

TORONTO FRINGE

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Customer Service Standard

Policies and Procedures

THE TORONTO FRINGE

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Customer Service Standard - Policies and Procedures

Introduction

The Toronto Fringe is committed to extending a high level of customer service to all of its patrons. We are dedicated to demonstrating leadership by working constructively with our venues, patrons, staff, volunteers and community to meet and exceed the requirements which will identify, prevent and remove barriers so a fulfilling theatrical experience can be enjoyed by patrons with disabilities.

Definition of Disability

“Disability” means,

- (a) 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 co-ordination, 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,
- (b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- (c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- (d) a mental disorder, or
- (e) 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”).

Ontario Human Rights Commission/Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) became law on June 13, 2005. Under this landmark legislation, the government of Ontario developed mandatory accessibility standards that identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities in key areas of daily living. The standards apply to private and public sector organizations across Ontario. The goal is for the province to be accessible by 2025.

On June 6, 2016, the Ontario government consolidated the regulations to the AODA into a single regulation called the *Integrated Accessibility Standard (IASR)*.

The IASR includes the following sections:

- General
- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service

The Customer Service Standards address business practices to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.

The Customer Service Standard (AODA)

Every business and organization operating in Ontario that provides goods, services and facilities to the public or other organizations and has at least one employee in Ontario has to meet the requirements of the Customer Service Standard. Every provider must:

1. Develop, implement and maintain policies and procedures on providing goods, services and facilities to patrons with disabilities.
2. Provide training on the IASR requirements and the Ontario Human Rights Code, and how to serve patrons with disabilities to staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone else who interacts with the public or other third parties on your behalf, and those involved in developing customer service policies, practices and procedures.
3. Establish a process for receiving feedback on how you provide service to patrons with disabilities and how you will respond to feedback and take action on any complaints. Make information about the feedback process readily available to the public.
4. Communicate with a patron with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
5. Let patrons with disabilities bring their service animals onto any part of your premises open to the public, except where the animal is otherwise excluded by law.
6. Let patrons with disabilities bring their support person with them when accessing goods or services on parts of your premises open to the public.
7. Let the public know when facilities or services that people with disabilities usually use to access your goods or services are temporarily unavailable.
8. Document all policies, practices and procedures to providing accessible customer service and notify the public that these documents are available upon request.

Overview of the Growing Disability Theatre Market

Disability impacts the lives of many Ontarians. The numbers of people with disabilities is increasing and the disability sector is a growing market. Research indicates accessible service attracts more patrons with disabilities, resulting in return visits and increased revenue.

Ontario

- 1 in 7 people in Ontario, 4.4 million Canadians and 1 in 5 people in the United States - all have disabilities.
- In 20 years, one in five Ontarians are likely to have some kind of disability.
- 10 – 20% of the general population have hearing loss; 50% of people over 65 have hearing loss.
- 600,000 Canadians have self identified as having vision loss.
- 6% of people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair.
- Many of our veterans have disabilities. Men and women, who want to carry on their life activities with friends and family, will demand access to do so.
- It is projected that the older population will double in the next 25 years.
- Many disabilities are invisible and need to be considered when responding to adaptive needs.
- In the next 20 years, people with disabilities will represent 40% of total income in Ontario – that’s \$536 Billion of spending power. *Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, Ontario, 2013* With increased audience development, potential patrons can be invited and encouraged to spend some of their disposable income attending the Toronto Fringe Festival, particularly if accessible features and adaptive needs are well publicized.
- While average life expectancy in Ontario is just under 80 years, the DFLE (disability-free life expectancy) is only 68 years of age. After that, Canadians can expect to live more than a decade – until 81 years – with a significant physical or mental disability before they die. *Statistics Canada*
- Almost half of all people with disabilities make the buying decisions for their households.
Towards an Accessible Future: Ontario Innovators in Accessibility and Universal Design”, MaRS 2013

Statistics to Support Theatre Production Design for Patrons with Adaptive Needs

Patrons on the Autism Spectrum (Relaxed performances)

- In the United States in 2014 a report indicated that 1 in 68 children have an autism spectrum disorder.
 - This was a 30 per cent jump from the last estimate of 1 in 88 children and a 1,000% increase over the last forty years. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

- The National Epidemiologic Database for the Study of Autism in Canada (NEDSAC) in 2010 estimated the prevalence of autism spectrum disorders in Canada as 1 in 94 children.

