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Confederation
COLLEGE

Customer Service Guide For Assisting People With Disabilities



January 2010

*"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we understand that all threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their colour."
Maya Angelou*

This Customer Service Guide is designed to provide faculty and staff at Confederation College with information and tips to help improve their services to people with disabilities.

Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005) provides direction for improving accessibility for people with disabilities. In promoting accessibility, the AODA has mandated a Customer Service Standard, detailing specific requirements for all service providers. Accessible customer service recognizes and addresses each person's accommodation needs.

Addressing People With Disabilities

Referring to people with disabilities places the person first. Communication and interaction are enhanced when speaking to the person first.

**This Customer Service Guide For Assisting People With Disabilities was compiled by:
The Learning Centre,
Confederation College
Thunder Bay
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with the assistance of the following resources:**

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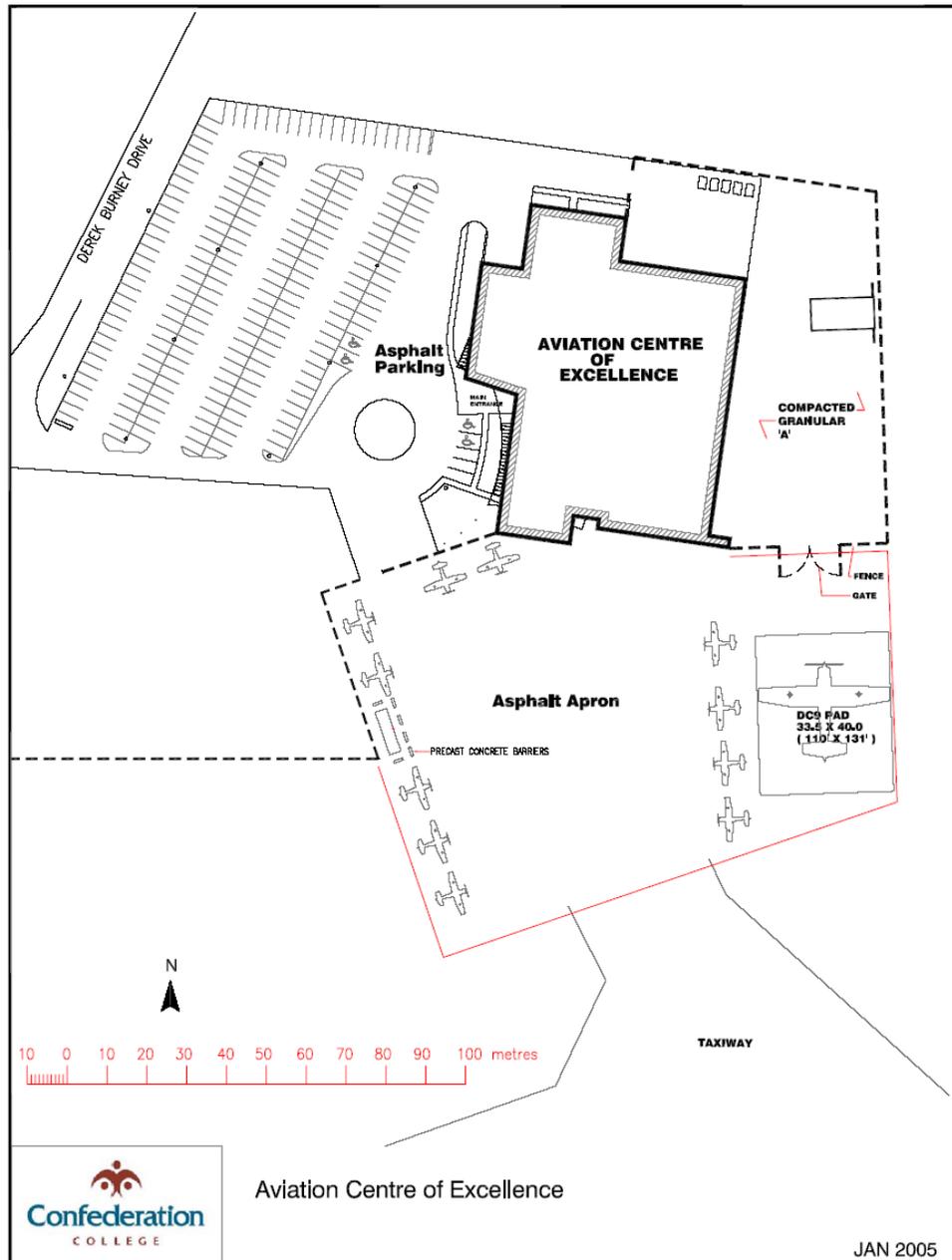
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Confederation College Aviation Centre of Excellence Accessibility Map



