

Course 1: Accessibility

Vehicle for Hire



Overview

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to increase the awareness and competence of Edmonton's vehicle-for-hire (VFH) drivers concerning providing truly accessible transportation. The course includes focused content, scenarios, case studies, and practical guidance about unconscious bias, assumptions, protected rights, legislation, prevalence and types of disability, and providing accessible transportation options.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Recognize and challenge unconscious bias and assumptions
- Describe the prevalence of disabilities and limitations within our diverse population
- Identify various types of disabilities and functional limitations that may result because of them
- Describe the protected rights of persons with disabilities, both in general and with regard to accommodation
- Provide appropriate assistance to passengers with disabilities

Module 1: Describing Disability

Introduction

As you work through this module, you will learn to:

- Identify unconscious bias
- Challenge assumptions about disabilities

Words Associated with Disability

Below is a list of words that may be common to hear when a discussion about disability is occurring. As you progress through this module and course, you will learn more about which of these words hold truth and which do not, and which are appropriate and which are not.

For now, as you read through this list, self-reflect. What is your initial reaction to each word? Do not worry about whether or not your reaction is “correct.” Just make note of it and, most importantly, be willing to expand your knowledge and understanding as we progress through the learning content.

Word List

Hurt	Productive	Capable	Slow
Normal	Sick	Burden	Wheelchair
Powerful	Weird	Creative	Leader
Needy	Professional	Handicapped	Old
Parents	Expert	Independent	Welfare

Defining Disability

Here are the Canadian definitions of common disability terms.

Disability

Disability is defined by the Government of Canada (2019) in the *Accessible Canada Act* as

any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.

Barrier

A barrier, as defined by the Government of Canada (2019) in the *Accessible Canada Act*,

means anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Organizational or systemic barriers are policies, procedures, or practices that unfairly discriminate and can prevent individuals from participating fully in a situation.

Technological barriers interfere with communication. In many organizations today, technology is often used to communicate. Without non-verbal cues such as eye contact, facial expressions, and body language, people are more likely to misunderstand messages. This causes the quality of communication to suffer.



Accessibility

Accessibility is “about creating barrier-free communities, workplaces and services for all Canadians” (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023), and involves “the design of products, devices, services, environments, technologies, policies, and rules in a way that allows all people—including people with a variety of disabilities—to access them” (Accessibility at the Senate, 2022).

“Nothing About Us, Without Us”

“*Nothing About Us, Without Us*, means that persons with disabilities should be consulted when developing laws, policies and programs that impact them” (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023).



Remember

Disability intersects with every way of life. It does not discriminate based on race, gender, age, economic status, level of education, religion, political ideologies, language, culture, etc.

Anyone can be born with a disability.

Anyone can become disabled at some point in their lives.

Bias

Conscious Bias

Conscious, or “explicit, bias is holding a clear and conscious judgement about groups of people based on their identity” (The Jed Foundation, n.d.).

Due to social pressure, many people do not openly speak about their conscious biases. Some examples of conscious bias include:

- Knowingly choosing to use language that is derogatory or disrespectful, such as a slur when speaking about people who are different from you.
- Treating a person with a disability with condescension, like they are unintelligent, incapable, etc.
- Deliberately excluding someone from social activities because they are different from you.

(The Jed Foundation, n.d.)

Unconscious Bias

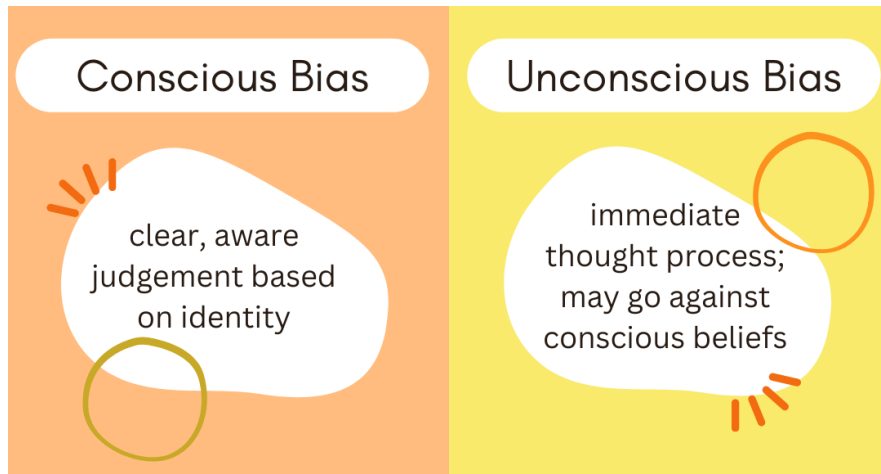
Unconscious, or “implicit, bias is an unconscious or immediate thought process that may go directly against our conscious beliefs” (The Jed Foundation, n.d.)

