

Bridlewood Child Learning Centre
Training

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Welcome to Bridlewood Child Learning Centre's AODA Customer Service Training Program which was designed to review the new legislative requirements under the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. Ontario was the first jurisdiction in Canada to pass such legislation and is leading the way to develop, implement and enforce standards to make Ontario more accessible for everyone, especially persons with a disability.



Agenda

- Review Ontario accessibility legislation
- Review corporate requirements for compliance
- Identify types of disabilities
- Identify accessibility barriers
- Share tips and strategies for serving customers with disabilities
- Provide links to resources

Quotes

- “Being disabled should not mean being disqualified from having access to every aspect of life.” *Emma Thompson*
- “Invariably when we design something that can be used by those with disabilities, we often make it better for everyone.” *Donald Norman*



The purpose of the AODA includes:

- achieving a fully accessible Ontario by 2025
- developing accessibility standards
- enforcing the standards
- covering both the public and private sectors

The Accessibility Standards for

A. Purpose and Application

- The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service is the first accessibility standard to be passed into law under the AODA. Every designated public and private sector organization that provides goods and services to the public or other third parties and that has at least one employee in Ontario must comply with this standard. Under this standard, organizations that deal with the public must have in place policies, procedures and practices pertaining to persons with disabilities that address the following topics:
- Providing goods and services to persons with disabilities
- Dealing with assistive devices used by persons with disabilities
- The use of support persons by persons with disabilities
- The use of service animals by persons with disabilities
- Providing notice of disruptions in services and facilities used by persons with disabilities
- Feedback process about the ability of persons with disabilities to access goods and services.
- Additionally, businesses must fulfill the training requirements.

B. Compliance Deadlines for the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

- The compliance deadline for the private sector is January 1, 2012.

C. Providing Goods and Services to Customers with Disabilities

- The Accessibility Standards for Customer Service requires that policies, procedures and practices be developed on how goods and services are provided to persons with disabilities. The policies, procedures and practices must abide by the following guiding principles.

D. Guiding Principles for Accessible Customer Service

- The guiding principles of the Standard form the foundation of accessible customer service and are key to compliance. Under the Standard Bridlewood Child Learning Centre must use reasonable efforts to ensure that our policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the following principles:
- Respect for the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Allow them to do things their way, even if it takes a little longer. Be patient, and respect their independence.

- These Guiding Principles are the Keys to Compliance Accessible Customer Service Training for Bridlewood Child Learning Centre.

- The provision of services to persons with disabilities must be integrated with persons who do not have disabilities unless an alternative measure is necessary to enable the person with a disability to access goods and services. An example of providing goods and services in an integrated manner includes making reasonable efforts to provide services to clients with disabilities at the same place and time as services provided to others. There will be times when this is not possible and services will need to be provided to clients in a separate manner due to the nature of their disability and the services they require.

- Persons with disabilities must be given an opportunity equal to that given to persons without disabilities to access goods and services. Bridlewood Child Learning Centre must make reasonable efforts to provide the same goods and services to persons with disabilities as those provided to others.



The AODA is comprised of 5 standards that will be rolled out in three stages to cover the following key areas:

Stage One is Accessible Customer Service – This standard will address and remove barriers to accessing services, programs and goods.

Stage Two is the Integrated Accessibility Standards which includes:
Information and Communication – This standard will look at information being provided in person, through print, a website and other means.
Transportation – This standard will focus on reducing the barriers to public transportation.
Employment – This standard will look at recruitment, hiring and retention.

Stage Three is the Built Environment – This standard will reduce barriers within buildings and outdoor spaces by building on Ontario's Building Code.

The Human Rights Code and AODA defines disability as:

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 ("handicap").

The AODA Customer Service Accessibility Standard requires that an employer:

- create and maintain accessible customer service policies, procedures and practices
- provide staff/volunteer training
- create a feedback method
- arrange for alternate communication methods
- provide appropriate notice of service disruptions





Accessible Customer Service, under AODA, means creating a positive customer service atmosphere for people with disabilities by:

- respecting their dignity and independence
- ensuring an opportunity equal to that given to other customers to obtain and use goods and services
- allowing persons with disabilities to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in a similar way to other customers



Under the Accessible Customer Service Standard, employees, volunteers and organizations must constantly and consistently apply four principles: Dignity, Independence, Integration and Equal Opportunity. These principles are considered a basic requirement and should be reflected in everything that we do.

