.

Both the Design of Public Spaces standard and the Ontario Building code are on a “go forward” basis.

Still have questions? Check out our webinar recording “Accessibility and the Built Environment” (<http://bit.ly/1P5bZnl>). Webinar speakers explained the obligations BIAs and their business members have under the AODA, the Ontario Building Code, and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

### Summary of Requirements

DOPS requires accessibility be taken into account when building or extensively renovating the following spaces:

- Recreational trails/beach access routes
- Outdoor public eating areas
- Outdoor play spaces
- Outdoor paths of travel, such as sidewalks
- Accessible parking
- Service counters, fixed queuing lines and waiting areas

It also has requirements concerning the maintenance and restoration of public spaces.

BIAs use many different types of public spaces for their events and working with your local municipality to make them more accessible will benefit everyone.

### Best Practices for Accessible Spaces

- **When conducting renovations or repairs**, think about what changes can be done with little or no extra cost (ie: lower light switches and counter tops, install carpets to prevent slipping)
- **Clear paths of travel** so that they are easy to navigate and allow enough space



for a person using a mobility device to pass other customers/staff or travel side-by-side.

- **Level flooring to reduce trip hazards.** If this is unavoidable, use cable protectors that a wheelchair can roll over and are in bright/contrasting colours to alert people with low vision that there are wires and protector there.
- **Clearly mark changes in level with high-contrast colours** (ie: yellow tape at stairs)
- **Install lower counters with knee room** for people using mobility devices to approach a service counter.
- **Widen entranceways** so that people using mobility devices or support animals/ persons can enter a building, a washroom, or a room easily.

### BIA Lead by Example



#### Georgetown: Accessible Bench

On hearing that the Barton Village BIA had been installing accessible benches in its community, the Georgetown BIA contacted their regular supplier to see if they could make the same accommodations to the bench style they use. For only \$200 extra, the supplier was able to customize the bench to make it 3" higher and include an armrest in the middle. Georgetown BIA will be using this accessible bench model to replace the other ones going forward.

#### Collingwood – An Accessible Community

The streets of Collingwood needed an update. The infrastructure they had built in the 70's and 80's was now outdated and they looked to accessibility and pedestrian-friendly design to revitalize their community.

Collingwood worked with individual businesses to help those with inaccessible entrances remove steps, adjust grades and install concrete ramps. As result

of this work, undertaken in partnership with private property owners, approximately 80% of the businesses in Collingwood's Downtown area are now accessible from the street.

There was no added cost to design for an accessible environment - either in the planning stages or during the reconstruction. By making businesses accessible at no additional cost to the private sector, this was felt to be a great win for the Collingwood community

No form of innovation comes without its challenges. For example, some pre-existing patios impacted the plan for a straight path in areas. However, most businesses were able to move their patios, and all new patio installations have chosen to be located at the curbside.

## Accessibility Checklist

- ☒ Choose an accessible venue for your meetings and events
- ☒ Clear paths of travel so that they are easy to navigate and allow enough space for a person using a mobility device to pass other customers/staff or travel side-by-side
- ☒ Level flooring to reduce trip hazards
- ☒ Clearly mark changes in level
- ☒ Consider accessibility when making purchases, such as benches and signage
- ☒ Think about how to enhance accessibility when conducting renovations or repairs

# General Requirements - IASR

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## General Requirements - IASR

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) sets out a variety of general obligations for companies and organizations that are not part of the specific standards relating to information and communications, employment, transportation, or public spaces under the AODA.

### Summary of Requirements

#### Accessibility policies and plans

All organizations with one or more employees in Ontario must develop, implement and maintain policies that govern how the organization will achieve accessibility. In addition, the Government of Ontario, designated public sector organizations and large organizations with 50 or more employees must develop, implement and maintain multi-year accessibility plans. The accessibility plans must outline strategies for removing existing barriers and preventing new ones, and must show how the requirements of the IASR will be met.

