

## **NWL Accessibility Policies**

### **Providing Services to People with Disabilities**

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## AODA Standards Report

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### **A - Providing goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities**

Northwaters & Langskib is committed to meeting its current and ongoing obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

Northwaters & Langskib understands that obligations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and its accessibility standards do not substitute or limit its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or obligations to people with disabilities under any other law.

Northwaters & Langskib is committed to complying with both the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *AODA*.

Northwaters & Langskib is committed to excellence in serving all customers including people with disabilities.

Our accessible customer service policies are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

Our Website is in the process of becoming accessible and will be accessible by 2021 and follow the WACG guidelines.

#### **A1) Assistive devices**

People with disabilities may use their personal assistive devices when accessing our goods, services or facilities. Due to the nature of our program and the remote backcountry setting the environment may be prohibitive to particular disabilities for safety & access reasons.

In cases where the assistive device presents a significant and unavoidable health or safety concern or may not be permitted for other reasons, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure the person with a disability can access our goods, services or facilities.

We will ensure that our staff are trained and familiar with the process of asking how best they can assist someone with a disability in an honest way to understand how they can help as best as possible.

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### **A2) Communication**

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that take into account their disability. This may include the following

#### By Telephone

- In Person
- Over E-mail
- Sign Language or written communication
- Other means necessary to include and provide clear communication

We will work with the person with a disability to determine what method of communication works for them.

### **A3) Service animals**

We welcome people with disabilities and their service animals. Service animals are allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public.

When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask a person to provide documentation (template, letter or form) from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

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If service animals are prohibited by another law, we will do the following to ensure people with disabilities can access our goods, services or facilities:

- explain why the animal is excluded
- discuss with the customer another way of providing goods, services or facilities

### A4) Support persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises.

Individuals who need support and generally have the support of a support person will need to have a conversation with the Management Team. The aim of this discussion is to identify the areas in which the person with a disability needs support and whether or not we can provide that support without their support person.

If it is absolutely necessary for a support person to accompany a disabled participant on an expedition there will be a maximum additional charge of actual cost to accommodate the support person (food, equipment etc.)

We will notify customers of this policy by posting a notice in the following location:

[www.northwaters.com](http://www.northwaters.com)

In certain cases, Northwaters & Langskib might require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person for the health or safety reasons of:

- the person with a disability
- others on the premises

Before making a decision, Northwaters & Langskib will:

- consult with the person with a disability to understand their needs
- consider health or safety reasons based on available evidence
- determine if there is another reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person or others on the premises

### A5) Training

Northwaters & Langskib will provide accessible customer service training to:

- all employees and volunteers

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- anyone involved in developing our policies
- anyone who provides goods, services or facilities to customers on our behalf.

Staff will be trained on accessible customer service before our usual season begins.

Training will include:

- purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard
- Northwaters & Langskib policies related to the customer service standard
- how to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities
- how to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person
- what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing Northwaters & Langskib's goods, services or facilities

Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessible customer service policies.

## A6) Feedback process

Northwaters & Langskib welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible customer service. Customer feedback will help us identify barriers and respond to concerns.

Customers will be notified of how to provide feedback in the following ways:

- Website – [northwaters.com](http://northwaters.com)

Customers who wish to provide feedback on the way Northwaters & Langskib provides goods, services or facilities to people with disabilities can provide feedback in the following way(s):

- Via E-mail – [Canoe@northwaters.com](mailto:Canoe@northwaters.com)
- In Person – At the Office
- By Phone – 705-237-8227
- Other method – Discuss preferred method with Director

All feedback, including complaints, will be handled in the following manner:

- Feedback will be handled by a member of the Management Team who is most available, or to whom the feedback is the most relevant

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Customers can expect a response in no more than 3 business days, we aim to address all feedback in a timely manner

Northwaters & Langskib will make sure our feedback process is accessible to people with disabilities by providing or arranging for accessible formats and communication supports, on request.

