



## Accessible Customer Service Procedure

**SUBJECT:** Ensuring Current Terminology Concerning Persons with Disabilities

This Procedure supports:

**POLICY:** Accessibility Policy #3012

**OBJECTIVE:** Employee Training

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**DEVELOPED BY:** Accessibility Working Group

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The terminology used to articulate disabilities has changed over the years. When describing persons with disabilities, it is important to remember to use the term “person with” prior to the disability; persons with disabilities are people first. The following are terms that are currently used:

- **Blind, Low Vision** - Person who is blind, person with a visual impairment
- **Hearing Impairment** - Person who is hard of hearing, person who has a hearing impairment, person who is deaf. While culturally linguistically deaf people (that is, sign language users) are properly identified as “the Deaf” (upper case “D”), people who do not use sign language are properly referred to as “the deaf” (lower case “d”) or people who are deaf.
- **Intellectual** - Person with an intellectual disability. One can say “a person with Down’s Syndrome” only if relevant to the situation.
- **Learning** - Person with a learning disability, person with dyslexia
- **Mental Health** - Person with a mental health disability, person who has schizophrenia, person who has depression
- **Mobility** - Person with a disability, person who uses a wheelchair, person with a mobility impairment

The following are some practical tips for effectively addressing barriers that have been identified as preventing the delivery of a consistent level of helpful service to all customers.

- Refer to a person's disability only when it is related to what you are talking about.
- If it is necessary to identify the disability, use phrasing such as "person with" rather than labelling a person as a disability. For example, "person with a vision impairment" rather than "blind"; "person with schizophrenia" rather than "schizophrenic."
- When talking about accommodations for people with disabilities, use the term "accessible" rather than "disabled" or "handicapped." For example, refer to an "accessible" parking space rather than a "disabled" or "handicapped" parking space.
- It is okay to use words or phrases such as "disabled," "disability," or "people with disabilities" when talking about disability issues.
- When talking about people without disabilities, it is okay to say "people without disabilities"; do not refer to them as "normal" or "healthy." These terms imply that people with disabilities are "abnormal."

Persons with disabilities are comfortable with terminology used to describe daily living activities. Do not be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later" or "Got to be running along" that seem to relate to the person's disability. Persons who use wheelchairs go for "walks," people with visual impairments "see" what you mean, etc. A disability may just mean that some things must be done in a different manner; however, that does not mean the words used to describe the activity must be different.