#### Training

All organizations in Ontario with 1 or more employees (which would include your BIA and most of your member businesses) must train everyone who provide goods, services or facilities on their behalf. Employees, contractors, board members and volunteers must receive training on the four IASR standards and the Ontario Human Rights Code as it relates to persons with disabilities.

#### Self-Service Kiosks Accessibility Features

When determining what accessibility features can be included in the design or purchase of a kiosk, organizations may consider technical features, structural features, and the access path to the kiosk.

Technical features: Includes colour contrast on the display screen and the options to increase font size, as well as allowing for extra time to complete tasks. Other technical features include voice activating equipment and visual and non-visual modes of operation.

Structural features: Includes the height and stability of the kiosk, headset jacks with volume control, and specialized keypads or keyboards.

Access path: Includes reach ranges or people using mobility aids, and the proximity of the kiosk to other objects.

## **Self-service kiosks**

Both large and small organizations need to consider accessibility for people with disabilities when designing, procuring or acquiring self-service kiosks. This includes interactive terminals that your member businesses might have including self-serve check-out kiosks, point of sale devices, and computers for customer use.

# Transportation

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## Accessibility Standard for Transportation

The Accessibility Standard for Transportation applies to public passenger transportation services that operate within Ontario. This includes transit commissions, municipality licensed taxis, public school boards, hospitals, and post-secondary institutions that provide transportation, and some ferries. This standard does not apply to BIAs or businesses that offer transportation, other than those noted above.

# FAQ

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## General

### What are the deadlines for compliance?

All businesses and organizations are responsible for being in compliance with accessibility standards on January 1st in the year they come into effect.

All businesses and organizations must report being in compliance by December 31st of their reporting years.

The next reporting year for the private sector is 2017.

The deadlines for compliance and reporting can be found at [Ontario.ca/accessibility](http://Ontario.ca/accessibility)

### What is the definition of a “disability”?

The definition of disability under the AODA is the same as the definition of disability in the Ontario Human Rights Code. In this Act, “disability” means,

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997;

The definition includes disabilities of different severity, visible as well as non-visible disabilities, and disabilities the effects of which may come and go.

**Example:** A person with arthritis has a disability that over time may increase in severity.

**Example:** A person with a brain injury has a disability that is not visible.

**Example:** A person with multiple sclerosis has a disability that causes her to experience periods when the condition does not have an effect on her daily routine and other periods when it does.

It is important to understand that information about a disability is personal and private and must be treated confidentially. In most cases it will not be necessary to ask for proof of a disability.

## **Who has to comply with the AODA?**

All organizations in Ontario, with 1 or more employees must comply with the AODA requirements. This applies to organization in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors of Ontario, including all municipalities in the province as well as ministries and agencies of the Ontario government.

Organizations can visit [Ontario.ca/Accessibility](https://ontario.ca/accessibility) to determine their specific requirements.

## **How do I count the number of employees that I have?**

Employee size is determined by identifying the organization's peak employee count at any one time over the previous twelve-month period.

When determining whether the AODA applies to your organization and what size your organization is (see next question), count all full-time, part-time, seasonal, and contract workers.

In determining the size of your organization, do not count volunteers and independent contractors such as plumbers and electricians

## **How does the AODA define an organization's size?**

Under the Customer Service Standard, a small organization has between 1-19 employees and a large organization has 20+ employees.

Under the IASR and the requirements therein, the definition is slightly different. A small organization is one with 1-49 employees and a large organization is one with 50+ employees.

## **What is the definition of an employee under the AODA?**

An employee is someone in an employee-employer relationship with an employer. An employer needs to determine who is included as an employee based on the individual situation or circumstances. In most situations it is clear whether someone is an employee or not. Usually this will depend on whether you pay the employee wages or a salary, have control over the work assigned to the employee, and have a right to control the details of the work.

However, even if someone is not an employee as defined by the AODA, they may still require AODA training, as in the case of volunteers and some independent contractors who represent your organization.

