



7.2.3 (ii)

► Getting on Board

Disability Awareness Training Manual

Section 1: Why this session?

Here are some important reasons to increase your awareness of how to best serve people with disabilities.

1. Persons with disabilities are a growing segment of the travelling population.

- Statistics Canada reported in 2001 that the overall percentage of persons with disabilities in Canada was 12.4% or 3.6 million Canadians aged 15 and over.ⁱ
- In any given year, over 500,000 Canadians with disabilities travel using the rail system; 700,000 people with disabilities travel by air; and 168,000 such persons will use ferry services within Canada.ⁱⁱ
- More persons with disabilities are working, and need to travel on business.
- Canada's senior population is among the fastest growing in the world. In 2005, people 65 years of age and older made up 12% of the population, and will account for close to 25% by 2031.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Of Canadians over 65:
 - 78% have a mobility impairment;
 - 40% have a hearing loss; and
 - 21% have a visual impairment.^{iv}

Essentially, about a fifth of Canadians have a disability in some form or another. Their disability may not be readily apparent, such as people who are hard of hearing or deaf and persons with artificial limbs, mental health or learning disabilities.

In addition, the level of impairment varies widely. For example, people with some vision can be considered legally blind. Others have only peripheral vision, and some are totally blind. 'Persons with disabilities' are not a homogenous group.

2. Understanding passengers' needs will help to:

- Provide appropriate service.
- Accommodate passengers' unique needs.
- Meet passenger expectations.
- Reduce possible injuries to you and the passenger.
- Reduce boarding and disembarking delays.
- Make your work easier and more rewarding.

3. Federal regulations require this training for many service providers, depending on the nature and size of their operation, in the national transportation system.

The *Personnel Training for the Assistance of Persons with Disabilities Regulations* state:

"Every carrier and terminal operator shall ensure that, consistent with its type of operation, all employees and contractors of the carrier or terminal operator who provide transportation-related services and who may be required to interact with the public or to make decisions in respect of the carriage of persons with disabilities receive a level of training appropriate to the requirements of their function (...)"

Legislation, regulations, and codes of practice concerning accessible transportation are listed in Section 7 – Other resources.

This manual's goal is to familiarize service providers with the knowledge to appropriately serve passengers with disabilities. However, it should be emphasized that travel needs for persons with disabilities are quite individual and the key will be effective communication with the passenger.

1.1 Terminology

Being aware of the appropriate terminology is an important way to signal that you understand and are sensitive to persons with disabilities.

<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Avoid Using</i>
Person with, or a person who has, a disability	Disabled, handicapped, suffering from, victim of
Person with a disability since birth	Birth defect
Person who has a congenital disability	Congenital defect
Sport for athletes with disabilities	Disabled sport
Accessible parking	Disabled/handicapped parking

Generally, use the word "person" or "passenger" before employing the adjective referring to the individual's disability. If in doubt, listen for clues as to how the customer refers to herself.

1.2 General awareness

Most persons with disabilities are capable of travelling on their own and acting for themselves. Your practical assistance can help them to retain their independence. The following sections provide some general rules for assisting persons with particular disabilities.

Questions to ask the traveller before the trip:

- Are you an experienced traveller? Are you familiar with the travel processes and procedures?
- Do you require any special assistance during the trip?

When interacting with passengers with disabilities:

- Offer assistance, but don't insist.
- Address the person directly - not the interpreter or attendant.
- Ask how to assist and what to do.
- Take into consideration the person's knowledge of his own needs.
- Ask whenever you are uncertain.
- Ask about the passenger's disability only when pertinent to travel needs.

1.3 Etiquette

Naturally, no one wishes to give offense. Sometimes, people avoid interacting with persons with disabilities as they are unsure what is appropriate. Here are some tips.

Should I offer to shake hands?

If the person is blind or has a visual impairment, you should do so as long as you accompany it with a cue such as "How do you do?". If you are unsure whether the person can shake hands, for example a person who may not control his limbs, you can wait for a cue from him or simply nod and say something like "Pleased to meet you". The person with a disability may offer the left hand to shake.

If a passenger's attendant is talking, to whom should I address myself?