Every day we all make countless decisions without even realizing we are doing it. As Timothy Wilson explains in *Strangers to Ourselves* (2004), at any given moment we can be assaulted with 11 million pieces of information and because our brains can only process about 40 items efficiently, we need to rely on shortcuts and past knowledge or experiences to make safe assumptions. This creates what we call ‘unconscious bias’.

Some examples of unconscious bias include:

- Feeling discomfort when you are around individuals or groups of people who may be different from you (i.e., people with disabilities), even though you do not know them or cannot explain why you feel discomfort.
- Automatically changing how you speak to others, such as someone using a wheelchair, who may be different from you.
- Regularly showing more respect or giving preferential treatment to certain people because they may be like you or have similar viewpoints to yours.

(The Jed Foundation, n.d.)



Even someone who is often a target of discrimination can discriminate against others. We **all** have bias.

Predict the Bias

There has been recent research published on the prevalence of bias against disabilities within Western society.

One such study asked 25,006 healthcare providers a series of questions (VanPuymbrouck, Friedman, & Feldner, 2020). As required by the nature of their work, healthcare professionals often work with folks with different disabilities.

Do these results surprise you?

In the healthcare study mentioned above, when ***asked*** if they preferred persons with disabilities or people without disabilities, these were the results:

32%

Had a conscious preference for persons without disabilities.

~5%

Had a conscious preference for persons with disabilities.

~65%

Did not have a conscious preference.

This means that the majority of the participants did not hold conscious judgements or openly discriminate against persons with disabilities.

When the participants **completed a test** that is specifically designed to measure implicit bias, these were the results:

- ~83%** Had a conscious preference for persons without disabilities.
- ~7%** Had a conscious preference for persons with disabilities.
- ~11%** Did not have a conscious preference.

This means that even with a lot of experience working with persons with disabilities, and even with the majority of participants not consciously holding prejudice against disability, the vast majority were implicitly biased against people with disabilities.

What does this mean for you as a vehicle for hire (VFH) driver?

This can mean that even if you hold low explicit bias, you can still hold high implicit bias.

This could result in riders experiencing discrimination from you due to their disability, whether it is intended or not.

Persons with disabilities, even those who may be non-verbal or who do not openly seem to notice, can sense very quickly if someone has an implicit bias against disability. When this implicit bias exists alongside a possible negative experience when they utilize a vehicle for hire, there is a much higher risk of complaints, injuries, and unintended damage done to assistive devices and possessions. This significantly lowers psychological safety for everyone.

No one is perfect, and most people with disabilities only ask for the willingness to learn about your implicit bias and to work on reducing how much bias you hold against disability. Everyone only wants to be able to navigate their lives in ways that satisfy their needs and that do not cause harm to anyone else.

Different Worldviews of Disability

Much of our implicit bias on a topic is informed by our worldview of it.

There are several ways to view disability. These can be called the *Models of Disability*. As you explore the models, reflect on which one (or combination) most accurately matches your worldview.

Charity Model

Still very common within various charity and religious groups, this model views disability as a “burden” or as a “curse” for non-disabled people with “good morals” to take pity on.

This model views people with disabilities as not capable of autonomy and believes that they must always rely upon others (UNHCR France, n.d.)

In practice, this results in people with disabilities remaining extremely vulnerable with very little power or autonomy. This model was the main driver behind many people with disabilities in the past being removed from their families and placed in institutions.



Medical Model

The medical model sees disability as something that is 'wrong' with a person's body or mind (Zaks, 2023). It expects the person with the disability to change to fit in with society and takes on a “it’s not my problem” philosophy.

The greatest critique against the medical model is that it sees “the impairment as the most important part of the person and suggests the person is helpless to do anything about this” (We Can and Must Do Better, n.d.)

