

Changes to Accessible Customer Service Standards Took Effect July 1, 2016

Changes to the Ontario Accessible Customer Service Standards and the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation created pursuant to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act ("AODA") came into effect on July 1, 2016. All organizations within Ontario with one or more employees must comply with the changes as of that date.

As part of the changes, all accessibility standards are now consolidated as part of one Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. This change was made to ensure that the accessibility requirements are consistent and to make it easier for organizations to better understand their accessibility obligations.

There are a number of changes coming into effect that may impact your workplace. The most important changes are outlined below.

Training for all employees and volunteers

All employees and volunteers must be trained on accessible customer service. The training must include a review of the purposes of the AODA, the contents of the accessible customer service standards and specific training on:

- how to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities;
- how to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person;
- how to use equipment or devices available on the organization's premises or otherwise provided by the organization that may help with the provision of goods, services or facilities to a person with a disability; and
- what to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods, services or facilities.

Expanded number of health professionals can support a need for a service animal

A greater number of regulated health professionals can provide documentation in support of an individual's need for a service animal. The complete list includes audiologists and speech-language pathologists, chiropractors, nurses, occupational therapists, optometrists, physicians, physiotherapists, psychologists and psychotherapists.

When an organization can require an individual to have a support person

More specific guidelines clarify when an organization may **require** a support person to accompany someone with a disability. The organization may only require that a person with a disability be accompanied by a support person if, after consulting with the person and considering the available evidence, the organization determines that:

1. the support person is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises, and
2. there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others on the premises.

If it is determined that a support person is required, the fee or fare (if any) for the support person must be waived.

Changes for private sector and non-profit organizations with 20-49 employees

Private sector and non-profit organizations with 20-49 employees no longer need to have *documented* policies governing its provision of goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities. However, these organizations are still required to comply with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation, the accessibility standards contained in the AODA and will be required to report on accessibility standards.

Accessibility Compliance Reports

All public sector organizations, businesses and non-profits with 20 or more employees must submit a 2017 accessibility compliance report by December 31, 2017. The 2017 report will include questions relating to compliance with the updated customer service standard. More information about the accessibility compliance reports is available on the Ontario "Accessibility Rules for Businesses and Non-Profits" website.

AUTHOR

Erin H. Durant
T 613.787.3512
EDurant@blg.com

BLG OFFICES

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
1900, 520 - 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, Québec, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514-954-2555
F 514-879-9015

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Toronto

Scotia Plaza
40 King Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5H 3Y4

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

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