SECTION 1 DISABILITY AND THE DUTY TO ACCOMMODATE

Did you know?

In Ontario:

- Just over 15.5% of Ontarians have a disability. That's 1 in every 7 Ontarians, and as the population ages that number will grow.

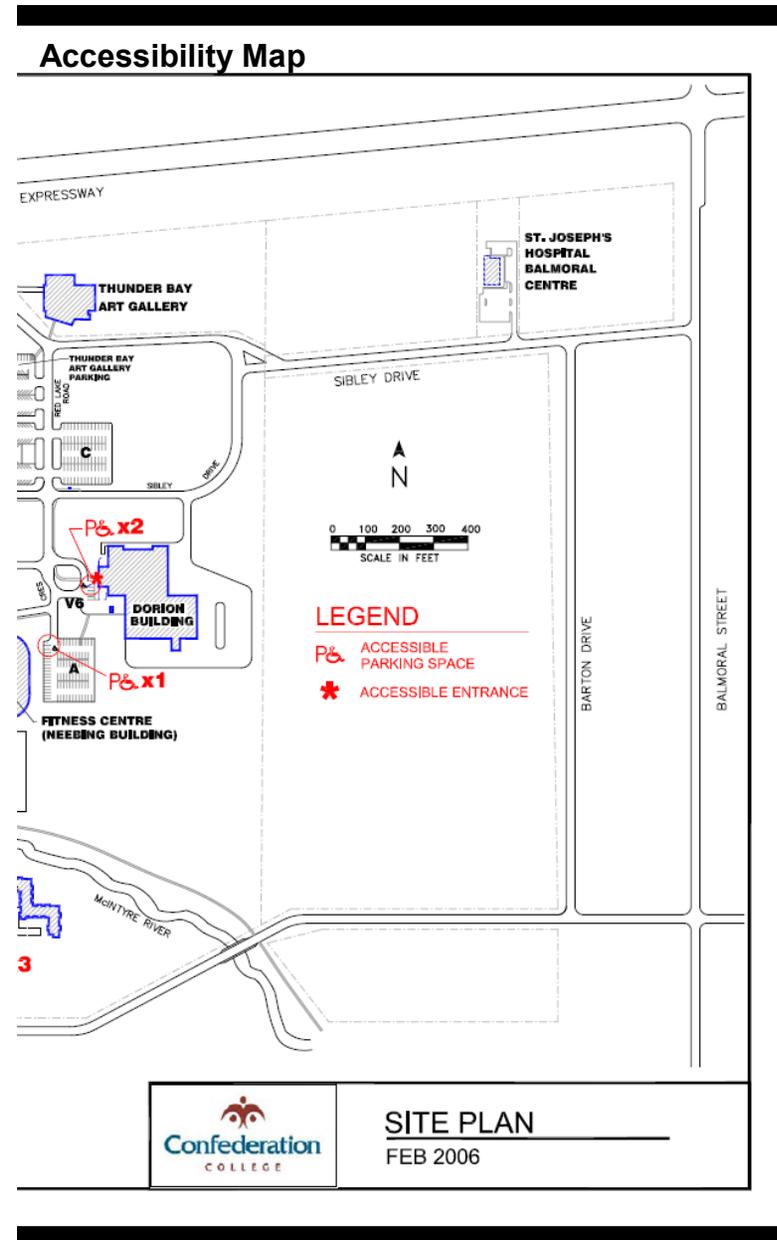
ACCESSIBILITY AT CONFEDERATION COLLEGE

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005, was passed by the Ontario legislature with the goal of creating standards to improve accessibility across the province.