- Dignity - Every customer shall be treated with respect and will receive the same level of goods, service, and attention.
- Providing independence to all customers will mean that each customer is given the freedom to do things on his/her own without offering unnecessary help or interference to expedite the process.
- Employees will ensure that each customer is provided the same opportunities. This does not necessarily mean that all customers will be given the exact same service every single time but rather that employees will recognize and adapt their approach to ensure each customer receives the same value and quality.
- Incorporating integration will mean that all customers are able to access our goods and services in the same way - free from separation and barriers.
- OUTCOME: Excellent care for all



Terminology

When referring to someone with a disability, it is extremely important that you put the person first.

It is:

- a person with a disability
- a person with a physical disability
- a person with vision loss

Always show respect for the person first when addressing a person with a disability.



Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

- Bridlewood Child Learning Centre must comply with the legislation by January 2012 which means that all who provide service to clients of Bridlewood Child Learning Centre must have received this training prior to December 31, 2011.
- This report specifically requests that 100% of staff who would have contact with Bridlewood Child Learning Centre clients are trained and also requests numbers of staff who have received the training. Because it is difficult to separate who will be serving a client at any time and because we feel that this work is fundamental to Bridlewood Child Learning Centre's mission and philosophy of care, we will train all Board members, staff and volunteers and this will become a component of orientation.



For B.C.L.C. to comply this means:

1. Establishing policies, practices and procedures on providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities.
2. Ensure policies, practices and procedures are consistent with principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
3. Establish policies to allow people to use their own assistive devices to access goods and services and other measures offered to enable them to use our services.
4. Continue to work with our policies to ensure all policies are consistent with our Accessibility Policy.



Compliance continued

4. Training for all staff on how to communicate with persons with disabilities in a manner that takes into account the disability.

5. Policy and procedure guidelines that:
   - Permit people with disabilities to be accompanied by a service animal in areas or premises that are operated by B.C.L.C. and open to the public.
   - Permit persons with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person while accessing goods or services provided by B.C.L.C. on premises open to the public.



Compliance continued

6. Practices that provide advance notice when facilities or services, that people with disabilities rely on to access and use our goods and services, are temporarily disrupted.

7. Train staff, volunteers, and any other people who interact with the public on behalf of B.C.L.C.

8. Establish a process for a) individuals to provide feedback on how we provide services to people with disabilities, b) how we will respond to feedback and take action on complaints.



Barriers

- The purpose of the legislation is to remove barriers. Barriers are obstacles that make it difficult for individuals with disabilities to carry out everyday activities such as getting dressed, communicating, playing outside or enjoying time with friends and family. Barriers can be:

i. Attitudinal Barriers

- Attitudinal barriers often occur when people are unsure of how to interact and communicate with persons with disabilities. They also include the negative attitudes or stereotypes held about people with disabilities that develop from a lack of understanding.

ii. Systemic Barriers

- Systemic barriers are often created unintentionally due to a lack of understanding about the needs of persons with disabilities. They are found in policies, procedures or practices that result in restrictions to persons with disabilities.
- Barriers To Accessibility
- Accessible For example: physical barriers which prevent disabled people from accessing or participating fully in the workplace or failure to provide assistive devices when possible.

Barriers



iii. Information and Communication Barriers

- Information and communication barriers occur when a person cannot gain access to information or cannot understand the information provided to them due to the manner in which it is presented or its format. Examples of communication and information barriers include, small print, low colour contrast between text and background, the use of jargon or communicating in a manner that is not easy to understand.

iv. Technological Barriers

- Technological barriers occur when assistive technology is not available or when existing technology cannot support various assistive devices, such as computer software that cannot support screen reader software.

v. Architectural and Physical Barriers

- Architectural and physical barriers result from the inaccessible design of buildings, the shape of rooms or the width of doorways and hallways, and are caused by heavy doors, the placement of furniture, inadequate lighting, poor signage, etc. are requested.

