At Ease
A guide to improving accessibility in the workplace and on route for people with invisible disabilities

Tools, tips and resources to better serve Ontarians living with neurological diseases, while employers and transit services comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

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For more information on neurological disorders and how they affect daily living, contact:

Alzheimer Society of Canada
alzheimer.ca
1.800.616.8816
info@alzheimer.ca

Epilepsy Canada
epilepsy.ca
1.877.734.0873
epilepsy@epilepsy.ca

Huntington Society of Canada
huntingtonsociety.ca
1.800.998.7398
info@huntingtonsociety.ca

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada
mssociety.ca
Toronto Chapter
1.416.922.6065
info@mssociety.ca

Neurological Health Charities Canada
mybrainmatters.ca
1.416.227-9700 ext. 3314
1.800.565-3000
Info@mybrainmatters.ca

Parkinson Canada
parkinson.ca
1.800.565.3000
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Introduction

Some international studies have estimated that up to 40% of all people with disabilities have invisible disabilities. Over 90% of people with chronic medical conditions live with a condition that is invisible. These people do not use a cane or any visible assistive device and appear as if they do not have a medical condition. Although the disability creates a challenge for the person who has it, the reality of the disability can be difficult for others to recognize or acknowledge.

People living with invisible disabilities face many barriers as they go about their daily lives. With this booklet, we will shed some light on them and how best to remove barriers in the workplace and on transit systems.

This booklet contains information for transit agencies seeking to remove barriers to better accommodate people with invisible disabilities. There is also information for employers that have or may hire people with disabilities.

These considerations were guided by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Ontario was the first province in Canada and one of the first jurisdictions in the world, to enact specific legislation establishing goals and time frames for accessibility.

This booklet introduces you to the AODA. It also provides answers to frequently asked questions as well as a glossary of definitions. Toward the end, you will find contact information for other organizations that help remove barriers for individuals living with neurological conditions.
Overview of Disabilities

At some time in a person’s life, they likely have or will experience a disability. Some are temporary; others are permanent. And disabilities are not always obvious. The laws in Ontario protect the rights of people with disabilities so that they may continue to participate in their communities and in their activities of daily living. The following are some frequently asked questions related to disabilities in Ontario.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is considered a disability?

The **Ontario Human Rights Code** (OHRC) defines disabilities by the following criteria:

1. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;

2. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;

3. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;

4. a mental disorder; or

5. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

What is an invisible disability?

Also known as a **hidden disability**, it is a disability that is not immediately obvious to onlookers and may go unnoticed under most conditions and situations. It may not be noticeable in the person’s speech, behaviour or mobility. However, in given situations and under specific conditions, a person with an invisible disability still experiences barriers.
Here are a few examples:

**Example:**
Roberto has Parkinson’s disease. During meetings at work, everyone is expected to take part in the discussions and provide input. When it’s his turn, his speech is soft, slow and occasionally, he has trouble finding the right words. Others attending meetings lose patience and form the opinion that he is either stupid or has come to the meeting unprepared. He senses this and it causes him distress, further worsening his symptoms.

**Example:**
Hamid has a back condition. He appears fine while sitting at his desk working on his computer. He takes frequent breaks during which he performs prescribed stretching activities. His coworkers are unaware of his needs and view him as lacking focus and not working as hard as they do. This affects his relationships with them.

**Example:**
Katarina has a severe and chronic respiratory illness. It affects how far she can walk without experiencing a lack of oxygen (hypoxia) and feeling like she is about to faint. At work, she must walk through a very long warehouse to the foreman’s office to pick up mail. She needs the job, and experiences severe anxiety each time a pick-up has to be made. Her health is being affected.

**Example:**
Graham has multiple sclerosis. He occasionally experiences balance and walking issues. He is at risk of falling and injuring himself when he has to stand up during his commute. When he uses the courtesy/priority seating, other riders who cannot perceive his disability give him severe looks as if to judge him. This makes him uneasy and anxious.

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**Are neurological disorders considered a disability?**

Neurological disorders are diseases that affect the central and peripheral nervous systems, including the brain, the spinal cord and the nerves that connect them to the rest of the body. There are hundreds of conditions that fall into this category, including multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy, Huntington’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, stroke, traumatic or acquired brain injuries and many others.

People with these conditions face various accessibility barriers.
What are the main types of invisible disabilities?

According to Statistics Canada’s Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD, 2012), some of the most common invisible disabilities, as a percentage of the total population, include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental/Psychological</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexterity</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures are in alignment with the federal Human Resources and Skills Development (now known as Employment and Social Development Canada or ESDC) report on types of disabilities common in Ontarians. The report demonstrates that challenges with agility, pain, vision problems, memory issues, communication and emotional disabilities top the list of unseen disabilities.