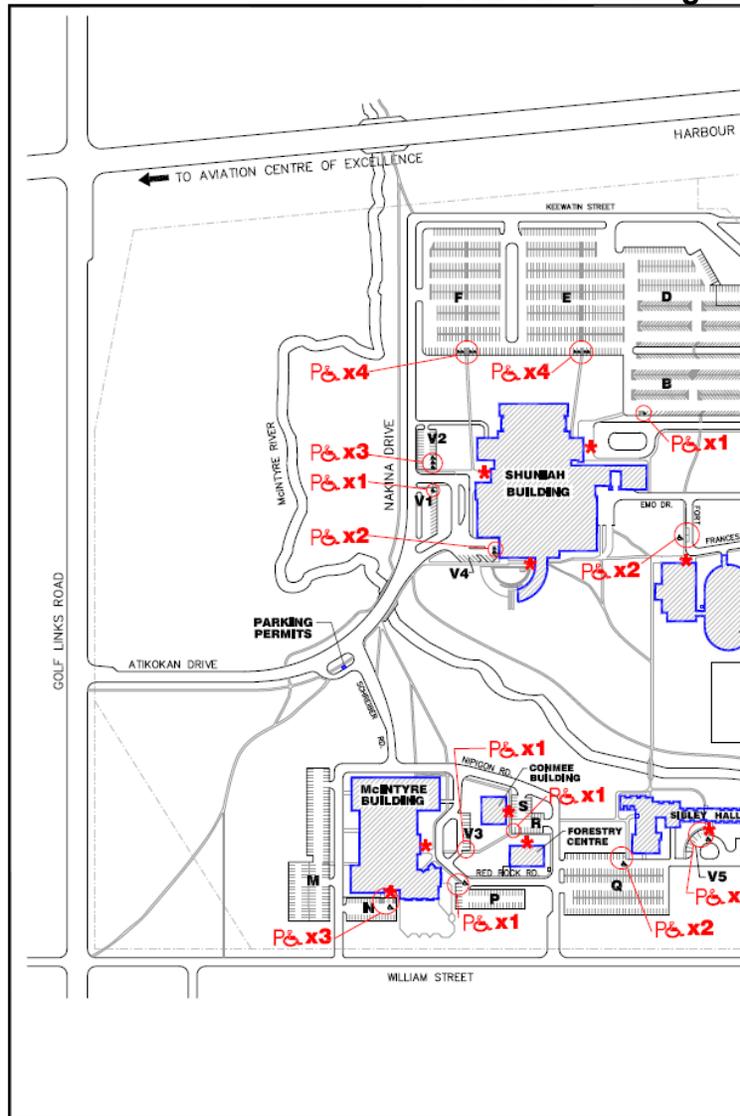
The AODA allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility that are designed to help make Ontario more accessible.

Ontario's Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities Act requires all service providers to remove the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Confederation College has a committee of dedicated individuals called *The Accessible Ontarians with Disabilities Act Working Group*. This group is comprised of Management, Staff, and Faculty, and meets regularly to discuss plans to make Confederation College accessible.



Confederation College



SERVICE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Our Mission

Confederation College strives to provide exceptional service to all customers, including people with disabilities. To do so we will facilitate the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005, and Ontario Regulation 429/07 (Accessibility Standards for Customer Service).