## **What if I am self-employed?**

If you are self-employed, either as a sole proprietor or in a partnership, you should not count yourself as an employee in determining how many employees you have. In this situation you and any business partner that you may have are not employees. However, any other individuals who work for you may be considered employees depending on the nature of the relationship.

If you run your own business and it is incorporated, you may be an employee of the corporation along with other employees you have.

## **Does a property owner need to comply with the AODA?**

If the owner of a property has incorporated that ownership, then the property owner is considered an employee of the business and therefore the business must comply with the AODA.

## **If an organization is renting/using another's premise to deliver services who is responsible for compliance with the AODA?**

The location of the service does not matter, rather it is who is providing the service that determines who is accountable for compliance with the AODA.

## **What if the AODA conflicts with other laws?**

If two laws conflict with one another, Section 38 of the AODA states that the law that provides the higher level of accessibility is the law that must be followed.

## **How is the AODA enforced?**

The AODA allows for enforcement of the standards through inspections, compliance orders and administrative penalties.

## **What does it mean "to provide goods or services to the public"?**

Organizations use many different words to describe the members of the public they serve, including customers, clients, members, patients, constituents, parishioners, congregants, patrons and consumers. Under the Customer Service Standard, providing services to the public means providing goods or services that members of the public are allowed to use.

## **What does it mean to provide goods or services to third parties?**

The Customer Service Standard also applies to persons or organizations who make goods or services available to other third parties and who have one or more employees—other businesses, the government or other organizations. This includes property owners, consultants, manufacturers and wholesalers as well as

providers of other business and professional services. Under the customer service standard, providers of goods or services to third parties must comply with the same requirements as the providers who serve the public.

### **What are some examples of “providers of goods or services”**

Here are some examples of businesses you may have within your BIA that provide goods or services to the public:

- Stores, restaurants, hotels, bars and hair salons;
- Garages, service stations, home renovators, architects and builders;
- Hospitals and health services;
- Schools, universities and colleges;
- Organizations that operate public places and amenities, such as recreation centres, public washrooms, malls and parks;
- Municipal and provincial governments and the programs and facilities that they run, including social assistance services, public meetings, public transit, libraries, and employment centres;
- Provincially regulated utilities;
- Travel agencies, tour operators, amusement parks, farmers’ markets and travelling fairs;
- Police, ambulance, fire and court services;
- Manufacturers and wholesalers;
- Professionals, such as doctors, dentists, chiropractors, physiotherapists, lawyers, and accountants, whether services are offered to individuals or to businesses;
- Consultants, programmers, engineers and event planners;
- Charities and non-profit organizations;
- Theatres, stadiums and conference centres;
- Places of worship, such as churches, synagogues, mosques and temples; and
- Unions and professional associations.

### **Do my goods have to be accessible?**

The Customer Service Standard does not set accessibility requirements for the goods themselves, but rather the way that they are provided to customers. Anyone with a disability has the right to access your goods or services.

### **What if another company provides some of my services?**

If you are a provider with responsibilities under the customer service standard, you must ensure that the policies, procedures and practices that govern the provision

of your goods or services are compliant with the standard regardless of who is providing the goods or services on your behalf.

For example, a provider may contract or pay another company to provide billing and collections services or delivery and installation services on its behalf. As the provider that contracts to another company you must still ensure the second company fulfills your obligation under the standard. You would need to ensure, for example, that the second company providing delivery and installation services, meets your obligations under the standard. If the goods or services are provided in Ontario, this applies even if the second company has no staff in Ontario.

## Training

**Do we have to train our event volunteers? Our Board Members? Interns? What about staff that don't have contact with the public? Committee members?**

### ***Customer Service Standard***

Training must be given to:

- Everyone in your organization who deals with members of the public as well as other third parties who act on your behalf.
- Everyone who develops policies, procedures and practices about the provision of goods or services to the public or other third parties.