Some persons with disabilities travel with attendants who provide personal services not usually offered by a carrier. In some cases, an attendant may assist with communications. However, all questions and comments should be directed to the person with a disability. You should not ask the attendant to offer opinions or make decisions.

Should I avoid expressions like "Be seeing you", "Gotta run along", or "Walk this way" if the person addressed could not do these things?

No, don't avoid them. Persons with disabilities will often use these phrases themselves, as they are common terminology.

Am I not causing embarrassment if I keep asking the person to repeat what was said?

Persons with speech impairments are aware that communication can be difficult. It is more important that they get across their message. You might try asking them to write down what they need or, if that is not possible, to write down what you think they need and ask for a 'yes/no' movement of the head.

Section 2: Assisting a person with a visual impairment or who is blind

People with visual impairments might not see as sharply or as clearly as those without this disability. Most individuals who are legally blind have some vision; however, some might be able to see only directly ahead, and some only peripherally. Others may be able to make out shapes but have trouble reading. Only 10% of persons with visual impairments are totally blind.

2.1 Terminology

<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Avoid using</i>
Persons who are blind Persons with a visual impairment	The blind, the visually impaired

2.2 How to assist a person with a visual impairment or who is blind

Ask if and how you can assist.

- Identify yourself and your role. Even if you are wearing a uniform, the person may not be able to see the insignia.
- Use a normal tone of voice.
- Ask if he needs assistance.
- If so, ask the person the best way to guide him.
- When offering directions, do it in distances, for example say "two steps behind you" or "a metre to your left". People may not be able to see landmarks. Pointing or saying "over there" is not helpful.

Offer your arm.

- If you will be taking the person to her destination, offer your arm (verbally) and touch her on the back of the arm with your hand. Don't take her arm unexpectedly.
- Walk at a normal pace. The person will walk about a step behind to be forewarned of your next move by changes in your body position and direction.

Keep the person informed of the environment.

- Keep up a running dialogue on things like:
 - Changes in slope or irregularities in terrain;
 - Tripping hazards;

- Obstacles;
- Handrails;
- Doors (whether they open towards or away from you);
- Curbs (specify 'step up' or 'step down'); and
- Stairs: Come to a full stop. Tell the person whether you are going up or down. Let her feel out the first step. Keep one stair ahead. Tell the person when the last step is coming up.

Leave the person secure at her destination.

- Describe the landscape or room at destination. Layout, dimensions, other people and objects are all helpful to know.
- If the person wishes to sit, place her hand on the back of the chair or in contact with the chair so her knees lightly touch the seat. Mention the kind of chair, for example arm chair or bench.
- If the person wishes to remain standing, try to leave her in contact with a tangible object, such as a wall or a table.
- Let the person know you are leaving.

2.3 Devices and supports

Guide dogs or other service animals:

Service animals are often used for wayfinding by people who have a visual impairment; however, they are also used for a variety of other tasks. While we generally associate service animals with dogs, miniature ponies and monkeys have also been trained to perform this function.

Properly trained service animals are allowed on board at no extra charge and are permitted in any public place, at any time. This includes all forms of public transit. They are also permitted to remain on the floor at the passenger's feet as long as they are properly harnessed. Passengers may be required to produce written proof their service animal has been trained by a professional service animal institution.

Guiding a person with a service animal:

- Avoid petting, feeding or talking to a service animal wearing a harness. The animal is working.
- The person with a service animal might prefer to follow your directions rather than take your arm, so ask.
- Before opening a door, check with the person. He might be using its location as a reference point, or might prefer to open it himself to protect the animal's paws.
- Ensure you know the designated relieving areas for service animals in the terminal facility.

White Cane:

This cane assists persons who are blind or have a visual impairment in wayfinding. The choice of a cane or service animal is personal, and does not necessarily depend on a person's degree of vision loss.

Braille:

A braille creates Braille in tactile dots on paper. Most people with visual impairment do not use Braille. It is a relatively complex language, so very few who experience vision loss as adults ever learn it. A *stylus* is used to take Braille notes by hand.

Devices to read print:

Magnifying devices, machines that transmit print into tactile information, scanners that 'read' print information aloud, and other technical advances can help persons with visual impairments to access print information. Therefore, even if the material is only available in print format, the customer may still find it accessible.