Some international studies have estimated that up to 40% of all people with disabilities have invisible disabilities (Matthews & Harrington, 2000). These studies have also shown that if it cannot be seen, then it will likely be misunderstood and, ultimately, not accommodated. See Resources section, page 34.

Can you have both visible and invisible disabilities?

Yes. In fact, it is common for people with certain types of visible disabilities to also have some type of invisible disability.

Example:

Mark has multiple sclerosis and uses a wheelchair for mobility and could also have invisible disabilities such as chronic fatigue, pain and heat intolerance, and experiences some level of cognitive impairment. He experiences fewer issues early in the day, and finds they worsen with exertion and as the day goes on.

Example:

Gina has Parkinson’s disease and experiences tremors, and difficulties walking. She also experiences unseen symptoms such as chronic pain, slowed or slurred speech, sensory dysfunctions, cognitive changes, mood disorders, and sleep issues. Gina manages her symptoms well enough most days. If late in taking a dose of her medications, she will have symptomatic setbacks and it may take her much longer to get back to a more managed state.
Do people with disabilities have unique challenges?
Everyone has varying challenges and abilities. Accommodations or modifications help facilitate a person’s ability to manage their activities of daily living, including work responsibilities.

What are accommodations or modifications?
An accommodation is an implemented plan that is designed to meet the specific needs of a person with a disability. It may be a change to their working location, the number of hours they work, or the manner in which their professional development and training are delivered. Or something simpler like modifications to the height of their desk, the chair they sit on, the size of the computer monitor they use, the devices they use, the format of the documentation they require, or whether they stand or sit while working.

The best way to determine appropriate accommodations is by asking the individual who discloses a disability what they specifically need.

What is an accessibility barrier?
Barriers to accessibility come in many forms. Just like disabilities, some are visible and others are hidden. They can be objects, structures, systems, physical designs, patterns, communications, and attitudes. Barriers are any obstacles that keep a person from participating fully at work and in their communities. Many barriers are preventable. Some are easy to take down.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
Protection of the rights of people with disabilities starts with the removal of barriers and the creation of accessibility on multiple levels. In Ontario, this is done through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The following questions and answers will more shed light on this legislation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the AODA?
The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act of 2005 is legislation designed to ensure that people of all abilities have an equal opportunity to fully engage and participate in everyday life here in Ontario, including, but not limited to going to work, school and other activities.
Who does the AODA apply to?
It applies to organizations that have one or more employees and provide goods or services in Ontario, including all levels of government, nonprofit and private sector businesses.

What are accessibility standards?
Accessibility standards are laws that government, businesses, nonprofits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible. The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) includes all of the following:

1. Customer Service Standard
2. Employment Standard
3. Information and Communications Standard
4. Transportation Standard
5. Design of Public Spaces Standard

The standards contain timelines for compliance and help organizations prevent and remove barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities.

For the purposes of this booklet, we will be touching upon the Customer Service Standard, and then looking at the Employment and Transportation Standards in a little more depth so we can provide the information and help necessary for a greater understanding of the needs of people with invisible disabilities.

AODA Customer Service Standard

The Customer Service Standard requires businesses and organizations to provide accessible customer service to people with disabilities. It also requires them to train their employees on the provision of accessible customer service and how to respectfully and effectively interact with people with various disabilities—visible and invisible.

Attitudes, for example, cannot be seen, yet can create barriers when they are based on stereotypes, learned behaviours or a lack of awareness and understanding.

The Customer Service Standard requires all organizations to:

• Set up policies on the provision of accessible customer service to people with disabilities
• Integrate the principles of equal opportunity, dignity and independence into these policies
• Ensure that these policies are enforced and consistent across the organization
• Make these policies available in accessible formats when requested

The **Standard** also requires organizations to:

• Accommodate the disability as it relates to communications of any kind;
• Permit the use of, and in some cases provide, assistive devices for accessing goods and services;
• Permit service animals into all public areas of an organization (e.g., a restaurant) except where prohibited by another law (e.g., in the kitchen of a restaurant);
• Allow support people to accompany people with disabilities and inform them in advance of any limitations, safety issues or costs related to that;
• Notify those accessing their goods or services of any accessibility limitations (e.g., bathroom under construction), or service disruptions (i.e., how long the disruption is expected to last and what accessible alternatives are available);
• Provide an accessible means of receiving complaints or feedback and identify how responses will be provided; and
• Train all employees on the provision of customer service to people with various disabilities.