### **A7) Notice of availability of documents**

Northwaters & Langskib will notify the public that documents related to accessible customer service, are available upon request by posting a notice in the following location(s)/way(s):

- In the Office at Northwaters Basecamp
- On our website at northwaters.com

Northwaters & Langskib will provide this document in an accessible format or with communication support, on request. We will consult with the person making the request to determine the suitability of the format or communication support. We will provide the accessible format in a timely manner and, at no additional cost.

### **A8) Modifications to this or other policies**

NWL will review our accessibility policies once every 5 years to assure that any policies of Northwaters & Langskib that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

## **B – Accessible Employment Policies**

### **B1) Recruitment**

Northwaters & Langskib will notify candidates under consideration for employment regarding the availability of accommodation for applicants with disabilities during the recruitment process.

### **B2) Recruitment, Assessment or Selection Process**

Northwaters & Langskib will notify job applicants, when they are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process that accommodations are available upon request in relation to the materials or processes to be used during the recruitment process. If a selected applicant requests an accommodation, Northwaters & Langskib will consult with the applicant and provide, or arrange for the provision of, a suitable accommodation in a manner that takes into account the applicant's accessibility needs due to a disability.

### **B3) Notice to Successful Applicants**

When making offers of employment, Northwaters & Langskib will notify the successful applicant of its policies for accommodating employees with disabilities.

### **B4) Informing Employees of Supports**

Northwaters & Langskib will continue to inform its employees of its policies (and any updates and/or revisions to those policies) used to support employees with disabilities, including policies for the provision of job accommodations that take into account an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability. This information will be provided to new employees as soon as practicable after commencing employment.

### **B5) Workplace Emergency Response Information**

Northwaters & Langskib will provide individualized workplace emergency response information to employees who have a disability, if the disability is such that individualized information is necessary, and if Northwaters & Langskib is aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability. Northwaters & Langskib will provide this information as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the need for accommodation.

Where the employee requires assistance, Northwaters & Langskib will, with the consent of the employee, provide the workplace emergency response information to the person



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designated by Northwaters & Langskib to provide assistance to the employee in the event of an emergency.

Northwaters & Langskib will review the individualized workplace emergency response information if the employee moves to a different location within the organization, or when the employee's overall accommodations needs or plans are reviewed and/or revised.

### **B6) Documented Individual Accommodation Plans**

The Individual Accommodation Plan consist of four steps

1. Recognize the need for accommodation
2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs
3. Write an individual accommodation plan
4. Implement, monitor and update the plan

1. Recognize the need for accommodation

Accommodations can be:

- Requested by the employee
- Identified by the employee's manager or hiring manager

2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs

The employee is an active participant in this step

- Information will be collected on the employee's functional abilities, not the nature of the employee's disability
  - The employee's personal information, including medical information, is kept secure and dealt with in a confidential manner. It will only be disclosed to individuals who need to perform the accommodation process.
- The employee and their manager will work together to find the most the most appropriate accommodation
  - A medical or other expert may be engages (at the company's expense) to help determine if/how the employee's needs can be accommodated
  - The employer may ask a bargaining agent or other workplace representative to participate in the process

3. Write an individual accommodation plan

After identifying the most appropriate accommodation(s), the details will be documented in a written plan, including:

- What accommodation(s) will be provided
- How to make information accessible to the employee, including accessible formats and communication supports
- Employee emergency information and/or emergency response plan (of applicable)

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- When the plan will be reviewed and updated

The manager will give the employee in an accessible format (if required), a copy of the individual accommodation plan , or written reasons for denying accommodation.

### 4. Implement, monitor and update the plan

After implementing the accommodation plan, the employee and his/her manager will monitor and review the plan to ensure that it is effective. Formal reviews and updates will take place on the mutually agreed upon, predetermined schedule in the employee's accommodation plan. If the accommodation is no longer appropriate, the employee and the manager will reassess the situation (step 2) and update the plan.

The accommodation plan will also be reviewed and updated if:

- The employee's work location or position changes
- The nature of the employee's disability changes

## **B7) Accessible formats and communication supports for Employees**

When an employee makes a request for accommodation or clearer communication & information about how to properly perform their duties, the department manager or Human Resources (HR) professional should work with the employee to determine which accessible formats and communication supports are appropriate, and then provide them or arrange for them to be provided. If necessary the Human Resources professionals may act as liaison between the employee and the manager to coordinate the request or enlist outside providers such as CNIB or The Canadian Hearing Society.

