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The Customer Service Standards Took Effect on January 1, 2012. Is Your Business Ready?

The customer service standard applies to all organizations, both public and private, that provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other organizations in Ontario (third parties) and that have one or more employees in Ontario.

The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service ([See link Below](#)) is the first accessibility standard created under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).

The adoption of the AODA was itself significant as Ontario became the first jurisdiction in North America to develop mandatory accessibility standards that will identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living

Persons with disabilities represent **25 billion** in spending power in Canada. Implementation of the customer service standard is mandatory, but it makes good business sense to make your business accessible to potential customers with that kind of spending power.

DID YOU KNOW?

Under the AODA, the government has the authority to conduct inspections to ensure compliance is met.

Organizations that are persistently non-compliant and have not returned to compliance could be fined as high as \$50,000 per day for individuals and \$100,000 per day for corporations.

In 2005, the Ontario legislature enacted the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act** ("AODA"). This new law requires organizations -- including employers and trade unions -- to comply with the requirements of a variety of **Accessibility Standards**

There are 5 Standards that fall under the AODA Act

1 Customer Service

2 Transportation

3 Information & Communications

4 Employment

5 Built Environment

Accessibility Standards are being phased in over time, its goal is to make Ontario more accessible for people with disabilities by 2025.



If you are an organization or company with 20 employees or more you should note that there are some additional requirements around written documentation. Visit onevoicenetwork.ca to find out more.

Excellence in customer service is the goal of any successful business today. Ensuring you are accessible and open to all your customers, including people with disabilities, is what the customer service standard is all about.

The legislation requires that your business be in compliance by January 1, 2012. This new Customer Service Standard will ensure a more accessible business through the adoption of a few simple measures.

- **Set up a policy** on how people with disabilities can access your goods and services. (See link below to a sample policy)
- **Communicate** with people with disabilities in a manner that takes into account his or her disability
- **Training:** Provide training-to staff and any other people who interact with the public on your behalf on topics as outlined in the customer service standard
- **Service Animals:** Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas open to the public
- **Support Persons:** Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them.
- **Provide notice** when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on are disrupted. (See link below to a sample notice)
- **Feedback:** Make sure people can provide feedback identifying the process of how you provide goods or services to people with disabilities

What is it going to cost?

For most businesses the cost of implementing the new standard on accessible customer service will be minimal. Most of the requirements can be met with no-cost solutions such as simply asking customers with disabilities how you can best help them, being patient, and not making assumptions about what a customer with a disability may or may not be able to do. Meeting the training component will require an hour or less for each employee.



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