Other devices:

Other assistive devices may be computers adapted with voice synthesizers, screen readers, Braille read-out, Mowat sensors to detect objects, PAC Mate hand-held computers, talking book machines which may be used for reading during the trip, and Trekkers for navigation.

2.4 Do's and don'ts: assisting a person with a visual impairment or who is blind

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO ask if and how you can best assist. • DO offer your arm to guide. • DO keep the person informed of the environment. • DO leave him secure at destination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DON'T touch the person without warning. • DON'T touch a service animal without permission. • DON'T use vague phrases like 'over there'. • DON'T forget to tell the person you're leaving.
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Section 3: Assisting a person with a mobility impairment

As with all disabilities, the degree of mobility impairment ranges greatly. Some people may be able to move well with the help of a cane while others do best with a wheelchair specially tailored to their particular needs.

3.1 Terminology

<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Avoid using</i>
Person with a physical disability	Physically challenged
Person who uses a wheelchair; wheelchair user	Confined, bound, restricted to or dependent on a wheelchair
Person with a mobility impairment	Crippled

3.2 How to assist a person with a mobility impairment

Ask if and how you can assist.

- Sometimes assistance is not necessary or desired.
- Ask the customer how he prefers to be assisted.
- Sit down when speaking with a person in a wheelchair to avoid forcing the person to look upward for an extended period.
- Ask permission before leaning, resting against, or touching a person's wheelchair. A wheelchair is often seen as an extension of the person's body.

Mention physical obstacles.

- When giving directions, include any physical obstacles, such as stairs, curbs, heavy or narrow doors, or uneven surfaces.

Ask the person to guide you.

- If the person who uses a wheelchair prefers help moving to the destination, check that she is secure in the seat. Also ask about the safety or other features of the chair.
- Always ask the person before taking action, for example "Shall I start pushing the chair?"
- If you are unsure how to handle an obstacle, such as an incline or curb, ask the person to guide you.

Transfer the person safely.

- Transferring a person from his own mobility aid to one provided by the carrier requires particular techniques. These will safeguard you and the passenger from injury as well as respect the passenger's dignity and comfort. Transfers should only be attempted by persons who have received proper training. Before attempting any transfers, read the *Guide to Physically Assisting Persons with Mobility Disabilities*. Please note that this guide is provided for informational purposes only, and should not be relied on in lieu of professional advice and training.

3.3 Devices and supports

Wheelchairs:

There are many types of wheelchairs, which range in size, height, weight and the degree to which they fold or collapse. They may also come with special operating devices, for example head controls, which can be both sensitive and fragile.

Scooters:

There are models with three and four wheels, often with "add-ons" such as baskets, backpacks, and lights.

Walkers:

Some models have two wheels, either with both wheels at the front, or with two wheels at the back. They may be equipped with a bench.

Crutches:

There are generally two types; forearm or underarm. Most passengers take them on board but sometimes they are transported with other luggage.

Canes:

Users typically take their canes on board, as they can be easily stored.

Leg braces:

Passengers will wear them while boarding but may remove braces on board when seated.

Transporting mobility aids:

If a passenger's mobility aid is damaged or unavailable on arrival, the carrier should provide a suitable temporary replacement immediately and at no cost. A passenger is entitled to use the temporary replacement until her own aid is either repaired or replaced.

In addition, and more importantly, the lack of such a specialized piece of equipment for the days or months it takes to replace the damaged piece can seriously impede the passenger's freedom of mobility.

Preparing the mobility aid for transport is critical. The best source of information on how to properly disassemble, stow, and reassemble the mobility aid is the passenger. However, the accompanying *Guide to Physically Assisting Persons with Mobility Disabilities* may also be helpful.