Vision Disabilities

- There are different types of vision disabilities and different levels of severity.
- Vision loss reduces a person's ability to see clearly; however, very few people with vision loss are totally blind. Many have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some people can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light.
- Vision loss can affect a person’s ability to read or navigate and can cause trouble with depth-perception.
- Best practice tips for assisting people with vision disabilities:
- Identify yourself so the customer knows who is talking. Offer assistance but wait until the person accepts your offer or makes a request.
- When providing written material, offer to read or summarize it.
- If you need to leave the person to get something, let him/her know where you are going and when you will return.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions (e.g., two steps behind you, to your right and so forth).
- Before opening the door, ask if the customer wants you to open it. Indicate whether the doors open to the left or right and if it is pulled or pushed.



Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Similar to other disabilities, there are varying degrees of hearing loss ranging from missing certain words, sounds or frequencies to complete hearing loss. People who identify as “deaf” use sign language to communicate and identify as a cultural minority, rather than seeing themselves as disabled. They are bi-lingual with sign language as their native language and the spoken language as their second language. Persons who are deaf are proud of their language and culture and signal it with a capital “D”.
- The major difference between people who are deaf and people who are hard of hearing is that people who are deaf use their eyes and visual sense for communicating and generally use sign language, while people who are hard of hearing still use their ears and their auditory sense. Some barriers that individuals with hearing disabilities might face include: not hearing others approaching them, not responding to alarms or other emergency situations, and not understanding speech in a noisy environment.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing Tips

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing may communicate in various ways such as sign language, speech, and writing. Follow the customer's lead in communicating.
- If the customer writes, respond in writing. Have a paper and pen handy. If the customer gestures, he/she wants to write.
- If the customer responds by talking and lip reading, look directly at him/her and enunciate clearly in a normal tone of voice. Keep your hands or any objects away from your mouth and face. Rephrase or substitute words rather than repeat yourself again and again.
- Avoid directly asking customers if they lip read as this is culturally offensive to many.
- Pointing is perfectly acceptable in the deaf community. Feel free to point at or to products.
- In emergency situations assist the individual in recognizing and responding to the emergency.
- Persons relying on the use of a hearing aid may find it difficult to hear in a noisy environment so suggest moving to a quieter location.



Deaf-Blind

- Deaf-blindness is a combination of hearing and vision loss that results in a person experiencing difficulty accessing information and performing daily activities.
- Some persons with deaf-blindness will have some sight or hearing, while others will have neither but rely on their other senses.
- Deaf-blindness interferes with communication, learning, orientation and mobility.
- People who are deaf-blind communicate using any combination of sign language systems - Braille, telephone devices, and communication boards - and often use the services of an Intervener to relay information, facilitate auditory and visual information and act as sighted guides.
- The Intervener is trained to use sign language that involves touching the individual’s hand in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling.



Deaf-Blind Tips

Some of the Customer Service tips would include:

- Understand that communication can take some time, please be patient.
- Ask what would make the client the most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.
- Avoid sudden movements or touching of the individual that may catch them off guard, unless it is an emergency.



Physical Disabilities and Tips

- Physical disabilities can also come in many forms and degrees of severity. The most visible would include persons using a wheelchair or persons with amputations. However, many physical disabilities are not visible or may even be episodic in nature. For example, persons who have heart disease, asthma or lung disease may not show visible signs most of the time but occasionally suffer from their disabilities.

Best Practice Tips for assisting customers with physical disabilities:

• Always ask before touching or moving any assistive device;

• Ensure the environment is clear and free of obstacles;

• If you are providing one-to-one support, consider pulling up a chair and talking to the customer at their eye level.



Speech or Language Disabilities and Tips

- An individual could have speech or language impairments resulting from conditions such as cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or other conditions that make it difficult to clearly pronounce words or communicate with written or spoken language. They also may prevent the person from expressing themselves or prevent them from understanding written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Best Practice Tips for assisting customer with speech or language impairments:

• If you don't understand, it is okay to ask the customer to repeat the information;

• Consider asking closed-ended questions inviting a "yes" or "no" response;

• Be understanding and reassuring.



