

Open Doors for Everyone

St. Andrew's AODA Training for Staff, Leaders, Volunteers

Learning Objectives

In this module you will learn about:

- The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
- The Integrated Access Standards Regulation (IASR)
- The five standards
- Our commitment to serve persons with disabilities
- The 4 core principles under AODA
- Barriers
- What constitutes a disability
- How to serve people with disabilities
- Information and communication supports
- How to respond to requests
- Feedback processes
- St. Andrew's commitment as an employer
- The Ontario Human Rights Code

What is the AODA?

The Government of Canada passed a law in 2005 that aims to **identify, remove and prevent barriers** for people with disabilities.

This law is called the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**.

Barriers can prevent a person with a disability from being able to participate fully in programs, ministries and services in a manner similar to other people.

All organizations must comply with the AODA.

AODA – Five Standards

Through its regulations, AODA sets minimum standards to be followed in **five areas**:

1. Customer Service
2. Communications
3. Employment Practices
4. Design of Public Spaces
5. Transportation

The Transportation Standard does not apply to St. Andrew's because we do not provide transportation services.

The Standards and IASR

The five standards are part of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

It requires all organizations to develop an **accessibility policy for customer service** and to **train staff, leaders and volunteers.**

We will look at each of these standards individually.

Open Doors for Everyone

Luke 14: 12-14 (NIV)

Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, **invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.** Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Our Vision and Mission

The vision of St. Andrew's is to bring the Word of God **to all people.**

St. Andrew's Memorial Presbyterian Church exists to glorify God by bringing the Word of God to the congregation, the community and the world through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Commitment

In fulfilling our vision and mission we strive at all times to provide our programs, ministries and services in a way that respects the **dignity** and **independence** of people with disabilities.

We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our programs, ministries and services **in the same place**, and **in a similar way** as other attendees.

Four Core Principles of AODA

There are 4 core principles under the AODA:

DIGNITY

INDEPENDENCE

INTEGRATION

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

We will look at each of these core principles separately.

Principle of DIGNITY

Policies, procedures and practices that respect the dignity of a person with a disability are those that treat the person as a valued member who is equally deserving of effective and full service as any other individual.

The person is not treated as an afterthought nor is the person forced to accept a lesser standard or convenience.

Service delivery takes into account how people with disabilities can effectively access and use services and shows respect for these methods.

Principle of INDEPENDENCE

It means freedom from control or influence of others, and the ability to make one's own choices.

It also means freedom to do things in one's own way. For example, a person who may move or speak more slowly should not be denied an opportunity to participate in a program or service because of this, and another person should not hurry them or take over a task for them if they prefer to do it themselves in their own way.

Principle of INTEGRATION

Integrated services are those that allow people with disabilities to fully benefit from the same services, in the same place and in the same or similar way as other people.

It also means that policies, practices and procedures are designed to be accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

Sometimes, however, it may not be possible to remove a barrier to accessibility, in which case an alternate arrangement should be made to provide the service.

Principle of EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Equal opportunity means having the same chances, options, benefits and results as others.

For services, it means people with disabilities have the same opportunity to benefit from the way you provide goods and services to others.

They should not have to accept lesser quality or more inconvenience.

They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service.

What is a Barrier?

Physical Barriers are things such as stairs, doors, inaccessible washrooms, obstacles blocking aisles.

Information Barriers occur when information cannot be accessed, such as print too small to read, or too complex to follow or placed too high on a wall to see.

Organizational Barriers occur when policies, practices or procedures don't take accessibility into account.

Attitudinal Barriers occur when we make assumptions about someone's abilities. Stereotyping is an example of attitudinal barrier.

Removing Barriers

Some barriers only require a slight **shift in perspective**.

In 2017, Canada past a milestone – we now have more seniors than youth in our population.

Aging brings changes in vision, hearing, ambulating, cognitive processing.

Our population has an increasing number of people with disabilities.

With awareness, we can be a church with **open doors for everyone**.

What is a Disability?

Some disabilities are **visible**, some are **invisible**.