It is also important to note that there are specific requirements for the transportation of battery-operated wheelchairs on aircraft. For information on these requirements visit:

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/CivilAviation/commerce/DangerousGoods/regoverview/passlugg/menu.htm>

Or contact:

Chief, Dangerous Goods Standards
Transport Canada
Telephone: 613 990-1060
Fax: 613 954-1602

3.4 Do's and don'ts: assisting a person with a mobility impairment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO ask if and how you can best assist. • DO ask the passenger how to handle the mobility aid. • DO include descriptions of physical obstacles when giving directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DON'T touch the person's wheelchair unnecessarily. • DON'T transfer a passenger from his mobility aid without having been properly trained. • DON'T neglect your own health and safety requirements in effecting transfers.
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Section 4: Assisting a person who is hard of hearing or deaf

Hearing loss is common in the population; however, the range of disability, like all other disabilities can be very wide. Some people who are hard of hearing can lip-read. A lip-reader typically understands only 30 to 40% of what is being said. The rest must be guessed at or deduced from the context.

In addition to possibly restricting or hampering the learning of language, a hearing loss may also affect a person's balance or the ability to orient in darkness or water.

4.1 Terminology

<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Avoid using</i>
Person who is deaf, hard of hearing Person with a hearing loss	Deaf and dumb, deaf mute, the hearing impaired

4.2 How to assist a person who is hard of hearing or deaf

Ask if and how you can assist.

- Get the person's attention by a discreet motion such as moving your hand.
- Face the person directly and ask "What is the best way to help you?". He will tell you if he can lip-read or has some hearing.

Help the person lip-read.

- If the person can lip-read:
 - Allow a clear view of your mouth;
 - Keep hands and food away from your mouth when speaking;
 - Speak at a natural rhythm; and
 - Avoid turning your face away from the person.

Help the person to hear better.

- If the person can hear:
 - Look directly at the person;
 - Eliminate distractions like a radio by turning them off or muting;
 - Speak clearly in a normal tone of voice;
 - Don't shout, since it increases distortion;
 - Ask short questions that require short answers;

- Rephrase, don't just repeat if you're not understood. Some words are easier to understand than others; and
- Don't use jargon.

Provide writing materials if appropriate.

- Write out the information so that the person can read what you are trying to communicate. However, writing may not be appropriate for persons whose first language may be sign language. American Sign Language (ASL) has a completely different grammar and syntax from English or French. When writing notes, the general rule should be: "Keep It Simple".

4.3 Devices and supports

Interpreters:

The interpreter's role is to assist conversation with the person who is hard of hearing or deaf, not to participate in it. Speak to the person with the hearing loss, not to the interpreter. However, most people with a hearing loss do not travel with an interpreter.

Hearing Aids:

Hearing aids may help users but problems may still be experienced in noisy environments.

Teletypewriter (TTY):

These electronic communication devices are built with a keyboard and a small screen to allow persons who are hard of hearing or deaf, as well as persons with no hearing impairments, to use the telephone to communicate. Instead of speaking and listening, users communicate by typing back and forth to one another.

Communicating with a TTY is noticeably different from communicating with a telephone. As such, employees and contractors responsible for providing front-line customer services to persons with disabilities are to receive training on the use of this equipment.

Here are some commonly used abbreviations:

GA= Go Ahead
SK= Stop Keying
LV= Leave
Q or ? = Question
XX= Errors
HLD= Hold
TY= Thank You
PLS= Please

Pagers and Cell Phones:

These devices can be used for text messaging in the same manner as general users do.

4.4 Do's and don'ts: assisting a person who is hard of hearing or deaf

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO get the person's attention discreetly.• DO face the person directly.• Do remember lip-reading only gives 30-40% of the information.• Do rephrase or write the information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DON'T cover your mouth, for example with hands or paper.• DON'T shout.• DON'T use jargon.• DON'T use exaggerated lip movements.
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Section 5: Assisting persons with other disabilities

There are many persons with other types of disabilities, such as those with cognitive, speech, and mental health impairments. Persons who are deaf-blind and seniors also can have special needs.

5.1 Terminology

<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Avoid using</i>
Person with a learning disability	Learning disabled, learning difficulty
Person with a developmental disability	Retarded, mentally retarded
Person with Downs syndrome	Mongoloid
Person with cerebral palsy, person who has spasms	Spastic (as a noun)
Person with mental illness	Mental patient, mentally ill, schizophrenic
Seniors	The aged, the elderly
Person who has epilepsy	An epileptic

5.2 How to assist persons with other disabilities

This section provides some tips on assisting persons with other common disabilities. As with all persons with disabilities, the cardinal rule is to first understand what the person desires or requires in assistance.