Mental Health Disabilities and Tips

- Often times, you will not be aware that you are dealing with a person who has a mental health disability and it will not affect the way you provide your products or services. However, you may encounter an individual who is in crisis or is struggling and you need to know how to assist. Examples of mental health disabilities include schizophrenia, depression, phobias, as well as bipolar, anxiety and mood disorders.

Best Practice Tips for assisting customers with mental health disabilities:

• Listening skills are important when dealing with such situations as you need to understand the real issue to know how you can offer help.

• Ask how you can help and try to work with the customer to find a solution.

• Be confident, patient and reassuring.

Intellectual / Developmental Disabilities and Tips

- People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit the person's ability to learn, communicate, socialize and take care of their everyday needs. You may not know that someone has this type of disability unless you are told.
- As much as possible, treat the person with an intellectual or developmental disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate that you treat them with respect.

Best Practice tips for assisting customers with intellectual disabilities:

- Provide examples when sharing and providing information
- Remember that the customer, can make her own decisions
- Be patient and verify understanding
- Provide information in smaller chunks



Phone Tips

- Clearly articulate information, do not speak with a soft or rushed voice.
- Avoid background noise.
- Use good volume.
- Speak slowly enough for a person to write down phone numbers.
- Phone numbers should be repeated.
- Give dates, names and details of how to communicate back.
- Provide alternative means of accessing information and leaving messages, such as emails or through a website.

Service Animals

Service animals offer a variety of types of assistance including:

• Autism assistance to prevent a child from running into danger and responding when sensory stimulus is heightened;
• Guiding by following the directions of owner, alerting owner of changes in elevation and of obstacles;
• Psychiatric services by retrieving and prompting person to take medicine, activating medical alert and leading the person out of crowds;
• Hearing by alerting the owner to sounds, leading them to the source of the sound and by using a special signal to alert the owner of fire alarms or emergency situations;
• Mobility by pulling wheelchairs, carrying objects, turning handles, activating push buttons and providing balance; and/or
• Seizure assistance by steering the owner away from danger during a seizure, activating medical alert and notifying the owner of an oncoming seizure.

Rules for Handling Service Animals:

- Do not touch, pet, feed or talk to the animal while it is working
- Focus on the client
- If the animal is excluded by law, find another method to service the client that allows the client to retain independence & dignity



Service Animals continued

If you are not sure if the animal is in fact a service animal, ask the customer. Verification may include:

- A letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons related to the disability;
- A valid identification card signed by the Attorney General of Canada; or
- A certificate of training from a recognized guide dog or service animal training school.

What if the animal becomes disruptive or out of control?

- It is the owner's responsibility to maintain control. If the animal is becoming disruptive ask the customer if you can do anything to assist them in regaining control – for example, offering them a private location to calm the animal. Remember that you should never touch the animal or have to clean up after it.

Are there locations or areas that the service animal should not be permitted?

- The Health Protection and Promotion Act provides strict guidelines around animals and food. However, service animals, because of the nature of their work, are permitted in locations where food is served, sold and offered for sale. They still are not permitted in locations where food is manufactured, prepared or processed.

What if another customer is severely allergic to the animal?

- It is your duty to accommodate both customers. You would need to devise an accommodation plan that will work for both individuals. Consider talking to both of them to determine if they can be in separate areas while still receiving the same service and access.



Support Persons

- Some customers may require the assistance of a support person. A support person is an individual hired or chosen to accompany a person with a disability to provide service or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or to access services. Personal care needs may include, but are not limited to, assistance with eating or using the washroom. Medical needs might include: ensuring medication is taken on time, monitoring someone's health conditions and providing injections. A support person can be a paid worker, volunteer, family member or friend and does not necessarily require any special training or certification to offer support.

- Get the client’s consent if their confidential information is to be addressed in the company of the support person. Where possible consent should be in writing.