## **B8) Return to Work Process**

Northwaters & Langskib maintains a documented return to work process for its employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and who require disability-related accommodations in order to return to work.

The Return to Work Process consists of 4 steps

1. Initiate the leave and stay in contact with the employee
2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs
3. Develop a return to work plan
4. Implement, monitor and update the plan

Step 1 - Initiate the leave and stay in contact with the employee

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If an employee needs to take a disability leave, s/he will inform his/her manager and human resources. The employee and manager will maintain regular contact, with the employee's consent, to address any problems that may arise and facilitate the return to work process.

### Step 2. Gather relevant information and assess individual needs

The employee and manager will work together to share information and find the most appropriate accommodation, for example:

#### Manager

- Provides the employee with return to work information
- Helps resolve any problems with treatment if requested to do so by the employee
- Maintains regular contact with the employee
- Ensures work practices are safe for returning employee
- Assists with identifying accommodations
- Assists with analyzing the demands of each job task

#### Employee

- Gets and follows the appropriate medical treatment
  - Provides updates about their progress, including information about his/her functional ability to perform the job
  - Provides his/her health care provider with the return to work information
- Health care provider(s), union/workplace representative(s) and health and safety professional(s) may also participate in the process, if needed.

### Step 3. Develop a return to work plan.

After identifying the most appropriate accommodation, safety considerations and any transitional measures, capture the details in a written plan. Depending on circumstances, the employee may:

- return to the original position
- return to the original position with accommodation(s) on a temporary or permanent basis
- return to an alternate position on a temporary or permanent basis

The return to work plan should be attached to the employee's individual accommodation plan.

### Step 4. Implement, monitor and update the plan

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After implementing the return to work plan, the employee and manager will monitor and review the plan regularly to ensure that it remains effective. If the accommodation is no longer appropriate, they will reassess the situation (step 2) and update the plan.

## **B9) Performance Management, Career Development, Advancement & Redeployment**

Northwaters & Langskib will take into account the accessibility needs of employees with disabilities, as well as individual accommodation plans, when conducting performance management processes, providing career development and advancement opportunities to employees, or when redeploying employees.

## **C – Multi Year Accessibility Plan**

### **C1) Our Mission**

Northwaters and Langskib Wilderness Programs (NWL) is committed to excellence in serving all participants and their families, including persons with disabilities.

Our programs by virtue of their backcountry setting and remoteness require a case by case safety assessment. We have worked with and will continue to work with persons who have disabilities and strive to offer an uncompromised experience despite their disability as long as this does not compromise safety

In fulfilling our mission, NWL strives at all times to provide its goods 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 goods and services and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in a similar way as others, as long as it is safe for them to do so.

NWL will review our policies once every 5 year at least to ensure that we have not unintendedly added barriers that complicate access to our product.

### **C2) Aim & Commitment**

Northwaters & Langskib strives to meet the needs of its employees and customers with disabilities and is working hard to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility.

Our organization/business is committed to fulfilling our requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This accessibility plan outlines the steps Northwaters & Langskib is taking to meet those requirements and to improve opportunities for people with disabilities.

Our plan shows how Northwaters & Langskib will play its role in making Ontario an accessible province for all Ontarians.

### **C3) Past Achievements to Remove and Prevent Barriers**

Northwaters & Langskib has always aimed and will continue to aim for as much inclusion as possible in our services and programs. Over the past decade there have been upgrades made to our vehicles and or service providers we work with to have accessible equipment available when necessary. We have worked with many individuals with disabilities who have wanted to experience our program. We worked with them on an individual level to strategize about how to best serve them in the context of our work. We do not believe that anyone should be excluded from the experiences that we provide if their inclusion does not compromise their own safety or the safety of others.

Our administrative approach to accessibility has grown a lot in the last decade, we now offer alternative documents upon request with any modifications necessary for any individual to be able to use them. Additionally defining and expanding our understanding of barriers that may not be obvious but are real for clients who may have disabilities.