This includes full-time, part-time and contract staff, volunteers and anyone that provides goods or services on your behalf.

This also includes management and senior leaders of an organization if they direct, monitor or evaluate policies on how goods or services are provided.

### ***IASR***

Organizations are required to train persons in their organization on the requirements of the Accessibility Standards in the Regulation, as well as on disability-related obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

This training applies to:

- All employees and volunteers – including paid and unpaid positions;
- Persons who participate in developing an organization's policies – this may include business owners, independent operating regulated professionals, etc.; and
- All other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of the organization – including outsourced services, such as facilities management, payroll and contact centres.

All organizations (except private and not-for-profit with 1-49 employees) must keep records of the number of people who were trained, and the dates that training was provided.

## Websites

### **Do we have to make our website accessible?**

As of January 1, 2014 all organizations with 50 or more employees that create new internet websites and web content on those sites must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level A.

A “new” website means:

- a site with a new domain name (i.e. a brand new website address, and not a new page or link on the existing site); or
- a site with an existing domain name undergoing a significant refresh. Significant refresh may include, but is not limited to, a new look and feel, changes to navigability, or the majority of content is being updated or changed.

By January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content must conform with WCAG 2.0 Level AA, other than success criteria 1.2.4 Captions (Live) and success criteria 1.2.5 Audio Descriptions (Pre-recorded).

### **Do mobile apps need to be made accessible and meet AODA requirements?**

Mobile applications (smart phone applications/mobile apps) that are internet-based would have requirements under the standard. Mobile applications that are not internet-based would not have requirements. Organizations will need to assess their mobile application to determine whether it is internet-based or not.

## Service Animals

### **How are service animals and guide dogs defined?**

#### ***i. Readily apparent***

It is “readily apparent” that an animal is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or by what it is doing. For example, it may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that identifies it as a service animal or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if a person is using the animal to assist him or her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.

**Example:** A cafe has a customer who is blind and uses a guide dog to get around. The cafe allows the customer and his dog to use its facilities without any documentation as the individual is obviously using the dog because of his disability. Or, a BIA might have an office volunteer who is autistic and has a service animal to help reduce social stress.

## ***ii. A letter from a doctor or nurse***

Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent to an average, informed person that the animal is a service animal, you may ask the person using the service animal for a letter from a doctor or nurse that says the animal is needed because of a disability. The letter need only explain that the animal is required because of a disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used.

## **Who must take care of a service animal while its owner is accessing goods or services?**

It is the responsibility of the owner of the service animal to provide for the maintenance and care of the service animal while accessing an obligated organization's goods or services.

## **Can I let service animals into my restaurant?**

People with disabilities accompanied by a service animal can go wherever the public regularly has access. They will be permitted to keep the service animal with them unless the animal is excluded by another law, such as a kitchen where food is prepared.

If the service animal is not permitted on the premises, the business will need to ensure that alternate methods are available to the customer/client accessing our services. It is the responsibility of the customer to ensure that their service animal is kept under control at all times.

## **What should I do if I'm unsure if an animal is a service animal or not?**

If it is not obvious that the animal is a service animal, the customer may be requested to provide a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that they require the animal for reasons relating to their disability, or for a valid identification card/training certificate from a recognized service animal training school.

## Design of Public Spaces (Built Environment)

### **Do I need to retrofit my building? Do I have to build a ramp and install an automatic door opener?**

No, under the AODA, organizations are not required to retrofit their building. The Design of Public Spaces Standard only applies to new construction and major renovations

## Accessible Documents

### **Do all my documents need to be in 12 pt. or higher font size?**

The AODA does not specify how documents need to be designed – just that alternative formats need to be provided upon request. However, it is advisable to create accessible documents to make it easier to respond to requests and for the population at large to access your content.

*Suggestion: A best practice is to use 12 pt or higher.*

### **Do I need to make Braille versions of my materials?**

Under the AODA, you are required by law to supply accessible formats and communication supports upon request. Braille is an example of an accessible format. You must consult with the person who requested the format to find an appropriate alternative that will work for both parties.