When it comes to neurological conditions, you may not be aware that a person has any type of disability unless they tell you. In order to provide them with respectful and appropriate customer service, you can practise these simple techniques:

- **Remain** calm and reassuring
- **Make** no assumptions about their capabilities
- **Listen** carefully to their concerns and needs
- **Allow** enough time for them to properly express their thoughts (they may speak more quietly, slowly or take more time to respond to questions)
- **Limit** distractions and interruptions (their concentration can be hindered by them)
- **Provide** information or instructions in short, concise sentences (this makes it easier to put to memory and recall)
- **Summarize** what you hear to confirm correct messaging has been received
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AODA Employment Standard

Overview

The AODA Employment Standard is designed to support employers in providing accessibility throughout the entire employment cycle—from sourcing and hiring, to employing and developing.

The criteria are applied to:

- Paid employees
- Seasonal or non-seasonal
- Full-time or part-time
- Apprenticeships

The criteria do not apply to volunteers and unpaid staff.

In this booklet, you will find information for both potential employees as well as some information for potential employers of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities are an untapped resource and have much to contribute to society and our economy. Improving employment accessibility for people with disabilities in Ontario is also good for our economy.

False impressions still exist about employees with disabilities. They include preconceived views that employees with disabilities may be:

- Less productive
- Less knowledgeable
- Less likely to go above and beyond expectations
- Harder to dismiss for underperformance
- Costly to hire and accommodate

There are plenty of reasons to hire someone with a disability. Many people with disabilities have very strong, marketable abilities; they are highly motivated and willing to work; and have been very committed and loyal employees.

There are almost 47,000 students with disabilities enrolled in colleges and universities Ontario. In fact, 43% of people with disabilities have post-secondary credentials (McCloy & DeClou, 2008). This represents a highly-skilled yet under-utilized pool of individuals that could supply the workforce demand that exists today.

The Ontario labour force needs workers, according to numerous sources, including the Ontario Ministry of Finance and Statistics Canada. There is a growing gap between the number of people retiring from the labour force and those entering. And this gap is set to widen in the next few years.
Many employers are experiencing issues filling job vacancies already. Ontario is set to face a shortfall of over 360,000 workers by 2025, and that number will more than double by the year 2030, according to a report by the Conference Board of Canada (2007) prepared for Ontario’s Workforce Shortage Coalition.

Employing people with disabilities would further assist in filling the gap of qualified candidates in the province, especially in sectors that are set to see deficits in the coming years. They include the following:

1. Financial Services where 33.3% of the labour force is set to retire by 2020
2. Information and Communications Technology where a need of an additional 106,000 workers was identified
3. Hospitality and Tourism where there will be an employee shortfall of 10% by 2025

In Ontario, 97% of businesses have 100 or fewer employees. These businesses faced challenges when attempting to find qualified personnel, with 29% reporting that positions were left unfilled for up to 18 months.

**FACT:** Hiring someone with a disability costs less than you might think, and may not increase employment costs at all.

According to the Job Accommodation Network, 57% of employees with disabilities cost their organizations nothing to accommodate; while an additional 36% required a minimal, one-time expense of $500 to accommodate.

Requests for employment accommodations typically fall into three simple categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Requests for flexible work hours</th>
<th>Requests for job redesign</th>
<th>Requests for additional training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These requests are easy, simple and affordable to fulfill. Flexibility and support may be things that many employees ask for at some time or another in their careers.

”Most importantly, we learned the satisfaction of our own success does not compare to the joy of making another person successful.”

~ Randy Lewis, Direct Employers Association Blog (directemployers.org), April 2016
How can I hire someone with a disability?

Hiring someone with a disability is easier than you may think. You can do it by incorporating some of the information that has been provided in this booklet (See “Employer Obligations” section on page 17 and “Tips for Employers” on page 20) to implement accessible hiring practices.

You can also register your organization or company with networks that connect employers with candidates that have disabilities. Some of these networks have the added benefit of being free. One such forum, known as “Magnet” (https://magnet.today/ or www.discoverability.network), is a network—led by Ryerson University and supported by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—that provides people with disabilities targeted connections to employers who will hire them based on their job suitability. It also acts as a means for employers to source out talent from a labour force that is yet untapped. For more information about Magnet and how it works, watch Tim’s Story on Vimeo (https://vimeo.com/158116052).

Finding the right person for the right job can be challenging. Think of non-traditional sources for candidates. Seek candidates who will bring suitable skills, applicable knowledge and empathetic perspectives to potential roles. You may discover that a person with a disability brings a fresh and unique outlook and a well-developed appreciation for the diversity of needs in the workplace.

The Rights of Employees with Disabilities

Job applicants and employees with disabilities have rights under the OHRC that allows them equal opportunity to apply for and maintain jobs. They include the right to have materials and information provided to them in accessible formats which include digital, Braille, audio, large print, captioning and text transcriptions.

Further to that, applicants and employees can request communication supports including notes and letters; being read the information; repeating, clarifying or restating of information; assistive learning systems for training or development; devices that screen read or speak out; and American Sign Language (ASL) translators.

