



Serving Customers with Disabilities: A Toolkit



will begin at 2:00 pm ET

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About Your Hosts...

- TransCen, Inc.
 - Mission Statement: Improving lives of people with disabilities through meaningful work and community inclusion
- Mid-Atlantic ADA Center, a project of TransCen, Inc.
 - Funded by National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



3



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4



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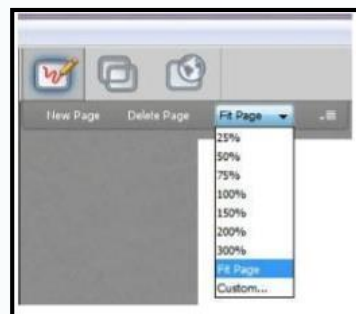
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5



Customizing Your View

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6



Customize Your View *continued*

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7



Technical Assistance

If you experience technical difficulties

- Use the CHAT panel to let us know
- E-mail ADAtesting@transcen.org
- Call 301-217-0124

8



Archive

- This webinar is being recorded and can be accessed within a few weeks
- You will receive an email with information on accessing the archive

9



Credit Hours and Certificates of Participation

- Are **not** available for this session

10





Serving Customers with Disabilities

Tools for Success



Welcome!

- This training is designed to help you interact more comfortably with customers with disabilities.



Did You Know?

- 1 out of 5 Americans has a disability.
- Many disabilities are not obvious.
 - You wouldn't typically know that a person has a cognitive disability, an autoimmune disorder, or chronic pain.

13



Disability and Aging

- The physical and mental limitations we experience as we get older can also be considered disabilities.
- With so many kinds of disabilities, you certainly interact every day with someone who is disabled.

14



Focus on the Person

- A disability is a personal characteristic, just like race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.
 - Just like these other characteristics, disability shouldn't have any effect on the way we interact with customers.

17



Don't Make Assumptions

- People with disabilities are so diverse that it is impossible to predict what any single individual might need or not need.
 - Rely on each individual to let you know what they need.

18



Equal Treatment

- In most situations, the way you treat a person with a disability should be identical to the way you treat a person without a disability.
 - For example, if you normally ask customers without disabilities if they need help, then you may ask customers with disabilities the same question.

19



Be an Observer

- Just like you would with any other customer, observe a person with a disability when she enters your business.
- If someone appears to need something out of the ordinary, it's okay to offer help.
 - For example, if someone looks lost or confused, or is struggling to reach an item, she may appreciate an offer of assistance.

20



Follow the Customer's Instructions

- If your offer of assistance is accepted, then ask the customer what he needs and how you can help.
 - Follow the customer's instructions.

21



Talking About People with Disabilities

- Are you ever confused about what kind of words and terms to use when talking about people with disabilities?

22



Person-First Language

- Person-first language puts the person first; *for example*:
 - Person with a disability
 - Person who has autism
 - Customer who is blind

23



Identity-First Language

- Identity-first language puts the disability first as a mark of identity; *for example*:
 - Disabled person
 - Autistic person
 - Blind customer

24



Person-First or Identity-First?

- So, which one should you use?
 - There's no right answer, but person-first language is usually acceptable.
 - If a customer prefers something different, accept the correction graciously.

25



Applying General Principles

- Now let's talk a little bit about some specific disabilities so we can apply these general principles.

26



Customers with Intellectual Disabilities

- Speak to customers with intellectual disabilities the same way you would any other customer.
 - If you are not understood the first time, try using different words to make your meaning clearer.
 - If you are unable to communicate effectively after several tries, it's okay to politely bring in your supervisor.

27



Customers with Speech Disabilities

- You might also have difficulty communicating with a customer who has a speech disability.
 - If you don't understand after a few tries, ask the customer if there are alternative methods you can use to communicate.

28



Customers with Speech Disabilities, continued

- People who have stutters or speech blocks usually prefer to finish their own sentences.
 - Instead of trying to suggest a word or finish a sentence for a customer who is stuttering, wait for him to finish on his own.

29



Customers Who Are Deaf

- When communicating with a deaf person through an interpreter, it is important to look directly at the deaf person, not at the interpreter.
 - This might be difficult at first. Your gaze may be naturally drawn toward the interpreter.
 - Don't worry if this happens, simply direct your eyes back to the customer with a smile.