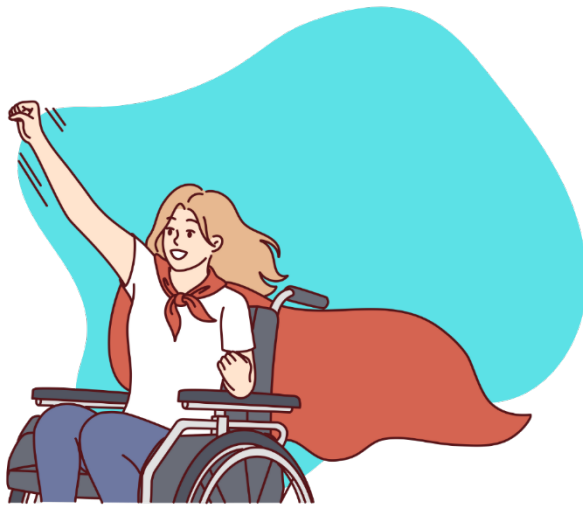
Social Model

The social model of disability states that the greatest experience of disability is “caused by the way society is organized” (Nottinghamshire Disabled People’s Movement, n.d.).

It employs a “we are all in this together” philosophy and looks at ways of removing barriers in the environment that people with disabilities experience.

Supercrip Model

The supercrip model views disability as heroic. It often uses examples of persons or fictional characters with disabilities, such as autistic characters all being shown as savants (Experiential Learning Hub, 2022).



This model tries to replace stereotypes of persons with disabilities as being powerless victims with a positive image (Schalk, 2016). However, it often does not consider the various circumstances that enabled one person with a disability to possibly face fewer barriers than another, such as race, gender, class privilege, etc. (Schalk, 2016).

Human Rights Model

Under the human rights model, persons with disabilities are recognized as having the right to equal opportunities and participation in society.

In practice, this model acknowledges persons with disabilities as people with rights and that others have responsibilities to respect these persons (UNHCR France, n.d.).

All legislation and accessibility standards for disability in Canada are rooted in both the *Social Model* and the *Human Rights Model*.

These are the two world views that afford persons with disabilities their rights and dignity without putting them or the people they interact with in a place of being caretakers, counsellors, or clinicians for them.

What can you do?

Now, you might be wondering, “Ok, so?” and that is fair. All of this theory is meant to be applied in real life, not just read about.

A simple way to apply the information found in the models of disability in a meaningful way is to:

- 1. Acknowledge that if people with disabilities are not viewed in a way that respects their dignity, those beliefs and attitudes will create more problems for you than there needs to be.**

All of us, people with disabilities and people without, have the responsibility to coexist.

- 2. Reflect on the following questions:**

- What model do you view disability through?
- Why is that?
- Will your worldview benefit your work?
- Will your worldview cause issues in your work?
- What would you like to do going forward?

3. **Flip the script**

When a thought or belief comes up about disability that doesn't respect the dignity of persons with disabilities, reframe it.

For example, if you help someone in a wheelchair use a ramp or a lift, take a quick moment to ask yourself why you think they need help. Is it because they are broken or is it because the environment makes it impossible for them to navigate on their own?

Module 2: Disability and Accessible Transportation Standards and Laws

Introduction

As you work through this module, you will learn to:

- Explain the protected rights of persons with disabilities
- Identify legislation related to accommodating passengers as a transportation provider

In Canada, transportation is considered a **social determinant of health** (Mirza & Hulko, 2022).

Social determinants of health are “non-medical factors that influence health outcomes” (WHO, n.d.).

As such, transportation is considered an essential service, especially for those who face inequities, like persons with disabilities and the elderly.

Undue Hardship

According to the Human Rights Commission (n.d.), “[s]ometimes accommodation is not possible because it would cost too much, or create health or safety risks. This is known as undue hardship.”

Charter of Rights and Freedoms



Charter of Rights and Freedoms

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/rfc-dlc/ccrf-ccd/index.html>

The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is part of the *Canadian Constitution*, which is a set of laws containing basic rules about how the country operates.

Section 15 of the *Charter* establishes that every individual in Canada – regardless of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, colour, sex, age or physical or mental disability – is to be considered equal under the law.

The *Charter* also allows for certain laws or programs aimed at improving the situation of disadvantaged individuals or groups.

- For example, programs to improve employment opportunities for people with mental or physical disabilities may be protected under subsection 15(2).

Canadian Human Rights Act



Canadian Human Rights Act

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6/>

The basic goal of the *Act* is to protect Canadians from discrimination. It includes eleven established grounds for protection from discrimination and harassment, including prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Protection is available under this act for any Canadian who is employed or receiving services from the Federal government, First Nations, and/or private companies.