## Funding

### **Does the government providing any funding to help businesses implement the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act?**

The provincial government does not provide dedicated funding for businesses or organizations to meet the accessibility standards.

There are provincial funding sources that you may want to investigate for projects that include an accessibility component.



# Conclusion

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## Keeping Accessibility Alive

Accessibility doesn't end with a policy or accessibility report. Successful organizations need to be proactive with their accessibility planning and feedback. Accessibility needs to remain relevant and current to your organization. This is to ensure that accessibility can continue to play an important role in the sustainability and relevance of your organization as Ontario's demographics and values evolve.

By making accessibility a fun and regular part of your BIA activities, you can help break down barriers and stigma around disability in your community while helping to include people of all ages and abilities. Get everyone involved in your community!

### Ways to Get Your Community Involved:

- Include accessibility stories and information in social media posts, newsletters, and articles.
- Hold a marathon or scavenger hunt to gather data on accessible businesses, parking spots, or public washrooms (see: Planat)
- Have a community ramp building event (see: StopGap Foundation)
- Invite members of the disability community to share their stories and insights at community events and in community materials
- Host an art or design contest for youth to redesign the International Symbol for Access
- Create a survey or interview community members to gather data and stories about barriers and successes within your community

### Ways to Get BIA Staff and Members Involved:

- Share best practices in your BIA newsletter and through social media.
- Set aside a time at each monthly meeting to discuss advancements, feedback, and barriers to accessibility.
- Enter your BIA for OBIAA's annual accessibility awards
- Take training courses on accessibility to refresh staff on accessibility content, to encourage them, and keep them informed.
- Sponsor disability organizations or events to keep your organization involved in the disability community and in touch with barriers and advancements.
- Encourage members to promote and include accessibility information on materials.
- Follow the AODA Alliance (<http://www.aodaalliance.org/>) or other advocacy groups in your community

## More Best Practices

**Continue to gather feedback from people with disabilities,** including your staff and customers, to find out what accessibility problems exist and how to prioritize areas of concern as you become more accessible.

**Offer a rent-a-ramp service:** Some BIAs and organizations share ramps and accessibility equipment. You could provide the service yourself, or build a list of contacts to refer BIA members to when requests come in.

**Incorporate accessibility into all your BIA events:** There are many ways, as we have shared throughout this handbook, that you can make accessibility a part of everything you do, especially your events.

**Host accessibility awareness events:** Your BIA could hold a map-a-thon or scavenger hunt to gather information on accessible washrooms, businesses, or public spaces; community ramp building days; workshops on creating accessible documents or communications skills.

**Include accessibility in your newsletter:** Include accessibility tips, success stories, and anecdotes in your BIA newsletter and/or on social media.

**Direct members and staff to accessibility resources on the AODA,** such as those on OBIAA's website.

**Add accessibility information to your website:** Include easy-to-find accessibility information on your website.

## Tip

Accessibility is a hot topic and there are many groups, conferences, and committees devoted to the area. Most are free to join too! Good places to look for accessibility groups and events within your BIA are [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com), LinkedIn, Facebook, through local disability organizations, and your municipality.

# How Business Members Can Become More Accessible

Accessibility is good for business. Every business can become accessible, and many things you can do have no cost or are low cost to implement. The smallest changes can make a big difference.

## Tip

Your employees may have a connection with someone who has a disability. Sharing insights with each other and experiences of friends and family members with disabilities may help to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and isolate areas of improvement at your business or community.

## Best Practices

**Gather feedback from people with disabilities,** including your staff and customers, to find out what accessibility problems exist and how to prioritize areas of concern.

**Promote accessibility through signage:** A simple sign or decal saying “Service Animals are Welcome.” or “Have an accessibility request? Just ask!” shows that you are an accessible business and creates a more welcoming, inclusive atmosphere.