Our Commitment

Confederation College is committed to providing people with disabilities equal access to, and benefit from its goods and services. To ensure this outcome, all operational policies and procedures for every department of the College are developed under the guidelines of dignity, independence, integration and equality of opportunity in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA), 2005.

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

To meet our commitment we will carry out our functions and responsibilities in the following areas:

Communication

Confederation College will ensure that staff communicate with people with disabilities in ways that will accommodate their disability. In order to achieve this goal, all staff will be trained to effectively interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities. In addition, the College will provide alternate methods of communication as quickly as possible upon request by the student (including electronic format for standard written documents, large print, or Braille).

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Assistive Devices

The College will provide assistive technology in order to allow people with disabilities to access College programs, goods and services while on the premises conducting business. The College will promote staff awareness of the various forms of assistive technology and devices that may be used by people with disabilities. Assistive technology is defined as any item, piece of equipment, or product that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities.

Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Confederation College is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. These individuals will be permitted to keep the animal with them unless it is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. In such cases, the College will look to alternate available measures to enable the person to obtain, use or benefit from the College's goods and services.

“When a seeing eye dog is in harness, it is a working dog; it is a tool. Don't ask to pet it or ask for its name - you wouldn't ask for the name of a cane.”

Used with permission by Kathy Toivonen

SECTION 4: ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE AT CONFEDERATION COLLEGE



ACCESSIBILITY AT CONFEDERATION COLLEGE

Location ▶ Service ▼	Shuniah Building	McIntyre Building	Dorion Building	Aviation Centre	Fitness Centre	Sibley Hall Residence
Accessible Parking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accessible Entrance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accessible Washrooms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lower Drinking Fountains	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	none
Lower Pay Phones	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elevators	✓	n/a	✓	✓	to 2 nd floor	none
Lecture Theatre	enter at 3 rd floor	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Student Lounge/Cafeteria	✓	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a
Nurse	by phone	by phone	by phone	by phone	✓	by phone
Paterson Library Commons (Shuniah Building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible entrance • Accessible work stations (for audiovisual equipment & computers) • Accessible study carrels • ReadPlease – reads electronic documents • askON Virtual Reference Service • Internal elevator 					
Learning Centre (Shuniah Building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible entrance • Accessible work station • Alternate format by request • TTY – text communication via telephone • FM listening system • Zoomtext – magnifies electronic documents • JAWS – reads the computer screen • Smartview Extend Magnifier – for paper-based text • Dragon Naturally Speaking – voice-to-text software • Kurzweil 3000 – reads electronic documents • TextHELP Read & Write – supports reading, writing, and learning • Inspiration – concept mapping • Plus a variety of portable devices for notetaking, recording, self-management, and reading 					
LEGEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Indicates accessible services and or features. n/a Not applicable to the facility. 					

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

People with Learning Disabilities

Facts:

- Learning disabilities are characterized by significant difficulties in listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, and/or mathematical ability.
- Learning disabilities can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced, but they can interfere with the person's ability to receive, express, or process information.

Tips for Helping People with Learning Disabilities:

- Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- Speak normally, clearly, and directly to the person.
- Take some time - people with some kinds of learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Try to find ways to provide information that work best. For example, have a paper and pen handy.

Types of assistance your Customer might use:

- Alternative technology for writing
- Calculator
- Scanning or reading technology
- Tape recorders, mini pocket recorders

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Support Persons

Also, Confederation College is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. The College may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person while on the premises in order to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others.

Maintaining eye contact and speaking directly to the person, rather than to a companion, aide, or sign language interpreter conveys respect.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

Confederation College will provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. The notice will be placed at all public entrances, service counters, on the College's Access for People with Disabilities Webpage, and other areas as deemed appropriate.

Training for Staff

Confederation College will provide training to all staff and volunteers on providing excellent customer service to people with disabilities. The training will extend to all

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Training for Staff

new staff as a condition of employment. The College will provide training about the provision of its programs, goods and services to persons with disabilities. The College will also provide ongoing training, when needed, to reflect changes to policies, practices and procedures impacting people with disabilities.

