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Accessible Mainstreet – Tipsheet

What You Need To Know About Customers with Physical 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.

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities, and not all require a wheelchair. People who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions or amputations may also have difficulty with moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability. Be patient. Customers will identify their needs to you.

Here are some tips on serving customers who have physical disabilities:

- ❖ Speak normally and directly to your customer. Don't speak to someone who is with them.
- ❖ People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- ❖ Don't refer to the disability, and never use phrases like "handicapped".
- ❖ Be patient and be sure you understand their needs.
- ❖ Don't touch any assistive devices, including wheelchairs, unnecessarily unless it's an emergency.
- ❖ Provide your customer information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).
- ❖ 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

Based on: "May I Help You?" – Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" Resource Package, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2005