

Shelter Valley Folk Festival

Accessibility Standard for Service

What we need to do under the standard?

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed in 2005. Under the Act, the Ontario government is putting accessibility standards in place in the following areas:

- Customer service
- Employment
- Information and communications
- Transportation
- Built environment.

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service applies to all people or organizations in Ontario that provide goods or services, and have one or more employees. It affects the private, non-profit, and public sectors.

Shelter Valley Folk Festival's Plan

Shelter Valley Folk Festival is committed to excellence in serving everyone who participates in any way at the Festival, including people with disabilities. We will train our staff and volunteers to notice and respond to people with various types of disabilities and needs.

How to assist people with disabilities who need help accessing our goods or services.

If you notice that anyone is having difficulty accessing services at the festival or festival events, a good starting point is to simply ask "How can I help you?" The person is your best source for information about their needs. A solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.

How to communicate with people with different types of disabilities

There are many types and degrees of disability. Openly communicating and responding to our festival goers' needs is the key to excellent service for all. If you're not sure about the best approach, just politely ask a person with a disability how you can best communicate with them. Here are a few tips for interacting with people who have various disabilities:

People with physical 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.

Some points to consider:

- 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, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission.
- 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.

People with vision loss

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

- 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 guest.
- Ask if they would like you to read any printed material to them (for example, a menu or schedule of fees).
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive.
- Offer your elbow to guide them if needed.

People who have 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.

- Once a person 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 person's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- If our ticket holder uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (for example, using a pen and paper).

People who are deafblind

A person who is deafblind may have some degree of both hearing and vision loss. Many people who are deafblind will be accompanied by a support person who helps with communication.

- An audience member or volunteer 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 the person, not to their support person

People with speech or language impairments

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

- Don't assume that a person with a speech impairment also has another disability.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or a "no".
- Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish a person's sentences.

People who have learning disabilities

The term “learning disabilities” refers to a variety 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.

- Be patient – people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond.
- Try to provide information in a way that takes into account the guest’s disability. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math.

People who have intellectual / developmental disabilities

Developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as Down’s Syndrome, can limit a person’s ability to learn, communicate, do everyday physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

- Don’t make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do.
- Use plain language.
- Provide one piece of information at a time.

People who have mental health disabilities

Mental health issues can affect a person’s ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. For example, some people may experience anxiety due to hallucinations, mood swings, phobias or panic disorder.

- If you sense or know that an festival participant has a mental health disability, be sure to treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident, calm and reassuring.
- If anyone appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.

How to interact with people who use assistive devices, and how to use any equipment that our organization provides to help Festival guests with disabilities

An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities, such as moving, communicating or lifting. Personal assistive devices can include things like wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes or speech amplification devices.

- Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.
- Don't move assistive devices or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of our customer's reach.
- Let people know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. accessible washrooms, etc.).

If the event location offers any equipment or devices for people with disabilities, make sure you 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.

How to interact with a person who has a guide dog or other service animal

People with vision loss may use a guide dog, but there are other types of service animals as well. Hearing alert animals help people who are deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard of hearing. Other service animals are trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure.

Under the standard, service animals must be allowed on the parts of our site that are open to the public. In some instances, service animals will not be permitted in certain areas by law (for example, the Hospitality and Public Food kitchen areas).

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal. Avoid touching or addressing them.
- If you're unsure the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask the person.

How to serve a person accompanied by a support person

Some people with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help our festival guest with a variety of things from communicating, to helping with mobility, personal care or medical needs.

We welcome support people to our Festival events and workplaces. They are permitted in any part of our premises that is open to the public. Our organization does not charge admission for a support person. If someone arrives with a support person but has not previously arranged for a pass, call a Yellow Shirt for assistance if needed.

- If you're not sure which person needs your help, take your lead from the person, or simply ask.
- Speak directly to the person, not to their support person.

We want everyone to enjoy the festival to the fullest.

If you have any questions or challenges that come up, please ask your Crew Chief, any Yellow Shirt or Board Member, Elizabeth Henkel-Thomas the Volunteer Coordinator or the Festival Producer.

We would be happy to help you!

Thank you