During the recruitment process, applicants with disabilities can request accommodations for their disability and should receive those accommodations, especially if the organization is one with 50 or more employees. They are also to be notified of any policies for accommodations should they be successful in acquiring the job.
The Obligations of Employers

Employers in Ontario have several obligations within the AODA that they must meet. Please refer to the Employer Obligations and Employee Rights table in the appendices of this booklet. Use this table to check off the obligations and requirements being met.

Disclosing a Disability

Invisible disabilities can go unnoticed and undisclosed for a time. If the employee chooses not to disclose their needs, an employer will not have the opportunity to understand those needs and to provide appropriate accommodations.

According to a report by Baldridge and Swift (2013), people with invisible disabilities often do not disclose their conditions to their employers, especially if they are young and have recently acquired the disability. Findings from a survey done in 2011 by Jonathan Fridhandler, on employees with Parkinson’s, indicated that as much as 38% of respondents waited more than six months after diagnosis to disclose to their employers. Fridhandler postulated that this may be due to a lack of knowledge regarding their rights to accommodations or fear of discrimination if they did disclose.

Factors such as these place pressure on the employee to try to manage their disability alone. It is the employee who then accommodates themselves to prevent exposure of their disability to their employer. Unaware of the disability, the employer may come to view the employee in an unfavourable light.

A person with a disability does not have to disclose the specifics of their disability to their employer. Furthermore, if a disability is disclosed and the person asks that it be kept confidential, it must be kept private.

Employers can do their part by establishing a workplace culture and practices that prevent situations like this. They can:

- Learn more about invisible and visible disabilities
- Access information on how to hire people with disabilities
- Be transparent and inform all employees about the accessibility and accommodation policies of their organization
- Remove any accessibility barriers in the workplace
- Encourage safe disclosure for employees with invisible disabilities
- Provide awareness training related to visible and invisible disabilities
Create and nurture a culture of understanding, tolerance and inclusion
Discover how your organization can engage diverse talents
Seek guidance and information from relevant organizations on how to accommodate specific invisible disabilities
Contact Ontario’s Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility for more information

Table 1: Advantages of Disclosure to Employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permits</th>
<th>Provides legal protection from discrimination and enforces human rights.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensures</td>
<td>the person with an invisible disability receives the support they need to successfully perform the responsibilities of their job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets</td>
<td>expectations for people with an invisible disability and employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensures</td>
<td>that the accommodation plan is revisited as needs change and some accommodations are no longer effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces</td>
<td>stress and the energy spent hiding the accessibility needs for the person with an invisible disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows</td>
<td>the person with an invisible disability to plan their career decisions and take steps towards them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents</td>
<td>an opportunity to assess and discuss health insurance and related benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides</td>
<td>more transparency and freedom to address changing needs or unexpected circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improves</td>
<td>the self-image and confidence of the person with an invisible disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows</td>
<td>the engagement of other support professionals such as HR, employment service providers, and skills development professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May increase</td>
<td>the comfort level of the person with an invisible disability as it relates to any stigma they may have felt as a result of their disability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Workplace Accommodation of Persons with Invisible Disabilities: A Literature Review, by Michael J. Prince, Prof. of Social Policy, Faculty of Human and Social Development, University of Victoria, B.C.
It is important for employers to appreciate the experience of people with invisible disabilities. With this knowledge, employers can create inclusive cultures in their respective organizations. That way, everyone can benefit from the sum of the contributions that people with invisible disabilities can provide to their workplace (and the broader workforce), their communities and the province.

**Accommodations and Customizations**

There are many accommodations that will enable people with disabilities to be successful in their job. No one accommodation plan fits all. Solutions ought to be based on the specific needs of each employee with a disability for their specific job duties and responsibilities.

Typically, when you hire someone with a disability, they are required to take on the responsibilities of a given role as defined by the job description. However, a job or role is sometimes customized to the specific abilities of the individual. The job requirements can be altered to match the employee’s current abilities and strengths as long as this fulfills the employer’s business needs.

**Benefits to the Employer**

There are many benefits to accommodating an employee’s needs on the job. They include, but are not limited to:

- Employee retention
- Employee job satisfaction
- Employee attendance and productivity increase; and
- Employee professional growth
- Reduced costs related to a new hire, including:
  - Recruitment
  - On boarding
  - Training
- Reduced insurance costs
- Improved employer/employee relationship
- Improved company culture and morale
- Increased company inclusion and tolerance
- Increased productivity and profitability

**Organizations can benefit from a more positive overall culture of the organization, better employee morale and better employer-employee relations across the board.**
Accessible Employment in Ontario

It is anticipated that there will be more and more people with disabilities, and many with invisible disabilities. Employing, retaining and safely transporting people with disabilities to work and other activities of daily living is good for business, good for the province, and good for our society. Benefits can be enjoyed across both economic and cultural sectors, and will help build a stronger and more inclusive society in this province.

