

AODA Tipsheet #1

General tips for serving people with disabilities

This series provides tips for Ontario housing co-ops on communicating with members with disabilities. Using these tips will help your co-op adhere to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

- ✓ Treat a person with a disability the same as a person without a disability (i.e. with dignity and respect).
- ✓ Avoid making assumptions about the type of disability or disabilities a person has and the person's capabilities.
- ✓ Because a person has one disability does not mean they have another.
- ✓ Not all disabilities are visible. Don't assume that a person does not have a disability because you can't see it. Listen to what your members and the public are asking for, and respond in a way that meets his/her needs.
- ✓ Don't assume a person needs help because the individual has a disability. Adults with disabilities want to be treated as independent people. Offer assistance, if the person appears to need it.
- ✓ If a person wants assistance, ask "How may I help?" before acting. Usually a person with a disability knows what works best for him/her. (e.g. speak clearly, take my arm, etc.)
- ✓ Communicate clearly and patiently to ensure shared understanding. This may mean allowing the person to finish what he/she is saying without interrupting. It also may mean not being afraid to ask someone to repeat something if you don't understand.
- ✓ While acknowledging the presence of an interpreter, attendant, or other support person remember to address the person with a disability directly.
- ✓ Respect people's assistive devices e.g. a cane, scooter, walker, wheelchair, service animals, etc. Do not touch or move these devices without permission from the individual.