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BLUEWATER
HEALTH

Life, health and renewal.

www.bluewaterhealth.ca

WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

Accessibility refers to efforts to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who visit, work in or use the hospital facilities, services and property.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province.

AODA allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

One standard that has been put into law is the Accessible Customer Service Standard. This standard details requirements for all service providers.

Providers must deliver service in a way that preserves the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. Providers must also integrate services and equal opportunity.



ACCESSIBILITY AT BLUEWATER HEALTH

In alignment with Bluewater Health's strategic priority *to provide quality care and cultivate exceptional relationships with those we work with and serve*, the Bluewater Health AODA Working Group is ensuring that all the required compliance steps are taken towards creating an accessible facility.

Bluewater Health has an Accessibility Policy for Customer Service. The policy includes a process for receiving feedback from our customers regarding accessibility, and provisions for service animals, support persons, notice of service disruptions and the use of assistive devices.

A Bluewater Health Annual Accessibility Plan is available on the Bluewater Health website and intranet. The plan identifies accessibility barriers and plans for their removal in the calendar year. The plan also describes previous accomplishments for addressing barriers.

All staff, physicians, volunteers and students are required to complete Accessible Customer Service Training.

Bluewater Health offers accessible parking spots, STAXI and wheelchairs, language interpreters, way finding assistance, accessible public washrooms, automatic entry doors, Braille on elevator control panels and various other assistive devices.

TYPES OF BARRIERS



Physical



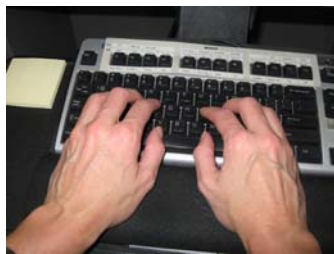
Information/Communication



Attitudinal



Policy and Practice



Technological



Disabilities may be visible
or invisible

TIPS FOR PROVIDING CUSTOMER

Did you know that just over 13.5 per cent of Ontarians have a disability? That is one in seven Ontarians, and as the population ages this number will grow.

People with disabilities travel, shop, seek health care and do business in our community just like everyone else. By providing service that welcomes people with disabilities, you can offer better service to everyone.

Treating all your patients and visitors with individual respect and courtesy is at the heart of excellent customer service and patient-centered care.

This booklet is designed to provide staff, physicians, volunteers and students with helpful information for interacting and communicating with persons with disabilities who access services at Bluewater Health.

The following pages provide a description of various disabilities and tips for providing service.

In addition to this booklet, there is further organization specific information in the Bluewater Health Accessible Customer Service Policy available on the intranet under 'Committees.'

VISION DISABILITIES

Vision disabilities range from slightly reduced visual acuity to total blindness. Vision disabilities can restrict a person's ability to maneuver in unfamiliar places, read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a vision disability. Others may use a service animal or a white cane.



Tips on welcoming people with vision disabilities:

- Identify yourself when you approach the person.
- Speak normally, clearly and directly to the person.
- Never touch the person without asking permission, unless it is an emergency.
- If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Do not touch or address service animals — they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- If you are giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you are approaching a door or an obstacle, say so.
- Do not assume the person cannot see you.
- Do not leave the person in the middle of a room. Show him/her to a chair or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around him/her.
- Do not walk away without saying good bye.
- Be patient. Things may take a little longer.

HEARING DISABILITIES



People with hearing disabilities may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has varying degrees. Some people with hearing disabilities may use assistive devices to communicate.

Tips on welcoming people with hearing disabilities:

- Always ask how you can help. Do not shout.
- Attract the person's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of the hand.
- Look at and speak directly to the person. Address them, not their interpreter.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communication would be easier, like a pen and paper.
- Do not put your hands in front of your face when speaking.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions, and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Do not touch or address service animals — they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Any personal (e.g. financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in a quiet area. Background noise can be distracting.

DEAF-BLIND DISABILITIES



A person with a deaf-blind disability cannot see and hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people with a deaf-blind disability will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communication.