Some disabilities are **temporary**, some are **permanent**.

Examples of Disabilities:

- Diminished or loss of hearing, vision, speech
- Cognitive impairments, developmental, learning
- Mental health
- Physical
- Drug and alcohol dependencies
- Conditions such as heart, lung, epilepsy, environmental sensitivities, phobias

Review



In keeping with the AODA and as Jesus taught us, we desire to be a church with **open doors for everyone**. This means mindfully offering **barrier-free** programs, ministries and services so everyone can participate in the same place and similar way, with dignity and independence.

Beyond **the physical barriers**, we will consider **organizational**, **attitudinal**, and **information barriers**. This process begins with **awareness**, so we can bring the Word of God to all people, who desire to enter St. Andrew's.

Question



Q: How do barriers affect human dignity?

A: Physical barriers such as a step, a cluttered aisle, or a closed door blocking access to a coat rack prevent a person with a walker gaining unassisted access. Information barriers such as small print in books, brochures or signs prevent a person with a vision impairment from fully participating.

Barriers can cause a person to experience diminished independence or self-reliance. When a person is prevented from being able to do things independently, it impacts their sense of self-worth.

Dignity is our inherent value and worth as human beings.

Customer Service:

Serving People with Disabilities

Who is a Customer?

Anyone who accesses your organization's goods, services or facilities.

Customers can also be **other business organizations.**

St. Andrew's Customer Service Standards apply to:

- Congregation members, visitors, adherents
- Participants in programs such as Bible Study
- Guests at Toonie Lunch, Community Breakfast, Frosty's Frolic, Footprints of Christmas, Concerts
- Short and long-term renters of our facilities

Use Appropriate Language

1. Say “disability” – not “handicapped”
2. Say “person with a disability” not “disabled person”
 - acknowledge the person by using “people first” language, refrain from labeling someone by their disability
3. Avoid sympathetic statements such as:
 - “victim of”
 - “confined to a wheelchair”
 - “stricken with ... “

Serving a Person in a Wheelchair

- Make the person feel included.
- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Ask "How might I assist you?"
- Sit eye level when talking for any lengthy duration.
- Move around a service counter.
- Do not move the individual without permission.
- Do not leave the person in an awkward or undignified position.

Serving a Person with Hearing Loss

- A person may have a preferred way to communicate.
- Speak directly to the person.
- Move to a well-lit area with minimal background noise.
- If needed, use a gentle tap on the shoulder to catch their attention or wave your hand.
- If necessary, use a pen and paper.
- If speaking through an interpreter, look and speak to the person, not the interpreter.

Speech or Language Disabilities

- Don't assume the person does not understand you.
- Speak directly to the person, not their companion.
- Try to ask questions that can be answered "yes/no".
- Be patient, don't interrupt, don't finish their sentences.
- If necessary, provide other methods such as email.

People with Learning Disabilities

- People with learning disabilities learn a different way.
- Be patient, allow time to process information.
- Sometimes an alternate form may be required such as verbal instead of printed material.
- Some people may have difficulty with numbers or math.
- Be willing to rephrase information again in another way.

Developmental Disabilities

- Don't make assumptions about abilities.
- Don't exaggerate your speech or patronize.
- Use plain language, one piece of information at a time.
- If unsure of what was said to you, ask to repeat or confirm by summarizing and repeating back.
- Ask if the person would like you to read material or information to them.
- Be patient, and allow extra time if needed.

Mental Health Disabilities

- Examples: depression, mood swings, anxiety, panic disorder, hallucinations.
- It may affect their ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things.
- Treat the person with respect, be confident and reassuring.
- Listen, try to meet their needs, respect personal space.
- Limit distractions, respond to immediate needs without confrontation.
- Set limits.
Example: “If you scream, I won’t be able to talk to you.”

Service Animals

- Service animals aid people with: vision loss, seizures, autism, and mental health disability, to name a few.
- A service animal may be identified by a harness or vest, or by documentation from a regulated health professional.
- Don't ask a person to disclose their disability.
- Don't touch or distract the service animal.
- Allow the animal to remain with the person.