Accessible Canada Act



Accessible Canada Act

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-0.6/>

Bill C-81 received royal assent on June 21, 2019, and became the *Accessible Canada Act*. The purpose of the *Act* is to set a federal standard to address accessibility across the country. Its vision is to create a barrier-free Canada.

The *Accessible Canada Act* applies to the federal public sector, crown corporations, and federally regulated organizations including railway, airlines, television, and radio.

Duty to Accommodate



Duty to Accommodate

<https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/en/about-human-rights/what-the-duty-accommodate>

The duty to accommodate means that sometimes it is necessary to treat someone differently to prevent or reduce discrimination (CHRC, n.d.).

The duty to accommodate may require alternative arrangements to be made to ensure a person or group can fully participate. As a service provider, you must provide accommodation when requested which includes the design of accessible systems and the identification and removal of barriers.

Examples of Accommodations from the Human Rights Commission (n.d.):

- Providing a special screen and software for people with visual impairment
- Allowing an employee to take time off to attend a medical appointment
- Managing an employee's schedule in a way that balances their work and caregiving obligations
- Making wheelchair access available to people with disabilities

Module 3: Knowing Your Patrons with Disabilities

Introduction

As you work through this module, you will learn to:

- Describe the prevalence of disabilities and the changing demographics of our ageing and diverse population
- Identify various types of disabilities and the common transportation barriers experienced by people living with these disabilities.
- Explain the needs of passengers with disabilities and provide appropriate assistance

Business Case for Accessible Transportation

Transportation is one of the most common barriers that patrons of all different types of disabilities face. Many individuals with disabilities face extremely long wait times due to a lack of providers knowing how to provide accessible transportation services.

At present, a large majority of Canadians who live with a disability do not have sufficient access to accessible transportation. Many of these individuals would be able to live much more independently with proper accessibility but presently live with a lower quality of life. They struggle consistently with the grocery store, work, medical appointments, and social events simply because they cannot physically get there.

Providing accessible transportation widens market reach. Individuals who require accessible transportation will regularly utilize vehicle-for-hire services if those services are accessible.

Providing accessible transportation for hire services as a standard practice whenever possible not only reduces the barriers for individuals who have disclosed their disability to drivers but also for those who have not. It reduces human rights violations (even if they are unintended), improves patron satisfaction and contributes to reducing complaints from patrons.

Prevalence of Disability in Canada

It is important to remember that statistics are not just numbers. They represent the people in our lives - our families, community, co-workers, and even ourselves. Everyone deserves to get the support and respect we, ourselves, want.



Canadian Statistics



Data on Disability in Canada (2022)

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2023063-eng.htm>

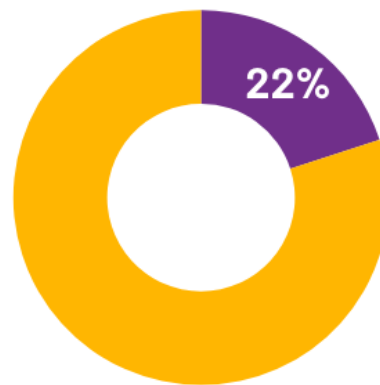
Women are slightly more likely than men to have a disability.



1 in 7 adults report a disability.



By 2036, it is estimated this will increase to **1 in 5**.



22% of Canadians have at least one disability.

This represents

6.2 million people

(Statistics Canada, 2017)

Person-First Language

The word “disabled” is an adjective, not a noun. Disabled has a negative connotation. If an alarm is “disabled” it does not work. If a person is “disabled” it infers they too “don’t work” in some capacity.

Person-first language

- Puts a person before their diagnosis
- Is used to speak appropriately and respectfully about an individual with a disability
- Emphasizes the person first, not the disability

For example, when referring to a person with a disability, refer to the person first by using phrases such as: “A person who ...”, “a person with ...” or, “person who has...”

Avoid language which may cause discomfort, guilt, pity, or insult.

- “Sally suffers from...”, “He is restricted to a wheelchair...”