Tips for Employers

The Government of Ontario wants employers to remove barriers for job seekers with disabilities. Here are some tips on how to create an inclusive and tolerant work environment as adapted from *Hiring Qualified Workers with Disabilities* (2010), *One Voice Network of York Region*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>training and education on accessibility in formats that meet the needs of all employees</td>
<td>any staff with known or disclosed disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodate</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Promote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as appropriate</td>
<td>any misconceptions and manage perceptions</td>
<td>overall health and safety in the workplace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barriers create unnecessary problems in the workplace. Here are some examples and possible methods by which employers can remediate situations and take down accessibility barriers. Remember, there is no one accommodation that can meet the needs of every person with a disability. Address each need on an individual basis.
Table 2: Barriers to Accessibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Possible Remediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudinal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attitudinal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employer has had experience with a previous employee who claimed to</td>
<td>• <strong>Recognize</strong> the need to assess each situation independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have “back issues” who stopped performing most of his job duties and</td>
<td>• <strong>Recognize</strong> preconceived notions and beliefs that may be impacting attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coworkers had to “pick up the slack”</td>
<td>• <strong>Consciously</strong> assess influencing factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He came to believe that back issues were a common excuse to avoid</td>
<td>• <strong>Provide</strong> opportunities for coworkers and team members to learn more about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing heavy work</td>
<td>disabilities and accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employer was unaware that he would look for affirmations of his</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication / Information</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communication / Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional manuals are in hard copy and have very small font size</td>
<td>• <strong>Produce</strong> and provide accessible documentation in various formats including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hard copy and digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Ensure</strong> language is simple and clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical / Architectural</strong></td>
<td><strong>Physical / Architectural</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An organization has just reorganized the desks in their office</td>
<td>• <strong>Address</strong> accessibility and safety issues prior to reorganization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They have added several more work spaces to accommodate staff</td>
<td>• <strong>Reorganize</strong> the desks in a manner that provides ample access for all employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This has narrowed the aisles between the desks and is creating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problems for an employee who relies on a rollator to walk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result of his invisible disability an employee needs to take frequent but much shorter breaks. His organization states that employees can only take two fifteen-minute breaks at specific times each day. The employee feels embarrassed to speak to his manager about his needs.

Reassure the employee that their contributions to the organization are valued. Advise them that anything discussed will be kept confidential. Discuss their needs and work with him to come up with an agreeable solution. Manage coworkers’ perceptions without breaking confidentiality.

An employee with low vision is having difficulty using the new software application for customer orders. Using the computer aggravates her vision and causes her to experience headaches. Her employer refuses to allow her to use the paper forms. She feels frustrated and helpless.

Review and separate out essential and non-essential job duties. Discuss accommodations that would work for both parties. Ask a coworker to enter in the information from the paper forms. Check in with the employee to ensure they are on track and the accommodations are working. Make any revisions to the accommodations as necessary.

Hiring someone with any type of disability should not be onerous. We hope the information in this booklet has provided you with a starting point from which to create accessible employment opportunities within your organization; and we encourage you to discover the benefits of hiring a highly motivated and loyal employee with a disability.
At Ease
A guide to improving accessibility on route for people with invisible disabilities

Tools, tips and resources to better serve Ontarians living with neurological diseases, while complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
For more information on neurological disorders and how they affect daily living, contact:

**Alzheimer Society of Canada**  
[alzheimer.ca](http://alzheimer.ca)  
1.800.616.8816  
info@alzheimer.ca

**Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada**  
[mssociety.ca](http://mssociety.ca)  
Toronto Chapter  
1.416.922.6065  
info@mssociety.ca

**Epilepsy Canada**  
[epilepsy.ca](http://epilepsy.ca)  
1.877.734.0873  
epilepsy@epilepsy.ca

**Neurological Health Charities Canada**  
[mybrainmatters.ca](http://mybrainmatters.ca)  
1.416.227-9700 ext. 3314  
1.800.565-3000  
Info@mybrainmatters.ca

**Huntington Society of Canada**  
[huntingtonsociety.ca](http://huntingtonsociety.ca)  
1.800.998.7398  
info@huntingtonsociety.ca

**Parkinson Canada**  
[parkinson.ca](http://parkinson.ca)  
1.800.565.3000  
info@parkinson.ca

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Produced by Parkinson Canada

This booklet was partially funded by a grant from the EnAbling Change Program with the support of the Government of Ontario.
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Getting to Work or Providing Accessible Transportation for People with Invisible Disabilities

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29 Tips for Transit Agencies and Staff
Overview

The *Transportation Standard* sets out the requirements to help public transit accessible to people with disabilities. This enables people with disabilities to participate in their communities, go to work and take part in daily living.