Accessibility Awareness Training will include the following:

- (a) A review of the purposes of the AODA and the requirements of the customer service standard;
- (b) How to provide goods and services in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities;
- (c) How to interact and communicate with persons in a manner that takes into account their disabilities;
- (d) How to interact with persons with disabilities who use assistive devices or require the assistance of a guide dog, service animal or a support person to access goods and services;
- (e) How to use equipment or devices available on College premises or provided by the College that may help with the provision of goods and services for people with disabilities;
- (f) The process for people to provide feedback to the College about the provision of goods and services to persons with disabilities, and how the College responds to the feedback and takes action on any complaint; and,
- (g) What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing the College's programs, goods or services.

Records of staff who have received training will be maintained in Human Resources Services.

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

People with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Facts:

- A developmental disability is characterized by a difficulty in understanding, communicating, mobility, controlling behaviour or a combination of these.
- A developmental disability does not necessarily mean the person is of low intelligence.
- People with developmental disabilities may have difficulty with both receptive and expressive language (communicating and understanding what is being communicated).
- Sensory issues (over or under stimulated senses) are a problem with many types of developmental disabilities.

Tips for People with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities:

- Do not be offended by lack of/inappropriate response(s) or unconventional behaviour.
- Maintain eye contact. This shows respect and that you are genuinely listening and trying to help.
- Do not use complex terminology or jargon - use simple sentences.
- Clearly identify yourself, your role and that you are trying to assist.
- Offer physical assistance and direction when necessary.
- Speak directly to the customer, not the support person

Types of assistance your Customer might use:

- Communication board
- Speech generating device
- Service animal
- Support person

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

People with Mental Health Disabilities

Facts:

- Mental illnesses are biochemical brain disorders that interfere with a person's ability to think, feel, interact with, or relate to other people and the environment.
- Mental illness disrupts an individual's mood balance, thought processes and perception, memory, emotions, ability to reason and relate to other people, and meet the ordinary demands of daily life.
- People with mental illness show the same range of intelligence quotients as the general population, but may experience difficulty functioning at "normal" levels because of their illness and/or the medications prescribed to treat their illness.
- People with mental illness are no more violent than the general public.
- Mental illnesses are commonly occurring disabilities, more common than diabetes, cancer, or heart disease. Two frequently seen mental health conditions are anxiety and depression.

Tips for Helping People with Mental Health Disabilities

- Treat a person with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring. Listen carefully and work with the individuals to meet their needs.
- If a person appears to be in a crisis, ask him/her to tell you the best way to help.

Types of assistance your Customer might use:

- Service animal
- Support person _____

PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Notice of Availability of Documents

This document and other policies and practices related to the provision of goods and services for people with disabilities will be advertised through a variety of methods to ensure public awareness. These documents, along with other College documents, will be made available on request and in a format that takes into consideration individual disabilities.

Feedback Process

The ultimate goal of Confederation College is to meet and surpass customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated.

Feedback regarding the way Confederation College provides goods and services to people with disabilities can be made known using various methods and will take into consideration the fact that individuals with disabilities may require access to different modalities of communication depending on their disability. This means that feedback can be given by email, telephone, in writing, in person or through a third party.

Concerns regarding service to persons with disabilities should be forwarded to the Director, Student Success and/or the Director, Human Resources Services.

SECTION 2 ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

DEFINING DISABILITY

“Disability” covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and others invisible. A disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time.

Under the Human Rights Code (the “Code”), protection from discrimination because of disability includes past, present and perceived conditions.

THE DUTY TO ACCOMMODATE

The “duty to accommodate” is the legal obligation that employers, unions, and service providers have under the Code to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The goal of accommodation is to allow equal benefit from and participation in services, or within the educational institution.