### **C4) Strategies and Actions**

Between 2020 and 2025 we plan to increase our training surrounding AODA and the standards outlined in the act. Since we operate seasonally we will train annually to ensure that all of our new staff are up to speed and all of our returning staff get refreshed. We also aim to identify particular areas in our organization that are inherently inaccessible, then to discuss possible solutions, make a plan and implement said plan.

We aim to continue to upgrade our vessels and vehicles and or the services we use to obtain highly specific equipment to meet any given need for an individual. Our programs by virtue of their backcountry setting and remoteness require a case by case safety assessment. We will continue to work with persons who have disabilities and strive to offer an uncompromised experience despite their disability as long as this does not compromise their safety or the safety of the group.

### **C5) Trail Expeditions**

Northwaters & Langskib is committed to continual innovation around new strategies to include people with disabilities in our backcountry programs as long as this does not compromise their safety or the safety of the group.

### **C6) For More Information please contact**

**Joshua Ferguson**

[Josh@northwaters.com](mailto:Josh@northwaters.com)

[www.northwaters.com](http://www.northwaters.com)

Standard and accessible formats of this and all documents are free on request.

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### D – Training

#### D1) Methods

Northwaters & Langskib will provide our staff with the following modules, videos and Tips to familiarize them with the relationship between Northwaters & Langskib and our responsibilities and duties to the AODA and everyone in general. We will keep records which can be available upon request about who is trained and when they were trained.

Accessibility and how we can provide an uncompromised experience is important to Northwaters & Langskib and we will strive to give equal opportunity, to the point of undue hardship.

*Sections D2 through D4 are taken from (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-create-accessibility-plan-and-policy>) to ensure that our training meets the standards of the AODA. There will also be training associated with the specifics of how Northwaters & Langskib can best support Accessibility.*

#### D2) Link to Ontario Human Rights Commission training

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/learning/working-together-code-and-aoda>

#### D3) Link to Accessibility Training Modules

<https://accessforward.ca/>

#### D4) Training Tips

##### People with physical/mobility disabilities

Only some people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair. Someone with a spinal cord injury may use crutches while someone with severe arthritis or a heart condition may have difficulty walking longer distances.

Tips:

- ask before you help; people with disabilities often have their own way of doing things
- if you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level
- don't touch items or equipment (e.g., canes, wheelchairs) without permission



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- if you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors
- think ahead and remove any items that may cause a physical barrier, such as boxes left in an aisle

### People with vision loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some customers may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not.

Not everyone with vision loss is totally blind. Many have some vision.

#### Tips:

- when you know someone has vision loss, don't assume the individual can't see you; many people who have low vision still have some sight
- identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the customer
- ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (e.g., a menu or schedule of fees)
- when providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive
- offer your elbow to guide them if needed. If they accept, lead – don't pull
- if you need to leave the customer, let them know by telling them you'll be back, or saying goodbye
- don't leave the customer in the middle of the room – guide them to a comfortable location

### People with hearing loss

People who have hearing loss may be deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. They may also be oral deaf – unable to hear, but prefer to talk instead of using sign language. These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person's hearing was diminished or lost.

#### Tips:

- once a customer has identified themselves as having hearing loss, make sure you are in a well-lit area where they can see your face and read your lips
- as needed, attract the customer's attention before speaking; try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand
- if your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or if possible, move to a quieter area
- if necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (e.g., using a pen and paper)

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- speak directly to your customer – not to their sign language interpreter – if they are accompanied by one

### People who are deafblind

A person who is deafblind has some degree of both hearing and vision loss. People who are deafblind are often accompanied by an intervenor, a professional support person who helps with communication.