Accessible Transit

Getting to Work or Providing Accessible Transportation for People with Invisible Disabilities

“Personal mobility has significant and profound impacts on employment, independence, social inclusion, entertainment and full participation in one’s general community and society.”

~ Accessible Transportation Technologies Research Initiative (ATTRI): Assessment of Relevant Research, April 2017

Although many public transit agencies and providers have accessibility policies for addressing the needs of people with disabilities, they may not be meeting the needs of people with hidden disabilities. People with neurological conditions come to depend more on public transit after they stop driving.

For people living with invisible disabilities, accessible transit services are essential. Depending on the stage of progression of their disease and their particular symptoms, they may be experiencing issues with fatigue, pain, balance, walking, and dizziness or even passing out when getting up too quickly from a seated position. All this can be experienced while the person still appears to be able-bodied. Non-judgmental service and accessible seating will be critical to their safety while travelling.

Ontario’s *Transportation Standard*—a part of the Integrated Accessibility Standards of the AODA—requires that all conventional
transportation services have **courtesy seating** for people with disabilities. It also requires that this type of seating be:

1. Clearly signed
2. Located close to the entrances / exits of the vehicles
3. Vacated if the seating is required by a person with a disability

Furthermore, every transit agency must develop a means of effectively communicating this requirement to inform the public and its staff of the purpose of the courtesy seating. However, in the event that the courtesy seating is needed and is not being vacated by someone without a disability, operators are not required to step in and ask people to give up their seats. This presents many challenges for people with invisible disabilities in particular, especially if they find themselves in a situation where they may require courtesy or priority seating, as it is sometimes known, and someone without a disability is occupying it.

Please refer to the appendices of this booklet for a “Sample Sign for Accessible Seating” that may help prevent barriers to accessible seating on public transit.

The following chart will also be helpful to transit agencies and their staff. It can be utilized to shed light on the needs of people with these conditions, identify potential and existing barriers, supplement paratransit applications and streamline processes, and improve overall service to people with invisible disabilities related to neurological conditions.
### Table 3: Invisible Symptoms That Can Affect Travel on Public Transit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parkinson’s Disease</th>
<th>Multiple Sclerosis</th>
<th>Other Neurological Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rigidity / Stiffness</td>
<td>Imbalance</td>
<td>Seizures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizziness</td>
<td>Vertigo / Dizziness</td>
<td>Irritability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akinesia / Bradykinesia (inability to move, or slowed movement)</td>
<td>Difficulty walking</td>
<td>Difficulty with memory or new information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Fatigue (can be debilitating)</td>
<td>Dyskinesia (involuntary jerking or writhing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postural instability</td>
<td>Muscle weakness</td>
<td>Dystonia (involuntary muscle contraction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthostatic hypotension (sudden drop in blood pressure upon standing, causing falling / fainting)</td>
<td>Spasticity</td>
<td>Impulse control issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Obsessive thought processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slowed / Slurred speech</td>
<td>Slowed / Slurred speech</td>
<td>Speech impediments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood disorders</td>
<td>Heat intolerance</td>
<td>Slowed mental processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision problems (blurring, double vision, eye strain and dry eyes)</td>
<td>Vision problems (Optic neuritis which presents as a sudden blurring or loss of vision)</td>
<td>Daytime sleepiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive changes</td>
<td>Cognitive changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masked face</td>
<td>Numbness / Tingling in limbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many people with neurological disorders may experience a decline in cognitive ability over time. Planning out and executing a trip by conventional public transportation can be hard and even hazardous. They may not be able to negotiate transfers, for example, from one subway line to another; one bus route to another. They may become lost and experience fear and anxiety. This may compound other symptoms and disabilities resulting in a crisis.

As neurologically based disabilities worsen, the need for door-to-door transportation services increases and other challenges rise to the surface. Some challenges include:

- No consistent and established criteria from one specialty transit service to another.
- Not all invisible disabilities are accepted as disabilities by all agencies.
- Some people with invisible disabilities may meet the criteria for using one agency’s service, but not another.
- When transferring from one municipality to another, a person with an invisible disability may have to switch to another means of transportation in order to get to where they need to go.