Accommodation is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved, including the person seeking accommodation, should co-operate in the process, exchange relevant information, and explore accommodation solutions together.

There is no set formula for accommodating people with disabilities. Though certain accommodations can benefit many, individual needs must still be considered each time an accommodation request is made. A solution for one person may not work for someone else. All parties should realize that an accommodation does not guarantee a student’s success. Everyone has the right to fail. An example of an accommodation may include:

- Providing reading materials in alternate formats

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

People with Speech or Language Impairments

Facts:

- Communication problems may be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words or causes slurring or stuttering. Individuals may not be able to express themselves or understand written or spoken language.
- Stuttering, a pattern of speech in which the speaker repeats or prolongs sounds for an unusually long time, may be aggravated by anxiety or stress.
- Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards or other assistive devices.

Tips for Helping People with Speech or Language Impairments

- Just because a person has one disability does not mean s/he has another. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking, do not assume an intellectual or developmental disability as well.
- If you do not understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’.
- Be patient and polite, and give the person whatever time he/she needs to get his/her point across.
- Do not interrupt or finish the speaker’s sentences. Wait for him/her to finish.
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Types of assistance your Customer might use:

- Communication board
- Paper and pen
- Speech generating device
- Support person _____

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

People with Physical or Mobility Disabilities

Facts:

- Physical disability goes beyond having to use a wheelchair or wear a back brace. There are many medical conditions, such as multiple sclerosis and chronic fatigue syndrome, which may affect a person's mobility.
- Physical disabilities cannot be generalized because each person will have different causes, symptoms and management strategies.
- Physical disabilities do not necessarily indicate the presence of any other disabilities.

Tips for Helping People who have Physical or Mobility Disabilities

- Speak normally and directly to the person.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- Be patient. The person will identify his/her needs to you.
- Do not touch assistive devices, including wheelchairs, unnecessarily unless it's an emergency.
- Provide the person with information about accessible features of the immediate environment (i.e. automatic doors, accessible washrooms etc.).
- Remove obstacles and rearrange furniture to ensure clear passage.

Types of assistance your Customer might use:

- Elevator
- Mobility device (i.e., wheelchair, scooter, walker, cane, crutches)
- Support person

RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

As a person with a disability:

- advise the Learning Centre of the need for accommodation related to disability;
- provide supporting information about your disability-related needs; answering questions or providing information regarding relevant restrictions or limitations, including information from health care professionals;
- participate in discussions exploring possible accommodation solutions;
- fulfill agreed-upon responsibilities, as set out in the accommodation plan;
- advise the education provider of difficulties experienced in accessing educational life, including problems with arranged accommodations.

As a party to the accommodation process, faculty have a responsibility to:

- include students with disabilities in in-class and extra-curricular activities;
- design and develop new or revised curricula inclusively, with the needs of persons with disabilities in mind;
- advise students of available accommodations and support services, and the process by which these resources may be accessed;
- maximize a student's right to privacy and confidentiality, including sharing information regarding the student's disability with only those directly involved in the accommodation process.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

As a Service Provider:

Once a disability-related need has been identified, education providers have a duty to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, unless to do so would cause undue hardship to the College. Accommodation is a means of preventing and removing barriers that impede students with disabilities from participating fully in the educational environment.

Accommodation involves three principles: dignity, individualization and inclusion.

1. **Respect for Dignity:** Students with disabilities have the right to receive educational services in a manner that respects their dignity. Human dignity encompasses individual self-respect and self-worth. It involves physical and psychological integrity and empowerment. It is harmed when individuals are marginalized, stigmatized, ignored or devalued. Accommodation solutions should therefore respect the dignity of students with disabilities.
2. **Individualized Accommodation:** Each student's needs are unique and must be considered afresh when an accommodation request is made. At all times, the emphasis must be on the individual student and not on the category of disability.
3. **Inclusion and Full Participation:** In some circumstances, the best way to ensure the dignity of persons with disabilities may be to provide separate or specialized services. However, education providers must first try to build or adapt educational services to accommodate students with disabilities in a way that promotes their inclusion and full participation and enables barrier-free access.

