

AODA Tipsheet #4

Communicating with a member who is deafblind

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).

GENERAL TIPS:

Don't assume what a person who is deafblind can or cannot do. Some have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.

A person who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a explaining how to communicate with him or her.

If a person is using an intervenor, identify yourself to the intervenor, but then speak directly to your member as you normally would, not to the intervenor.

If the person has a service animal, remember don't touch or address the service animal – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

Use the tips under the Section about people with vision and hearing loss to help you identify other ways to support your interactions with your members. This can include tips on guiding an individual, lighting and reducing background noise, etc.

Don't suddenly touch a person who is deafblind or touch them without permission.

Most people who are deafblind know the letter X drawn on a deafblind person's back, from shoulders to waist, means "Emergency... Take my arm. I will guide you to safety." The individual will follow you and not ask questions until you have reached a safe place. It is important to keep the person aware of what is happening once in a safe location.