Interveners 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.

Tips on welcoming people with deaf-blind disabilities:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do. Some people with deaf-blind disabilities have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- A person who has a deaf-blind disability may tell you how to communicate with him/her by giving you an assistance card or note.
- Speak directly to the person, not to the intervener.
- When you approach a person with a deaf-blind disability, make sure you identify yourself.
- Do not touch or address service animals — they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Never touch a person with a deaf-blind disability suddenly or without permission unless it is an emergency.

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES



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

A physical disability may affect an individual's ability to perform manual tasks, move around independently, reach, pull or manipulate objects, or have strength or endurance.

Tips on welcoming people with physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to your customer, not the person who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- Be patient. People will identify their needs to you.
- Do not touch assistive devices, including wheel chairs, unnecessarily unless it is an emergency.
- Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to give clear passage.
- If a counter is too high or too wide, step around to provide service.
- Provide seating for those that cannot stand in line.

SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS



Speech or language impairments involve the partial or total loss of the ability to speak. Typical disabilities include problems with pronunciation, pitch and loudness, hoarseness or breathiness, stuttering or slurring speech.

Tips on welcoming people with speech or language impairments:

- If possible communicate in a quiet environment.
- If a person has difficulty speaking, do not assume he/she has an intellectual or developmental disability as well.
- If you do not understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- When possible, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no.'
- Be patient and polite, and give the person what ever time he/she needs to get his/her point across.
- Do not interrupt or finish the person's sentences. Wait for him/her to finish.
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Give the person your full attention.

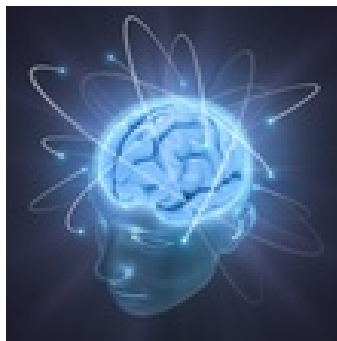
MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES

Mental health disabilities include a range of disorders; however, there are three main types, anxiety, mood and behavioural.

People with mental health disabilities may seem edgy or irritated, act aggressively, be perceived as pushy or abrupt, be unable to make a decision, start laughing or get angry for no apparent reason.

Tips on welcoming people with mental health disabilities:

- Treat each person as an individual. Ask what would make him/her the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the extent possible.
- Try to reduce stress and anxiety in situations.
- Stay calm and courteous, even if the patient or visitor exhibits unusual behavior.
- Focus on the service needed and how you can help.
- Take the client away from the situation, noise and distractions to facilitate one-on-one service.



INTELLECTUAL OR DEVELOPMENTAL

Intellectual or developmental disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit an individual's ability to learn. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way he/she acts, asks questions or uses body language.

As much as possible, treat people with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and will appreciate being treated with respect.

Tips on welcoming people with intellectual or developmental disabilities:

- Do not assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Use clear, simple language.
- Be prepared to explain and provide examples.
- Remember that unless you are informed otherwise, a person can make his/her own decisions.
- Be patient and verify your understanding.
- If you cannot understand what is being said, do not pretend - just ask.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.
- Speak directly to your customer, not to his/her companion or attendant.



LEARNING DISSABILITIES

People with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence, but take in and process information and express knowledge in different ways. Learning disabilities can result in difficulties in reading, problem-solving, managing time, finding ways, and processing information.

Tips on welcoming people with learning disabilities:

- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs assistance, ask how to help.
- Speak normally, clearly and directly to the person.
- Take your time. People with some kinds of learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Try to provide information in a way that works best for the individual. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- If you are dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- Be courteous and patient. The person will let you know how to best provide service for him/her.



FEEDBACK

Feedback from customers (patients, visitors, members of the public) gives Bluewater Health the opportunity to learn and improve. Bluewater Health recognizes the right of our customers to make a complaint, compliment, or suggestion to improve services.

