



## Disabilities

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) covers temporary, short term, long term, and permanent disabilities under the following 8 categories:

### Types of Disabilities:

#### 1. Vision loss

Vision loss may be total or partial and can be caused by congenital factors or a disease such as, to name just a few, Macular Degeneration, Cataracts, Myopia or Astigmatism.

A blind person often carries a white walking stick and may be accompanied by a support person or a service animal.

#### 2. Hearing loss

People with hearing loss may be deaf (unable to hear anything), or partially deaf, and may fall into one of the following categories: Deafened (born with hearing but have subsequently lost the ability to hear); Oral deaf individuals who were either born deaf or who lost their hearing before learning to speak; Persons with a loss of hearing, who use their own residual hearing and speech when communicating. People with hearing loss often wear hearing-aids or use forms of Pocket-Talkers (microphone and headset devices). They may find a Phone Amplifier useful. People with hearing loss can also use TTY devices (a small keyboard and display), email packages, and of course the American Sign Language, or another accepted alphabet such as Langue des signs Quebecoise (LSQ), to communicate.

#### 3. Deaf-blind (combination of hearing and vision loss)

Approximately 50% of deaf-blind people were born deaf or with a hearing loss, and then developed blindness as they aged, due to Retinitis Pigmentosa. The causes of deaf-blindness can be a trauma at birth or many of the same factors cited above for either vision or hearing loss.

Deaf-blind people may use the same types of assistive devices as people with hearing and/or vision loss use.

#### 4. Physical disabilities

People with a physical disability may find it difficult to sit, stand or move about freely. Physical disabilities can be caused by spinal cord injuries, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, cerebral palsy or through the amputation of a limb. People with physical disabilities may use wheelchairs, crutches, canes, walkers, scooters, or may need elevators to move between floors of a building.

## **5. Mental health disabilities**

Mental health disabilities impair thinking, feeling, and behaviour. They may interfere with a person's capacity to enjoy relationships or to be productive. Examples include bipolar disorder, periods of alternating euphoria and depression; major depression, a serious illness affecting a person's sleep, appetite, mood, concentration, and social behaviour; schizophrenia, which impairs a person's thinking, management of emotions, decision-making, and his or her relationship to others.

People with mental health disabilities may need assistance from support people or service animals, portable listening devices, or portable digital assistants.

## **6. Intellectual or developmental disabilities**

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have below-average IQs. They may experience problems communicating, looking after themselves, or being socially adept. Examples of intellectual or developmental disabilities include Down's Syndrome and can be caused by a serious head injury or an infection such as Meningitis.

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities sometimes make use of assistive devices such as large display calculators, alarm watches, support persons or service animals, and voice-actuated recorders.

## **7. Learning disabilities**

Learning disabilities affect a person's ability to understand verbal or non-verbal forms of communication. Non-verbal information can be written, aural (pod-casts, for example), or in arithmetic (handling or receiving change, for example).

Examples of learning disabilities include Dyslexia which interferes with a person's ability to read or understand written words, Dyscalculia, a difficulty with numbers, or Dysgraphia, a difficulty writing words by hand.

People with learning difficulties sometimes make use of assistive devices such as Optical Character Recognition readers (which read aloud written information), digital dictionaries, calculators that speak the results out loud, and voice-actuated recorders.

## **8. Speech or language disabilities.**

People with speech or language disabilities may have difficulty articulating, may speak softly, or may lack a range of expression. Examples of speech and language disorders include stuttering; repeating groups of letters; an inability to say specific words; and Aphasia, which impairs a person's ability to comprehend written or spoken language.

"With Thanks to the A-16 Accessibility Committee"