

Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

As of **January 1, 2012**, all organizations in Ontario with one or more employees in the private and non-profit sector must comply with the Accessible Standard for Customer Service which is part of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The AODA aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. This Act became law on June 13, 2005.

The Accessible Customer Service Standard component of the Act is now in effect. It is focused on training employees to serve the public with a focus on how to implement accessibility into practices and formal procedures, allowing people to bring a service animal, support person/or assistive device into your office and encouraging businesses to provide a feedback mechanism on the accessibility of your services.

If you have 20 or more employees who work for you full-time, part time or for part of the year, you must submit an online report to the Ontario government to prove that you are in compliance with the Accessible Customer Service standard that came into effect January 1, 2012.

If you have fewer than 20 employees, you may still wish to submit a report, but the government does not require it.

There are eight requirements within the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service that apply to all organizations with one or more employees as described below:

1. Establish a set of policies, practices and procedures on how you and your employees will provide goods and/or services to customers with disabilities.
2. Allow customers with disabilities to use personal assistive devices e.g. hearing aids, wheelchairs, walkers, oxygen tanks, to access your services and/or goods.
3. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
4. Train all staff to provide accessible customer service. The regulation is clear that it is not just front line staff but also management staff who must understand how to provide accessible customer service. You must also train volunteers and contractors if they will be acting on your behalf with patients, clients or customers.
5. Allow people with disabilities to bring a guide dog or service animal with them to your premises, unless otherwise prohibited by law. For example, animals are not allowed by law in a restaurant kitchen or an operating theatre in a hospital.
6. Permit people with disabilities who require a support person to bring that person with them. If you charge a fee, your organization can decide whether to waive or lower the fee for the support person.

7. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access your goods or services, are temporarily disrupted.
8. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how you provide goods and/or services to people with disabilities.

Role of the College of Optometrists of Ontario

Regulatory colleges such as the College of Optometrists of Ontario, as well as its members, must comply with this regulation. The College is not enforcing regulations under the AODA, nor is it authorized to provide tools or official advice. However, the College is positioned to provide information and support. Our College is part of an advisory committee working with People Access, an organization set-up to provide free or low-cost support and information to organizations in the health care sector and to health care providers.

Resources to help you become compliant:

[Ministry of Community and Social Services – Making Ontario Accessible](#)

[Making Ontario Accessible Online Staff Training Course](#)

[The Accessibility for Ontarians Disability Act website](#)

[People Access](#)