

A Helpful Staff Guide to Disability and Interacting with People with Disabilities

Recently the Ontario Legislature passed an Act to strengthen the law on creating a barrier-free Ontario for people with disabilities. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005, outlines mandatory standards that will improve accessibility in five areas beginning with the Customer Service Standard. All hospitals must comply with this standard.

Why this is important?

- Mount Sinai Hospital is committed to meeting the requirements of AODA and the Ontario Human Rights code by providing:
 - A barrier free environment for all patients, visitors, employees, associates and volunteers
 - An environment where every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities
 - An environment that is free from discrimination or harassment in any way because of a disability
- Human rights law is based on all people having equal opportunity to participate in and contribute fully to the community.
- People with disabilities have the right to access health care services.
- People with disabilities should not bear a disproportionate burden of disease and mortality because of their disabilities.

Being an ALLY to People with Disabilities

- An ally acts when people face discrimination and supports the rights of marginalized people. Any member of the Hospital community can be an ally in helping to create a healthy and safe Hospital.
- Marginalized people means *“Groups of people who, due to factors usually considered outside their control, do not have the same opportunities as other, more fortunate groups in society.”*
- Have you ever wished someone else would support you when you felt targeted, humiliated or excluded? Allies can provide support to people with disabilities to ensure they are included and treated with dignity and respect in our hospital.
- Speak up and create access for colleagues with disabilities.
- Ensure that our workplaces and workplace events are accessible.
- Treat everyone as a person first.

How is AODA linked to MSH Core Values?

- Our values that commit us to living the intent and spirit of AODA are:
 - Patient Centred Care
 - Respect and Diversity
 - Excellence and Innovation in Clinical Care
 - Collaboration
 - Leadership
- We live our values by providing high-quality Patient Centred Care and meeting the needs of different communities in an accessible, effective & culturally competent manner.
- Dignity, Respect, Integration & Equality of opportunity for All

It's important to remember that people with disabilities are individuals who have the same variety of attitudes, interests and personalities as the general population. As with other

situations in life, if you don't know what to do, ask! The person who lives with the disability is the best resource for information on how to help.

What can you do?

- Offer to assist the individual, but don't insist. Remember that people with disabilities have their own individual needs and demonstrate various levels of independence.
- Avoid making assumptions - ask! Communicate in a way that takes into account the individual. Don't be afraid to ask someone to repeat something you didn't understand.
- If the individual has a personal assistant, obtain his/her permission before discussing confidential matters in front of the assistant.
- Remember to put people first. Say "person with a disability" rather than a "disabled person"
- Provide notice of any disruption in accessing the hospital and its services, including alternatives (i.e. detours) where available. Become familiar with the assistive devices available.
 - While acknowledging the presence of an interpreter, attendant, or companion remember to address the person with a disability directly. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animal/support person.
 - Please note that a person's assistance device (wheelchair, cane, walker) is considered apart of their personal space. Don't touch anything without asking first (service animals, wheelchairs etc.)
 - Try to convey the message that you are comfortable and confident when assisting. Relax and smile!

What else can you do?

- Consult MSH policies
- When ordering goods or services, review the procedures
- Provide information in an accessible format upon request
- Check with Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness to ensure emergency procedures are appropriate for people with disabilities at Ext. 1572
- If purchasing self services kiosks, work with IT to meet requirements
- Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use your goods or services are temporarily disrupted

For more information, please visit the Mount Sinai Hospital Internet home page and follow [links to Accessibility](#).

Accessibility Hotline: 416-586-4800 Ext. 7286 | Volunteer Services Ext. 8200

Email: Access@mtsinai.on.ca

Ministry of Community & Social Services Website:

<http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/programs/accessibility/index.aspx>