To assist Bluewater Health in ensuring that the delivery of goods and services to those with disabilities is provided in an effective and timely manner, customers are invited to provide their feedback as follows:

In writing, in person, by email or telephone to:

Organizational Development Department
Bluewater Health
89 Norman Street
Sarnia, Ontario
N7T 6S3
(519) 464-4400, extension 8469

An Accessibility Feedback Form is available at
www.bluewaterhealth.ca

Feedback, complaints and concerns received by other departments regarding accessibility matters should be recorded in Feedback MonitorPro and forwarded to the Organizational Development Department. A response will be provided acknowledging receipt of feedback and setting out the action to be taken in response to any complaints. The determination for action steps may require input from other internal stakeholders and members of the AODA Working Group.

SERVICE ANIMALS

Bluewater Health will ensure that a person with a disability being accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal is permitted to enter hospital facilities and to keep the animal with him/her unless otherwise excluded by law. Where a service animal is excluded by law, Bluewater Health will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use and benefit from the organizations goods and services.

For example, regulations under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990* and the *Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001* prohibit animals from entering into areas where food is prepared, stored or sold.

Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, the reason why the animal is excluded should be explained. Steps should be taken to provide alternate arrangements. For example, accommodate the person with a disability by bringing goods and services to him/her in an area where the animal is not restricted.

When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting, or other harmful behaviour), an employee or volunteer may ask the person to remove the animal from the area or refuse access to goods or services. Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods or services should be explored with the assistance of the individual.

SUPPORT PEOPLE

Support People assist individuals with disabilities in a variety of ways. Support people may help with communication as an intervener or sign language interpreter, or as a personal support worker, providing physical assistance. A support person may be a friend or relative that will assist and support the customer.

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person, Bluewater Health will ensure that both persons are permitted to enter facilities and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person. Bluewater Health may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while in the facility, but only if a support person is necessary to protect the health and safety of the person with a disability or the health and safety of others.

- Persons with disabilities may be accompanied by their support person while accessing goods and services.
- When a support person is involved, it is important to identify up front the role of the support person when it comes to the discussion of confidential information and ensure that established policies are followed.
- Every employee or volunteer should use reasonable effort to allow persons with disabilities to use their own assistive devices to access goods and services.
- Other reasonable arrangements to provide goods and services should be explored with the assistance of the person with a disability.

DISRUPTIONS IN SERVICE

It is possible that from time-to-time there will be disruptions in service, such as an entrance way or elevator that is under repair, renovations that limit access to an area, or technology that is temporarily unavailable. If a disruption in service is planned, it is important to provide reasonable notice.

Notice should be provided on the Bluewater Health website, via hospital signage, over the phone and/or in writing.

In the event of a service disruption, alternative methods of service may be considered and those impacted should be informed of any alternative methods.

In some situations a refundable security deposit may be requested for Bluewater Health equipment and devices that leave the premises.



ASSISTIVE DEVICES



Bluewater Health provides multicultural interpreter support for patients and staff. Refer to Volunteer Services Department Policy “Multicultural Interpreter” #VOL.A.3.50

Examples of assistive devices include wheelchairs, STAXI chairs, walkers, crutches and canes.

ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING AT BLUEWATER

The Bluewater Health AODA Working Group strives to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities and to provide for their involvement in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers.

The purpose of the Accessibility Working Group is to assist Bluewater Health to fulfill its obligations under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

The working group strives to prevent or eliminate barriers that may exist in our facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for patients, family, volunteers, employees, healthcare practitioners and members of the community with disabilities.

The appropriate use of words and actions can influence and reinforce the public's perception of persons with disabilities.

For more information on accessibility planning or to provide a suggestion for the removal and prevention of barriers to persons with disabilities at Bluewater Health, please contact the Organizational Development Department:

(519) 464-4400 Ext.8469

The annual accessibility plan can be found on the Bluewater Health website at:

www.bluewaterhealth.ca