30



Alternative Methods

- If there is no interpreter, you might need to write notes, so have pen and paper available.
- Some customers might be able to read your lips, so speak clearly and make sure your mouth is visible.

31



When to Speak Loudly

- Many people with hearing loss still communicate through hearing, and may ask you to speak more loudly.
 - It's okay to speak more loudly *if a customer asks you to.*

32



Customers Who Are Blind

- When interacting with a blind customer, look at and speak to him, even if he is with another person.
 - In fact, always speak directly to the customer regardless of the type of disability.

33



Physical and Verbal Guidance

- If a customer who is blind or has low vision wants physical guidance, ask how you may guide her.
- If she wants verbal guidance, remember to give directions from her perspective (e.g., your “right” might be her “left”).

34



Other Services

- You might need to read receipts, help fill out documents, assist with self-serve items, or provide information in large print, braille, or electronic formats for individuals with vision disabilities.

35



Customers with Mobility Disabilities

- Mobility disabilities include conditions that limit a person's strength, stamina, or movement, and affect things like standing, walking, bending, climbing, sitting, reaching, grasping, lifting, etc.

36



Invisible Mobility Disabilities

- Some mobility disabilities are not obvious, *for example*:
 - A heart condition might limit stamina and affect a person's ability to climb stairs or walk long distances
 - The pain and stiffness of arthritis might limit the ability to grasp, hold, or lift objects

37



Conversation Etiquette

- If you are speaking for more than a moment with a customer who uses a wheelchair, sit down if there is a chair available, or step back a couple of paces so he doesn't have to strain his neck to look up at you.

38



Accessible Paths and Areas

- Be aware of accessible paths through your place of business and keep them clear.
- If you have service desks and counters that are too high for wheelchair users, be prepared to offer alternatives such as clipboards or lower tables.

39



Customers of Short Stature

- Some of these principles also apply to interacting with customers of short stature.
 - Position yourself in a way that makes it easy for them to look at you, and be sure to work around high desks and counters that might not be usable for them.

40



Service Dogs

- Many customers with disabilities use service dogs, so knowing a little bit about them will help your customer service.



41



A Service Dog Can...

- You may be familiar with service dogs that guide people who are blind or have low vision. Did you know service dogs do many other jobs? *Service dogs can:*
 - Retrieve items such as medicine or the telephone
 - Pull a wheelchair
 - Provide physical support and help with balance
 - Prevent or stop impulsive behaviors through positioning, applying pressure, etc.
 - Detect and alert individuals to allergens, sounds, oncoming seizures, etc.

42



Service Dog Rules

- Service dogs are allowed in your business even if you have a “no animals” policy.
- Service dogs are *working*, so don’t pet, feed, or distract them.
- Service dogs must be housebroken and under the customer’s control at all times.

43



Service Dog or Emotional Support Dog?

- Service dogs must be trained to perform specific actions, tasks, or work.
- Many animals provide comfort or emotional support, but *if they are not trained to do anything specific* the ADA does not require you to allow customers to bring them into your place of business.

44



The Two Questions

- If the task or work a dog performs is not obvious, there are two questions you can ask the customer.
 1. Is this dog required because of a disability?
 2. What work or task has this dog been trained to perform?

45



What You May Not Ask

- You may *not* ask for documents, certificates, details, or proof of either the customer's disability or the dog's training.

46



Take-Aways

- People with disabilities are eager to receive the services you provide.
- The most important things to remember:
 - Customers with disabilities should be treated with the same courtesy, patience, and respect as other customers
 - Follow the customer’s lead when it comes to preferred language, methods of communication, or providing help

47



Other Resources

- Visit **ADAInfo.org**
- Click on “Serving Customers with Disabilities: Tools for Success”
 - At Your Service
 - Quick Tips: Customer Service for Frontline Staff
 - ADA 2010 Revised Requirements: Service Animals
 - FAQ on Service Animals
 - Fact Sheet for Food Service
- For more resources, visit **ADAHospitality.org**

48



Thank You for Joining Us!

- Questions? Call or visit us online

- Mid-Atlantic ADA Center

- 1-800-949-4232

- (DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV)

- www.ADAinfo.org

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