General tips for working with a support person:



- Introduce yourself to both the customer and support person.
- Talk directly to the client, even if the support person is responding.
- Address the customer appropriately such as asking: "How can I help you today" as opposed to asking the support person "Can you find out what they need?“
- Don't try to have side conversations with the support person.
- Provide any written materials to both the customer and support person.
- Never separate the customer and their support person.



Assistive Devices

- Some customers might also need assistive devices to assist them in accessing our goods or services. Assistive devices can enable them to do everyday tasks such as moving, communicating, reading or lifting.

- Here are a few examples of devices that could be used: white canes, wheelchairs, walkers, listening devices, hearing aids, magnification devices, portable oxygen tanks, laptops with screen-reading software and communication programs, communication boards, smart phones and speech generating devices.



Assistive Devices Etiquette

- Always receive permission before touching or assisting with personal devices.
- Sit so that you are eye level with the person.
- When meeting/greeting a person with an artificial arm/hand, follow the persons lead, and shake the extended hand.
- Ensure the customer and assistive device have the appropriate amount of space.
- Offer assistance if the customer is having trouble working with their device.
- Always keep their personal devices within reach of the person.



T.A.L.K.

- **T**: Take the time to ask “May I help you?”
- **A**: Ask, don’t assume. Never assist unless asked to
- **L**: Listen attentively and speak directly to the customer
- **K**: Know the accommodations and special services available in your site



Service Disruptions

- Service disruptions happen for many reasons and can cause serious upset, hardship and disappointment to all of your customers. Responding and handling service disruptions in a way that supports and informs customers is important for maintaining solid relationships and offering great service.
- A description of other services and facilities that may be used to access goods and services if available.
- Service disruptions can include: unplanned closures, sick employees, construction barriers.
- Disruptions should be communicated immediately and in a variety of methods. You should indicate when the service will be restored and suggest alternatives to be used during the disruption. Ie. Posting a note at the main entrance, phone and/or email a notification to clients, and include the service disruption on the company's website.



Customer Feedback

- The final piece of the customer service standard is accepting and responding to customer feedback.
- After all, customer comments can lead to improved service, increased clientele and a reduction in complaints.
- Establishing a variety of methods to offer feedback such as in person, by phone or through email will mean that all customers will have the opportunity to supply their input into the organization.
- All feedback should be forwarded to the Director.