Patrons Who Are Blind or Have Vision Loss (Performances with live audio description)

- 1 million Canadians are living with blindness or significant vision loss. This number is expected to double within the next 25 years. *Source: CNIB*

Patrons Who are Deaf, Deafened or Have Hearing Loss (Performances with ASL interpretation)

- Nearly 1 out of every 4 adult Canadians reports having some hearing loss, although closer to 10% of people actually identify themselves as culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing. *Canadian hearing Society: 2013*
- According to Statistics Canada, more than one million adults across the country reported having a hearing-related disability, a number more than 50% greater than the number of people reporting problems with their eyesight (*Stats Can, 2002*).
- 530,210 people in Ontario (4.74% of the population) are deaf or hard of hearing. (*Canada Census 2006*)

Accessible Patron Service at The Toronto Fringe

To ensure compliance with the Customer Service Standard, The Toronto Fringe has:

- Reviewed existing policies and procedures and identified gaps.
- Revised and developed new policies and procedures, as required.
- Recommended long term priorities that continue to enhance the experience for patrons with disabilities.
- Developed and implemented a communication plan to increase understanding of the Customer Service Standards.
- Developed and delivered training programs for staff and volunteers on the content required by the Customer Service Standard, which also accommodates, on an on-going basis, the high turnover at the Fringe each year.
- Worked with and continues to engage proactively with the theatre venues to enhance access in the delivery of goods, services and facilities to patrons.
- Developed a sustainability plan to ensure access continues to be integrated into on-going business plans.

Customer Service Standard – The Toronto Fringe’s Policies and Procedures

In complying with the requirements, The Toronto Fringe makes reasonable efforts to ensure that its policies and procedures are consistent with the following principles, as defined by the Customer Service Standard, AODA:

- All goods, services and facilities at The Toronto Fringe will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity of people with disabilities.

- Dignity: service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to maintain self-respect and the respect of other people.
- Independence: when a person with a disability is allowed to do things on their own, without unnecessary help or interference from others.
- Integration and Equal Opportunity: service is provided in a way that allows the person with a disability to benefit from the same services, in the same place, and in the same or similar way as other patrons, unless an alternate measure is necessary to enable a person with disability to access goods or services. They should not have to make significantly more effort to access or obtain service. They should also not have to accept inconvenience or lesser quality. Sometimes this may mean that The Toronto Fringe has to treat individuals slightly differently so that they can benefit fully from the services.

Assistive Devices

Policy:

The Toronto Fringe is committed to serving and welcoming people with disabilities who use assistive devices.

Procedures:

If any of our venues make assistive devices available, the Fringe volunteers and staff are committed to being aware of the various assistive devices and how to support their use. Assistive devices are devices that are used to assist persons with disabilities in carrying out activities or in accessing the services of persons or organizations and can include:

- Wheelchairs
- Hearing assistive receivers;
- Close captioning systems;
- Live descriptive services.

Communicating with a Patron with a Disability

Policy:

The Toronto Fringe's policies and procedures take a person's disability into account when communicating with the individual. Two-way communications is a process of providing, sending, receiving and understanding information. To communicate in an effective way, The Toronto Fringe considers how the disability affects the way that the person expresses, receives or processes communications. Where possible, The Toronto Fringe asks the patron directly the best way to communicate with him/her.

Procedures:

The Toronto Fringe uses a variety of ways, wherever possible, to make communications more accessible by:

- Considering the needs of people with disabilities during the planning stage of services and communication development.
- Using plain language to make a document easier to read for people with certain learning disabilities.
- Making our rented venues aware of the requirements and the options for accommodating patrons with disabilities.
- Where possible, offering information in alternate formats or with communication supports, upon request, to include:
 - Hand-written or typed information;
 - Assistance in navigating show descriptions to the patron;
 - E-mail as an alternate channel to provide accessible communication;
 - Braille
 - ASL Video

Service Animals

Policy:

The Toronto Fringe is committed to welcoming patrons with disabilities who are accompanied by a trained, accredited service animal who come to the administrative office and theatres and makes third parties aware of this policy. A service animal may accompany a patron or any third party with a disability to all parts of our premises that are open to the public. Service animals may be used for, but not limited to, the following disabilities: vision loss, physical disability, hearing loss, autism, epilepsy etc. Although service animals are most commonly dogs, other service animals could include, but are not limited to, ferrets, monkeys etc. The Toronto Fringe ensures that all employees are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities, who are accompanied by a service animal.

Procedures:

To be considered a service animal under this standard, it must either be readily apparent that the animal is being used because of a person's disability or the person with a disability may be asked to provide a letter from a regulated health professional confirming that it is required because of his or her disability. Service animals are not pets - they are working animals. They are used by people with disabilities to overcome barriers much like assistive devices such as a white cane or a wheelchair.

Guide dogs or other service animals, including service animals in training, are allowed to accompany people with disabilities on The Toronto Fringe premises open to the public.

If the service animal is causing a disturbance for other patrons, the patron and accompanying service animal may be required to leave the area or The Toronto Fringe premises or rented venue.

The owner is responsible to "stoop and scoop".

The Toronto Fringe anticipates there will be special situations and is prepared to make every effort to accommodate the circumstances on an individual basis, as they arise, keeping safety to all patrons and service animals in mind.

Patrons can contact the Toronto Fringe at 416-966-1062 for more information.