Tips for assisting a person with a cognitive impairment

Persons with cognitive impairments have more difficulty learning new things. To help them:

- Use short sentences.
- Give one piece of information at a time.
- Give instructions in the order the person needs to follow them.
- Be patient and supportive.
- Be prepared to repeat and rephrase.
- Offer to write the information.

Tips for assisting a person with a speech impairment

A person with a speech impairment may have acquired it at birth or as a result of a condition like cerebral palsy, a stroke, or an accident. To help her:

- Do not assume the person has an intellectual impairment.
- Wait for the person to finish speaking.
- Do not pretend to understand. Ask the passenger to repeat.
- Repeat the part of the statement you understood.
- If possible, ask questions answerable by 'yes' or 'no'.
- If difficulty persists, offer help by providing words the person may be trying to say.
- Offer pen and paper.

Tips for assisting a person with mental illness

Psychological disorders affect a person's ability to function within society. The majority of persons respond to treatment. However, some people experience periods of detachment from reality, depression, or bizarre behaviours. To help them:

- Stay calm.
- Attend to the questions at hand. Provide only the necessary information.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues. Rapid breathing, nervous pacing, and perspiration may indicate distress.
- If the person seems in crisis, seek assistance.
- If the person is in crisis, calmly ask him for the name of someone to contact.

Tips for assisting a person who is deaf-blind

A person who is deaf-blind is an individual with a substantial degree of vision and hearing loss. He will often travel with an attendant who is called an intervener.

- As always, make sure you understand the passenger's needs. The intervener will communicate for you through signing on the passenger's hand.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission.
- Guide the passenger's hand to objects by letting her hand rest lightly on the back of yours.
- Do not leave without letting the passenger know by touch or by signal, even for short periods.
- Do not move the passenger or hand something to her without prior explanation.

Tips for assisting a senior

As the rate of disability increases with age, and since the population of seniors will significantly increase in the coming years, it is important to remain aware of the needs of this group. Most seniors will not need special assistance or, if they do, the help may be found under the sections for the particular disability, for example persons who are hard of hearing or deaf. However, you can generally help by:

- Asking if and how you can be of assistance.
- Adjusting your pace if the person moves or speaks slowly.

5.3 Summary

In addition to the disabilities noted above, people may have a condition, such as arthritis or a temporary disability, which can impact on their ease of travel. This training cannot cover all types of conditions or disabilities, as they are as varied as people themselves.

In assisting every person with a disability, the principle rule is to ensure you understand what is needed. The person with the disability is in the best position to tell you that. If you can accommodate those needs, you will promote a safer and more pleasant trip for your customer.

Section 6: Quiz

The following will test your awareness of the ways to assist travellers with disabilities. Although all of the answers are contained in the manual, try to answer these items without referring back to this document to assess how much knowledge you have gained. The answers follow.

- 1) **Which of the following is correct? Of Canadians over 65:**
 - 78% have a mobility impairment
 - 40% have a mobility impairment
 - 21% have a mobility impairment

 - 2) **I will generally know if the person has a disability as she approaches me.**
 - True
 - False

 - 3) **Some people who are legally blind have some remaining vision.**
 - True
 - False

 - 4) **Which of the following phrases is inappropriate?**
 - Suffering from cerebral palsy
 - Physically challenged
 - Handicapped parking
 - All of the above
 - None of the above

 - 5) **I should offer writing materials to a person who is hard of hearing or deaf.**
 - True
 - False
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- 6) **I can pet, feed, or talk to a service animal at any time.**
 - True
 - False

 - 7) **The final thing I should do before leaving a person with a visual impairment is to ensure he is in contact with some physical aspect of the environment, for example a chair or wall.**
 - True
 - False

 - 8) **If the passenger is breathing rapidly or pacing nervously, he might have a mental illness. It is best to ignore the behaviours and remain calm.**
 - True
 - False

- 9) As long as the person can lip-read, she should have no trouble understanding me.
- True
 - False
- 10) For someone with a speech impairment, I should simplify what I say to him.
- True
 - False