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## Accessible Mainstreet – Tipsheet

# What You Need To Know About Customers with Intellectual Disabilities

Everyone is different in some way. Each of us has a different way of doing things and there are some things we can't do without some help from people, or from machines and products that are easy to use.

People with intellectual disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one's ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or use body language. Be supportive and patient.

As much as possible, treat your customers with an intellectual disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have an intellectual disability:

- ❖ Don't assume what a person can or cannot do.
- ❖ Don't refer to the disability, and never use phrases like "handicapped".
- ❖ Use simple words and short sentences.
- ❖ Make sure your customer understands what you've said.
- ❖ If you can't understand what's being said, don't pretend. Just ask again.
- ❖ Give one piece of information at a time.
- ❖ Be polite and patient.
- ❖ Speak directly to your customers, not to someone who's with them.
- ❖ Every business should have emergency procedures for customers with disabilities. Make sure you know what they are.

**Additional Tipsheets can be found at:**  
[www.toronto-bia.com/resources/tipsheets.php](http://www.toronto-bia.com/resources/tipsheets.php)