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

Tips For Helping People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Attract the person's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where the person can see your face.
- Look at and speak directly to the person. Address the person, not the interpreter.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier; for example, a pen and paper.
- Don't put your hands in front of your face when speaking.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.
- Don't touch or address service animals - they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Be patient; communication for people who are deaf may be different because their first language may not be English; it may be American Sign Language.
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.

Types of assistance your Customer might use:

- Hearing aid
- Paper and pen
- Personal amplification device (e.g., Pocket Talker)
- Phone amplifier
- Relay Service
- Teletypewriter (TTY)
- Hearing ear dog
- Support person such as a sign language interpreter

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

People who are Culturally Deaf or have Hearing Loss

Persons with Hearing Loss

Facts:

- People who are hard of hearing or deafened have a loss of hearing that can range from mild to profound and whose language is spoken i.e. English. Those that are hard of hearing can often hear some sounds but may not be able to understand speech.
- People with hearing loss may use speech, lip reading, speech reading, or a print transcriber to communicate.

Culturally Deaf persons

Facts

- Culturally deaf persons are members of a cultural/linguistic minority group whose language is a signed language i.e. American Sign Language (ASL).
- Culturally deaf persons' first language is a signed language; therefore, signed language interpretation services are required. The printed use of a spoken language will vary depending on the individual and situation.

Tips For Helping People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout.

SECTION 3 CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES

ENHANCING INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES

- **Approach the person from the front where he/she can see you.** This position allows you to communicate with expressions or body language that often times speak louder than words.
- **Maintain eye contact.**
- **Speak to the person with the disability,** whether or not a support person is present. Encourage him/her to express his/her own opinions.
- **Listen to what customers or students say.** Do not assume you know what they want or what is best for them.
- **Ask if assistance is needed,** e.g., with a door. Don't assume.
- **Use a normal tone of voice.** If s/he cannot hear or understand you, s/he will ask you to repeat or rephrase. Raising your voice will make it harder for someone with a hearing impairment to understand you.
- **If you cannot understand what the person with a disability is saying, let him/her know.** S/he will appreciate it, and can rephrase, repeat or write it down.
- When speaking with a person who has a developmental or cognitive disability, **use plain language and a normal tone of voice.** Plain language is not necessarily childish language.
- **Do not assume a person with one disability also has other disabilities.**
- **Don't touch or address service animals** - they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- **Ask permission before touching a wheelchair or a piece of equipment.**

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

People who are Blind or have Low Vision

Facts:

- Low vision denotes a level of vision that is 20/70 or worse and cannot be fully corrected with glasses - indicating you see at 20 ft what a person with good vision sees at 70ft.
- Low vision is not the same as blindness - a person with low vision has some residual sight and usually requires adaptations for the performance of daily activities, such as reading.
- A person is considered "legally blind" when the best corrected central acuity is 20/200 (normal acuity is 20/20) or the peripheral vision is narrowed to 20 degrees or less in the better eye.
- People who are legally blind may still have some vision - very few people experience total loss of vision.

Tips For Helping People who have Vision Disabilities:

- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to him/her.
- Speak normally and clearly.
- Never touch the person without asking permission, unless it's an emergency.
- If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Don't touch or address service animals - they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- If you're giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you're approaching a door or an obstacle, say so.

PROVIDING GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

Tips For Helping People who have Vision Disabilities:

- Don't just assume the individual can't see you.
- Don't leave the person in the middle of a room. Show him/her to a chair, or guide him/her to a comfortable location.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the persons to the environment around them.
- Don't walk away without saying good-bye.
- Be patient; things may take a little longer.

Types of assistance your Customer might use:

- Braille
- Large print
- Magnification devices
- White cane
- Guide dog
- Support person such as a sighted guide