#### Tips:

- a customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note
- speak directly to your customer, not to the intervenor

### People with speech or language disabilities

Cerebral palsy, stroke, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or express themselves. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

#### Tips:

- don't assume that a person who has difficulty speaking doesn't understand you
- whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or a "no"
- read visible instructions for communication devices, if the person uses one
- be patient; don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences
- confirm what the person has said by summarizing or repeating – don't pretend if you're not sure
- speak directly to the customer and not to their companion or support person

### People who have learning disabilities

The term "learning disabilities" refers to a range of disorders. One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

#### Tips:

- be patient – people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond

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- try to provide information in a way that works for your customer (e.g. some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math)
- be willing to rephrase or explain something again in another way

### People who have developmental disabilities

Developmental disabilities (e.g. Down syndrome) or intellectual disabilities, can mildly or profoundly limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do every day physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

#### Tips:

- don't make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do
- use plain language
- provide one piece of information at a time
- ask the customer if they need help reading your material or completing a form

### People who have mental health disabilities

Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. It can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. A person with a mental health disability may experience depression or acute mood swings, anxiety due to phobias or panic disorder, or hallucinations.

You may not know someone has a mental health disability unless you are told. Stigma and lack of understanding are major barriers for people with mental health disabilities.

#### Tips:

- if you sense or know that a customer has a mental health disability, treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
- be confident, calm and reassuring
- respect your customer's personal space
- limit distractions that could affect your customer's ability to focus or concentrate
  - loud noise, crowded areas and interruptions could cause stress

### People who use assistive devices

An assistive device is a piece of equipment a person with a disability uses to help them with daily living (e.g., a wheelchair, screen reader, hearing aid, cane or walker, an oxygen tank).

#### Tips:

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- don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission
- don't move assistive devices or equipment (e.g., canes, walkers) out of your customer's reach
- let your customers know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, elevator)

If your organization offers any equipment or devices that can help customers with disabilities access your services, make sure you and your staff know how to use them. It could be helpful to have instruction manuals handy or an instruction sheet posted where the device is located or stored.

Some examples of assistive devices that your organization might offer include:

- mobility device, such as a manual wheelchair or motorized scooter
- lift, which raises or lowers people who use mobility devices
- technology that makes it easier for people with disabilities to communicate or access information, such as certain computer software, an amplification system or a TTY phone line
- accessible interactive kiosk, which might offer information or services in braille or through audio headsets

### People who use service animals

There are various types of service animals who support people with various types of disabilities. People with vision loss may use a guide dog. Hearing alert animals help people with hearing loss. Other service animals are trained to alert a person to an oncoming seizure or to help people with autism, mental health disabilities, physical disabilities and other disabilities.

The law requires you to allow service animals on the parts of your premises that are open to the public. In cases where another law prohibits a service animal from entering certain areas (e.g. a service animal would not be allowed in the kitchen of a cooking school), provide another way for the person to access your goods, services or facilities.

While service animals may be prohibited from certain areas, service dogs are allowed in areas where food is sold, served or offered for sale. This includes a restaurant's public dining room.

### Tips:

- don't touch or distract a service animal, it is not a pet, it is a working animal and has to pay attention at all times
- if you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer

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- you can provide water for the service animal if your customer requests it, but the customer is responsible for the care and supervision of the animal
- if the service animal is prohibited by another law, explain why to your customer and discuss other ways to serve them, e.g. leaving the dog in a safe area or serving your customer in another area where the animal is allowed

### People with a support person

A support person may accompany some people with disabilities. A support person can be a paid personal support worker, an intervenor, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help your customer with communication, mobility, personal care or with accessing your services.

Welcome support people to your workplace or business. They are permitted in any part of your premises that is open to the public. If your organization is one that charges admission, such as a movie theatre, provide advance notice about what admission fee or fare will be charged for a support person.

#### Tips:

- if you're not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting your goods, services or facilities, or simply ask
- speak directly to your customer, not to their support person
- if your organization charges an admission fee or fare, be familiar with its policy on fees or fares for support persons

### When it may be necessary to require a support person

There are certain cases when it might be necessary for a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person on your premises. You must first discuss the situation with the person and consider available evidence before you determine that:

- a 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
- there is no other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and that of others on the premises

In such a situation, you must waive the admission fee or fare for the support person, if one exists.

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### People accessing goods, services or facilities

If you notice that your customer is having difficulty accessing your goods, services or facilities, a good starting point is to simply ask “How can I help you?”

Your customers are your best source for information about their needs. Being flexible and open to suggestions will help create a good customer experience. A solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.