**Tips for Transit Agencies and Staff**

The Government of Ontario wants to make public transit more accessible for people with invisible disabilities and they want to remove any barriers that may exist. Here are a few ways transit agencies and their employees can make this goal a reality:

- **Provide** education and training for all staff in accessible formats
- **Learn** more about disabilities, and in particular, invisible or hidden disabilities
- **Share** this information with your colleagues and with others who wish to know
- **Look** for signs that a transit rider may have an invisible disability that may affect their safety while riding on public transit
- **Remind** passengers of the purpose of courtesy and priority seating
- **Offer** assistance if a situation presents itself
**Discover** ways to bring attention to hidden disabilities and their impact on safe travel

**Collaborate** with other transit agencies to align paratransit eligibility criteria

**Coordinate** with other transit agencies to ensure seamless transfers from one boundary to another

**Develop** plans to meet the growing needs of transit riders with disabilities

We hope that you appreciate the importance and the impact of safe and accessible transportation for people with disabilities. We also encourage you to do whatever you can to make Ontario more accessible for those with invisible disabilities so they can secure employment and get to and from that job, safely and comfortably, on public transit.
Appendices and Resources
For more information on neurological disorders and how they affect daily living, contact:

Alzheimer Society of Canada
alzheimer.ca
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info@alzheimer.ca

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This booklet was partially funded by a grant from the EnAbling Change Program with the support of the Government of Ontario.
## Appendix 1
Employer Obligations and Employee Rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Obligations</th>
<th>What That Means To The Person With A Disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advise</strong> a potential candidate of the types of accommodations available to them during the recruitment process</td>
<td><strong>Receive</strong> accessible communications advising of what the employer can do to accommodate accessibility needs Provided with information on the types of accommodations available to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide</strong> job candidates with accessible formats for application forms, questionnaires, assessments and materials they will need to apply for a job</td>
<td><strong>Receive</strong> materials and information in a format that meets their accessibility needs during the recruitment process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop</strong> appropriate and workable written policies* and procedures relating to accommodation plans. *Applies to organizations with 50 or more employees</td>
<td><strong>Receive</strong> written information on the organization’s policies and procedures for accommodations in an accessible format when requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notify</strong> successful job candidates or employees of the types of policies and scope of responsibilities that the employer has related to employment accommodations for people with disabilities</td>
<td><strong>Acquire</strong> a better understanding of what the employer can or is willing to do to accommodate their disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implement</strong> awareness training on the AODA and its Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), for all employees, including those without disabilities</td>
<td><strong>Have</strong> the information and tools necessary to understand their rights and the rights of the employer under the AODA and their accessibility needs met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employer Obligations</strong></td>
<td><strong>What That Means To The Person With A Disability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publish</strong> an accessible employment policy statement for the organization</td>
<td><strong>Know</strong> if an organization is compliant with the Act and willing to address or accommodate accessibility needs, before applying for a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribute</strong> accessible, job-specific information to those with a disability</td>
<td><strong>Have</strong> the necessary information to do a job successfully, in a format that meets their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Address</strong> the expectations and methods of performance management for employees with disabilities</td>
<td><strong>Receive</strong> effectively communicated performance management expectations and performance management methods that are suited to their accessibility needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consider</strong> the needs of each employee with a disability as it relates to the workplace emergency response information and procedures</td>
<td><strong>Have</strong> a specific workplace emergency response plan to meet the specific accessibility needs of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong> the professional development and training of employees with disabilities in a way that meets their accessibility needs</td>
<td><strong>Receive</strong> professional development in a way that meets accessibility needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document</strong> the use and application of accessibility policies and procedures each time they are implemented</td>
<td><strong>Have</strong> a record of the use and application of accessibility policies and procedures applied to their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apply</strong> the appropriate AODA, employment and human rights legislation in the development of return-to-work plans</td>
<td><strong>Receive</strong> return-to-work plans that are compliant with the law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2
Sample Sign for Accessible Seating

Seating for Ease and Accessibility on Transit

Have a SEAT!

To download a copy of this poster, visit the Parkinson Canada website at www.parkinson.ca
Appendix 3
Sample Sign for Accessible Seating

Invisible Disabilities Also Have Priority

On your feet? Need a SEAT?

To download a copy of this poster, visit the Parkinson Canada website at www.parkinson.ca
Appendix 4
Suggested Questions for Paratransit Applications

Select one of the following to indicate your specialty:

☐ Physician / Medical Specialist and/or Occupational Therapist
   (If the applicant has been diagnosed with a cardiopulmonary condition, traumatic/acquired brain injury, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer’s/dementia, Parkinson’s disease or other neurological condition)

☐ Physician / Medical Specialist and/or Occupational / Physical Therapist or other physical rehabilitation therapist
   (If the applicant has been diagnosed with a mobility disability or needs the permanent use of a wheelchair/mobility device)

☐ Psychologist / Psychiatrist, Counsellor, Social Worker or Psychiatric Nurse
   (If the applicant has been diagnosed with a developmental, intellectual or psychological/mood disability)

☐ Optometrist / Ophthalmologist
   (If the applicant has been diagnosed with a vision disability)