Support Persons

Policy:

The Toronto Fringe is committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person is allowed to enter The Toronto Fringe's premises with his or her support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on The Toronto Fringe premises and rented venues.

A support person is an individual hired or chosen by a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs or with access to goods, services and facilities.

The Toronto Fringe may require a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person when on the premises to protect their health and safety or the health and safety of others.

Procedures:

A patron with a disability, accompanied by a support person, pays regular admission to The Toronto Fringe.

Fees are not to be charged for the support person. Complimentary admission for one support person is the standard. Additional requests are addressed on a case by case basis.

Patrons are informed of this through The Toronto Fringe's communication to the public.

Temporary Disruption of Service

Policy:

The Toronto Fringe is aware that temporary disruptions of services (daily functions – elevators, physical operations) and programs may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within The Toronto Fringe's control or knowledge, particularly since many venues are rented. The Toronto Fringe makes a reasonable effort to provide advance notice of the disruption to the public, including information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that may be available.

Procedures:

The notice is made available for broadcasting news and updates through the following networks, as appropriate.

- www.fringetoronto.com
- Telephone recordings;
- Walkie Talkie System;
- Temporary signage;
- Twitter;
- Face book;
- Notification slip and alert signage at The Toronto Fringe Box Office.

In the event of an unexpected disruption, advance notice is not possible. In such cases, The Toronto Fringe provides notice, as soon as possible, through its communication networks.

Process to Receive and Respond to Feedback

Policy:

The Toronto Fringe has a process in place for receiving and responding to feedback about how goods and services are provided to patrons with disabilities.

Procedures:

Patrons with disabilities can offer their feedback in the following ways:

- On-line at the Toronto Fringe web site www.fringetoronto.com
- E-mail and telephone, (re-directed, as required, to the appropriate response employee);
- Face book, Twitter, Blogs;
- In writing where correspondence is re-directed to the appropriate response employee;
- Focus groups;
- In person to any Toronto Fringe staff and management.

The patron is requested to provide their name and contact information (phone, e-mail).

Once feedback is received, the following actions are taken to respond:

- The feedback is directed to the appropriate person for action.
- The feedback is assessed for appropriate action. (Note: the customer service standard does not require a response to be provided for all feedback).
- Patrons who provide feedback can expect an answer within three days (particularly during the Fringe Festival).

The feedback process is readily available to the public through:

- A notice on the web site;
- An incident report at the box office;
- A document describing the feedback process, available on request in different formats;
- Other communication networks, as appropriate.

Customer Service Training

Policy:

The Toronto Fringe provides training to all members of the organization. The Toronto Fringe works constructively with the different theatre locations and companies to facilitate that third parties, and others, who deal with the public, are aware of the policies.

Procedures:

Individuals in the following positions are trained by The Toronto Fringe:

- Board of Directors;
- Senior Staff;
- Front Line Staff;
- Volunteers.

New staff and volunteers will also receive training. This training will be provided as soon as practicable or as soon as it can be done in the circumstances, after an employee or volunteer commence their duties.

A variety of methods and time frames are used including formal and informal training sessions, presentations, train the trainer, Ministry of Economic Development, Employment, and Infrastructure's web sites, e-training, printed material, hand outs, fact sheets, and videos, dependent on need, job descriptions and functions.

The training content, required by the Customer Service Standard, includes the following:

- The history of the legislation and the purposes of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- How to interact and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- The potentially available assistive devices available at The Toronto Fringe's rented premises and the contact for patrons on accessing these devices.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing The Toronto Fringe's goods and services.
- The Toronto Fringe's policies and procedures relating to the customer service standard.
- On-going training in connection with any changes to The Toronto Fringe's policies and procedures governing the provision of goods and services to patrons with disabilities is provided.

The additional following topics are included:

- The Toronto Fringe's commitment to access and patrons with disabilities.
- The assistance staff and volunteers cannot offer due to insurance implications.
- The business case for access.
- Definitions of disability, dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity.

Training is recorded for staff and volunteers and includes name, date and content.

A sustainability plan has been developed and includes:

- Budget guidelines;
- Resources;
- Incorporating access into the orientation program;
- Training updates.

Posting of Documents

Policy:

Notices are posted, informing the public that the documents required by the Customer Service Standard are available upon request and will be provided in a format that takes a person's disability into account.

Procedures:

Documents are available on the web site: www.fringetoronto.com or by calling 416-966-1062.

Additional Toronto Fringe Policies and Procedures to Enhance the Patron Experience

In addition to compliance with the Customer Service Standard - AODA - The Toronto Fringe enhances the experience for patrons with disabilities by:

- Accommodating patrons with disabilities, where reasonable.
- Providing large text versions of information, where possible.
- Front of line service for patrons with disabilities.
- Seating accommodations:
 - Making seats available inside the theatre so waiting in line is avoided;
 - Advance seating;
 - Designated seating.