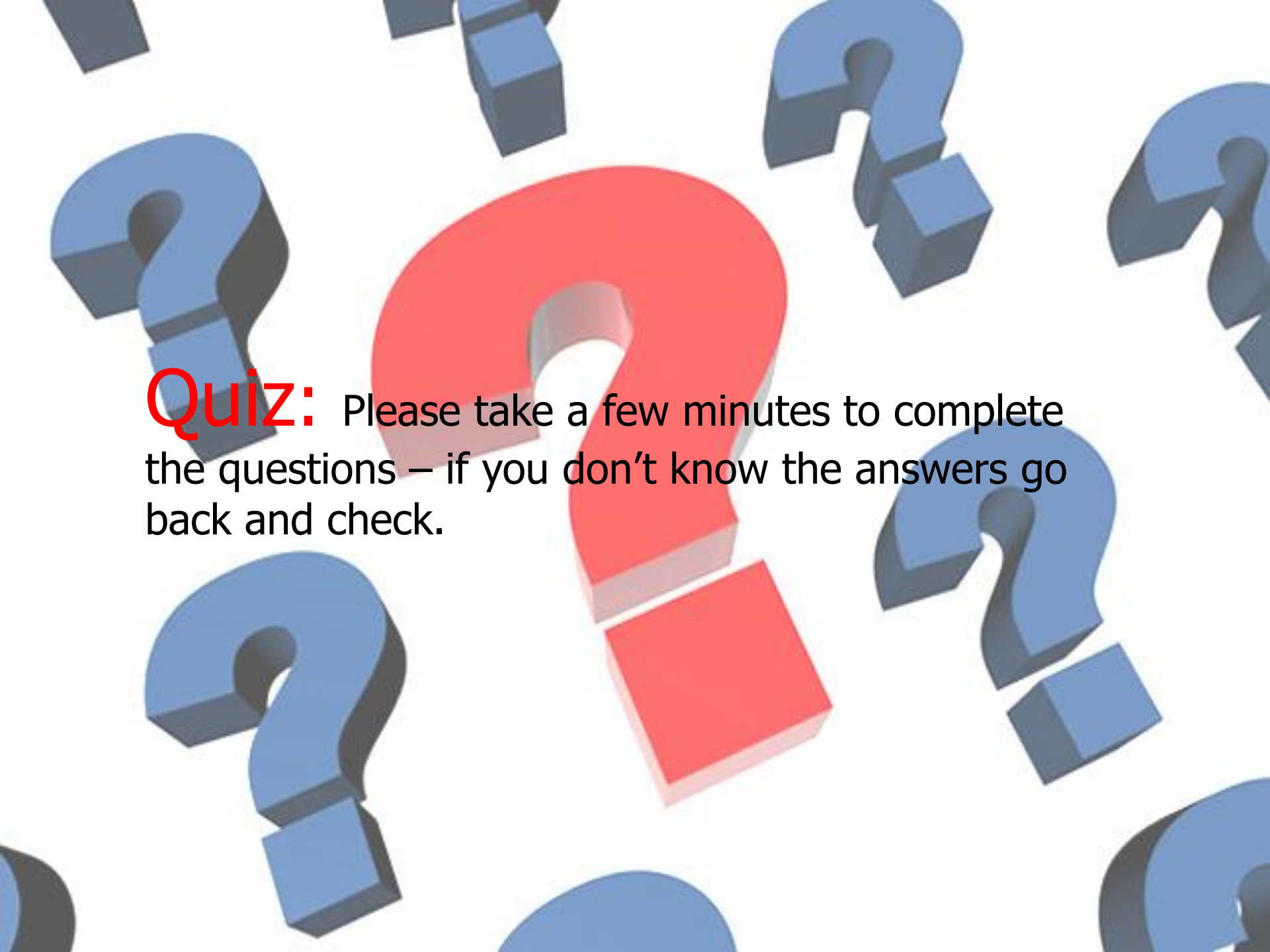
Summary

- Treat all customers and others in a polite, professional and respectful manner
- Recognize and remove barriers
- Notify customers of service disruptions
- Collect and address customer feedback
- By constantly applying the requirements under the AODA and the customer service standards we are furthering our commitment by ensuring that our doors are open to all people and that each customer is treated with dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. Together we will make a better Ontario!



Additional Resources

- www.AccessON.ca/compliance
- www.cnib.ca
- www.chs.ca
- www.abilitymagazine.com
- www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/understanding_accessibility/videos_stories_tips.aspx
- www.ocsa.on.ca



Quiz: Please take a few minutes to complete the questions – if you don't know the answers go back and check.

Quiz:

- 1.Under the AODA for Customer Service only front line staff whose job descriptions include dealing with the public must receive training? True or False?
- 2.Can you always tell when someone has a disability?
- 3.How do you show respect for the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities?
- 4. What is the first thing you should do when deciding how to provide care for someone with a disability?

Quiz:

- 5. If a person with a walker is sitting in a chair and you feel it is obstructing a passageway, should you move it?

- 6. If you are greeting a client and their service animal, should you offer the animal a treat or pet the animal?

- 7. Under the AODA for customer service, a support person may be :
  a) a friend
  b) a family member
  c) a trained professional
  d) a neighbour

Quiz:

- Communication: When communicating with a person with a disability you:

  a) Identify yourself
  b) Address the client by name
  c) Speak directly in a normal tone
  d) Don’t make assumptions
  e) All of the above

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about this important work. It is very important that you complete this training to comply with Bridlewood Child Learning Centre's legal requirements and for us as a centre to be able to state with pride that 100% of Bridlewood Child Learning Centre Board, staff and volunteers have participated in this exercise. **Please make sure you email info@bridlewoodchildlearningcentre.com once you have finished this training.** Thanks again!