For the following diagnoses, please indicate the corresponding specifics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alzheimer’s disease / Dementia</td>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkinson’s disease / Parkinsonism</td>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Sclerosis</td>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBI / ABI</td>
<td>Level</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ 1</td>
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<td>□ 3</td>
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<td>□ 5</td>
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<td>□ 7</td>
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<td>□ 3</td>
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<td>□ 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ RRMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ PPMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above sections were adapted from portions of the “Transports Quebec Application for Admission to STM”—the City of Montreal’s paratransit application (2011).
### Table of Abilities Affected

Please indicate the corresponding specifics relating to the applicant’s abilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability Affected or Difficulties with…</th>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Mod</th>
<th>Severe</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Night</th>
<th>Perm</th>
<th>Temp</th>
<th>Periodic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance / Fainting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognition / Exec. Function</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dizziness / Vertigo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatigue / Endurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement (control of)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement (inability to)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement (weakness)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postural Instability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seizures</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Speech / Communication</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table was adapted from a portion of the “DATS Application Form Checklist”, the City of Edmonton’s paratransit application (January 2014).
Resources


Alzheimer’s Society of Canada, www.alzheimer.ca


Epilepsy Canada, www.epilepsy.ca


Huntington’s Society of Canada, www.huntingtonsociety.ca


Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, www.mssociety.ca

Neurological Health Charities Canada (NHCC), www.mybrainmatters.ca


Parkinson Canada, www.parkinson.ca


For More Information on Accessibility

Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility
https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-seniors-accessibility
Toll Free: 1.888.910.1999
TTY: 1.800.387.5559
Local: 416.326.7076
Address: 777 Bay Street, Suite 601C, Toronto, ON M7A 2J4

Government of Ontario: People with Disabilities
www.ontario.ca/page/people-disabilities
Toll Free: 1.800.267.8097
Local: 416.326.1234

211-Ontario
https://211ontario.ca/
Tel: 2-1-1
Toll Free: 1.888.340.1001

Government of Ontario:
How to Provide Accessible Transportation Services
www.ontario.ca/page/how-provide-accessible-transportation-services

Discoverability Network for Employers/Employees
www.discoverability.network
Email: louiedipalma@occ.ca

Employment Access—Employment Ontario
www.disabilityaccess.org
Toll Free: 1.866.969.9734 (EmpAcc—Mississauga)
Toll Free: 1.800.270.3861 (EmpAcc—Brampton)
Local: 519.938-7900 (EmpAcc—Orangeville)
Email: empacc@disabilityaccess.org

Diversity Discovery Project
https://magnet.today/
Dave Bennett—Xposure PR
Local: 905.339.6668
Email: dave@xposurepr.com

The One Voice Network
www.onevoicenetwork.ca
Work Trends
www.worktrends.ca
Local: 519.672.3499

Ontario Disability Employment Network
https://odenetwork.com/
Toll Free: 1.866.280.6336 (ODEN)
Twitter: @odenetwork
Email: info@odenetwork.com
Address: 20–850 King Street West, Oshawa, ON L1J 8N5

HR Council: Diversity at Work
http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-disabilities.cfm
Local: 613.236.2664
Email: info@communityfoundations.ca

Accessible Employment Publications:
*EnAbling Retail for Accessible Employment: Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*—Retail Council of Canada, 2014


Accessible Transportation Publications:
Glossary of Terms

SOURCE: https://www.aoda.ca/guide-to-the-act/#introduction

accessibility standard
An accessibility standard is a rule that people and organizations have to follow to identify, remove and prevent barriers.

barrier
Anything that keeps a person with a disability from participating fully in society because of his or her disability.

disability
The AODA uses the Ontario Human Rights Code definition of “disability” which is:
• any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device
• a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability
• a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language
• a mental disorder
• an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 (“handicap”).

organization
Any public, private or nonprofit sector organization in Ontario.

person
In the AODA, “person” means an individual.

prescribed
Anything that the AODA lists or contains in its regulations.

standard
In the AODA, a “standard” outlines what an organization must do to achieve accessibility for people with disabilities to whom the standard applies.
For More Information on Neurological Diseases

Alzheimer Society of Canada
alzheimer.ca
20 Eglinton Avenue West
16th Floor
Toronto, ON  M4R 1K8
1.800.616.8816
info@alzheimer.ca

Epilepsy Canada
epilepsy.ca
25 Valleywood Drive
Unit 21
Markham, ON  L3R 5L9
1.877.734.0873
epilepsy@epilepsy.ca

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151 Frederick Street
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Kitchener, ON  N2H 2M2
1.800.998.7398
info@huntingtonsociety.ca

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info@mssociety.ca

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c/o Parkinson Canada
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Suite 316
Toronto, ON  M2P 2A9
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1.800.565-3000
Info@mybrainmatters.ca

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Toronto, ON  M2P 2A9
1.800.565.3000
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