People with a Support Person

- A support person can be a paid personal support worker, or an informal caregiver such as a volunteer, family or friend.
- They may assist with communication, mobility, personal care or accessing services.
- The usual admission fee to an event may be charged to the support person, unless the support person's attendance is mandated by the organization, in which event the fee must be waived for the support person.

Assistive Devices

- Some examples of assistive devices include a wheelchair, walker, cane, hearing aid, oxygen tank, communication board.
- Do not touch or handle a person's device or place it out of the person's reach.
- St. Andrew's has the following assistive devices:
large print Bible, wheelchair, walker, crutches, cane.

Review



St. Andrew's Customer Service Standards apply to its congregation, visitors, tenants, and everyone who participates in its many events.

When serving a person with a disability, **be respectful**, above all else. Use **"people first" language**. Speak directly to the person, not their aid or interpreter.

Never make assumptions about a person's abilities, or ask someone to disclose their disability. Be patient, and **be inclusive**.

Question



Q: Name five assistive devices available at St. Andrew's.

Answer:

- Large print Bible
- Wheelchair
- Walker
- Crutches
- Cane

Information and Communication Standards

Communication Supports

A person with a disability might require an alternate method of communication or accessing information. These are called **accessible formats**. The following are examples:

- Reading the text to the person.
- Providing large print format.
- Text transcripts for audio or visual information.
- Text instead of verbal/spoken word.
- Plain language materials.
- Electronic document formatted for use with a screen reader.

Responding to Requests

- Consult with the person to determine their accessibility needs.
- We have the flexibility to determine the most appropriate way to meet that need, based upon our capability to deliver.
- We must respond to such requests in a timely basis.
- If we are unable to accommodate, we must provide an explanation why it is not possible.

Feedback Processes

- We provide forms for use by individuals who wish to give feedback regarding how we provide goods, services and programs to people with disabilities.
- These forms are available in the narthex.

Emergency Procedures

- Our emergency procedures such as location of exits shall be made available in an accessible format upon request.
- Some examples of other accessible formats includes large print format and verbal instruction.

Employment Standard

Informing, Recruiting, Selecting

As an employer, St. Andrew's will work with an employee who has a disability to accommodate their needs.

We will advise job applicants during the recruitment process, of our willingness to accommodate to the best of our ability upon request.

Design of Public Spaces

Structural Building Elements

Structural building elements such as washrooms, entrances, halls, and stairs are addressed through the **Ontario Building Code**.

Organizations must incorporate accessibility when building a new space or making a significant alteration to an existing space, to the extent required under the Ontario Building Code.

Ontario Human Rights Code

The Ontario Human Rights Code

- It ensures people with disabilities are entitled to the **same opportunities and benefits** as people without a disability.
- It defines “disability” the same as under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- In situations where the two regulations conflict with each other, the one with the **higher standard** applies.
- Organizations have a **duty to accommodate** persons with disabilities to the point of undue hardship when receiving goods, services, and using facilities.

Review



A person with a disability may require an alternate form of communication. We refer to this as an **accessible format**.

We respond to requests for accessible formats by working with the person to understand their needs, to develop possible alternatives, and we respond on a timely basis with our solution. Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, we have a **duty to accommodate** to the point of undue hardship.

People can provide feedback to us using **feedback forms** provided for this purpose in the narthex.

Question



Q: Name four examples of accessible formats that a person with a disability may require as a communication support.

Answer:

1. Reading the text to the person
2. Large print format
3. A text transcript of an audio communication
4. Electronic document formatted for use with a screen reader

Summary

You have now completed the training module on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and how to provide accessible customer service.

We have looked at:

- The purpose, core principles, and standards under the AODA
- St. Andrew's commitment to serving people with disabilities
- The different types of barriers
- What we mean by "disability"
- How to serve people with disabilities
- How to respond to a request for accommodation
- The Human Rights Code as it relates to persons with disabilities

You can now proceed to complete the questionnaire.