**Assess your accessibility by doing a walk-through** to identify potential issues and areas for improvement in and around your building.

**Educate staff on accessible document authoring techniques:** Using accessible templates, Styles, built-in formatting, and other techniques in your office documents will help make your documents more accessible and improve workflow.

**Build a portable ramp:** There are many resources on the Internet on how to make ramps yourself, such as the community initiative, StopGap Foundation.

**Write newsletter articles or press releases on what you are doing** to become a more accessible business and how it has positively impacted you and your customers.

# Resources

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## A

AODA for BIAs and Businesses (OBIAA, Webinar)

<http://bit.ly/1IJgy38>

The Abilities Connect Fund (Ontario Chamber of Commerce)

<http://bit.ly/1DMX7JV>

Access Ability: A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design (Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario)

<http://bit.ly/1gejvBc>

AccessForward (Learnography)

<http://bit.ly/1M89T76>

Accessibility and the Built Environment (OBIAA, Webinar)

<http://bit.ly/1P5bZnl>

AChecker (Inclusive Design Institute)

<http://achecker.ca/checker/index.php>

## B

Best Practices and Case Studies for Accessible Tourism (OBIAA, Webinar)

<http://bit.ly/1L4PCri>

Business Benefits of Accessible Workplaces (Conference Board of Canada)

<http://bit.ly/1NcuyWo>

## C

Check-In Canada

<http://www.checkincanada.com>

ClearPrint Guidelines (Canadian National Institute for the Blind, CNIB)

<http://bit.ly/1IKrUmC>

## E

Employer's Toolkit: Making Ontario Workplaces Accessible to People With Disabilities (Conference Board of Canada)

<http://bit.ly/1JOkCDy>

Enabling Accessibility Fund (Government of Canada)

<http://bit.ly/1M4BByW>

## G

Government of Ontario

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

Guide to Accessible Public Engagement (Ontario Municipal Social Services Association)

<http://bit.ly/1LMxvA1>

Guide for Accessible Web Design (Ontario Trails Council)

<http://bit.ly/1UqwiPS>

## H

How to Host Accessible Events (OBIAA, Webinar)

<http://bit.ly/1gyatiu>

How People with Disabilities use the Web (W3C)

<http://bit.ly/1HGB0jj>

## O

Ontario Human Rights Code and the AODA (Ontario Human Rights Commission, Video)

<http://bit.ly/1T7wBg0>

Ontario Trillium Foundation

[www.otf.ca](http://www.otf.ca)

## P

Planat

<http://www.planat.com/>

## R

Ramp-on-Demand (StopGap Foundation)

<http://stopgapblog.blogspot.ca/p/interested-in-ramp.html>

Releasing Constraints: Projecting the Economic Impacts of Increased Accessibility in Ontario (Martin Prosperity Institute)

<http://bit.ly/1T7tTqZ>

Rethinking DisAbility in the Private Sector (Employment and Social Development Canada)

<http://bit.ly/1UBUzm4>

Resources: Tourism (Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments)

<http://bit.ly/1JTScrF>

## S

Social Media Accessibility (Queens University)

<http://bit.ly/1N3t5Vj>

## T

The Road to Inclusion: Integrating people with disabilities into the workplace (Deloitte)

<http://bit.ly/1L5HsFA>

The Ontario Building Code

<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10546.aspx>

## W

WAVE (WebAIM)

[wave.webaim.org](http://wave.webaim.org)

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

<http://bit.ly/1IXK4kR>

Web Accessibility Tools (W3C)

<http://bit.ly/1PkWatC>



# Aknowledgements

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Wendy Farrow-Reed	Downtown Georgetown BIA
Terri Wallis	City of Hamilton
Catherine Sholtz	Breaking Down Barriers Independent Living Resource Centre
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Wendy Sue Lyttle	LAL Association Member Services
Kay Matthews	Executive Director, Ontario BIA Association
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