Instead of...	Please use...
Disabled/invalid	Person with a disability
Crippled by, afflicted with, suffers from	Person who has, or person with
Lame	Person with limited mobility
Hard of hearing, hearing impaired	Person who is hard of hearing
Handicapped	Person with a disability
Confined, bound, restricted, or dependent on a wheelchair	Person using a wheelchair
Normal	Able-bodied or non-disabled
Retarded, mentally retarded	Person with a developmental disability
Spastic (as a noun)	Person with a particular disability, for example, cerebral palsy
Deformed, congenital, defect	A person born with
Physically challenged	Person with a disability

Deaf and dumb, deaf-mute	A person who is deaf or hard of hearing
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Additional Etiquette Considerations

It is okay to use words or phrases such as "disabled," "disability," or "people with disability" when talking about disability issues. Ask the people you are with which term they prefer if they have a disability.

When talking about people without disability, it is okay to say, "people without disability." But, do not refer to them as "normal" or "healthy." These terms can make people with disability feel as though there is something wrong with them and that they are "abnormal."

When talking about places with accommodations for people with disability, 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.

There are a couple of communities of folks with disabilities that prefer to use identity-first language, such as the deaf community and the autistic community. However, to be most mindful, default to using person-first language if you are not sure.

Different Types of Disabilities and Common Transportation Barriers

Different Types of Disabilities

As explained by the City of Edmonton (n.d.a)

Permanent Disability

This is a limitation caused by a physical or mental impairment that restricts the ability of a person to perform the daily activities necessary to participate in studies at the post-secondary level or in the labour force.

Temporary Disability

This is a physical or mental disability which hampers your discharging of responsibilities for a short period.

Episodic Disability

These are long-term conditions that are characterized by periods of good health interrupted by periods of illness or disability. These periods may vary in severity, length, and predictability from one person to another.

Visible Disability

These can be noticed by just looking at the person. For example, the person may have facial features that show they have a disability, they may have involuntary shaking throughout their body, or they may not be physically able to move.

Invisible Disability

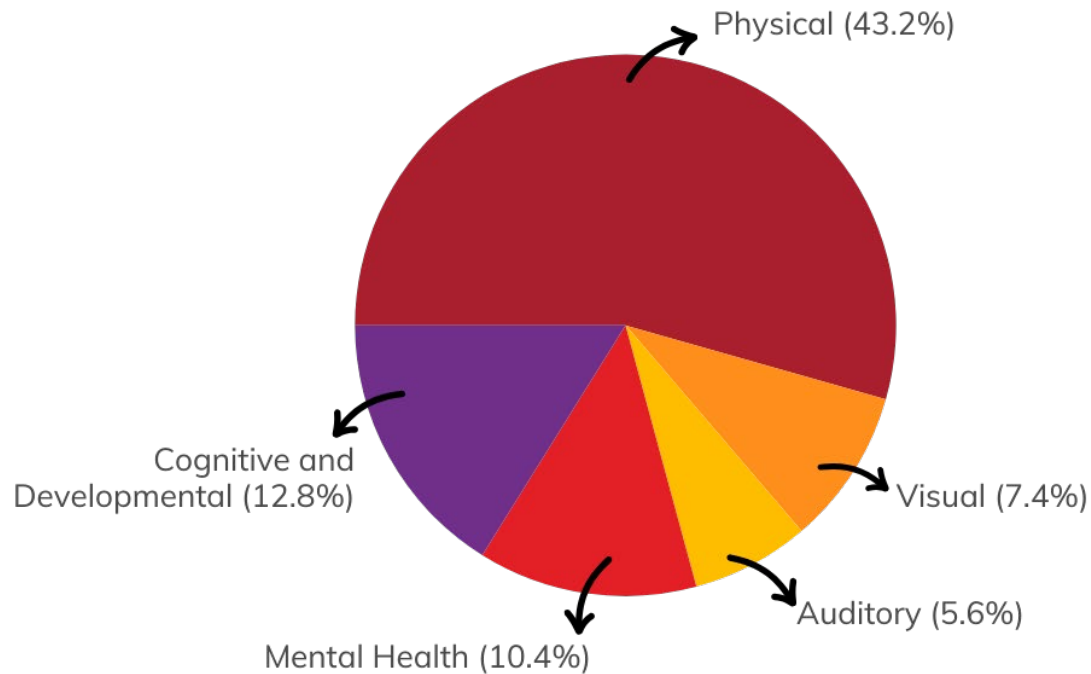
These are disabilities that are not immediately apparent. For instance, some people with visual or auditory disabilities who do not wear glasses or hearing aids, or who use discreet hearing aids, may not be obviously disabled. Some people who have vision loss may wear contact lenses.

Which person pictured below is disabled?



Images used from City of Edmonton. (n.d.). Module 2 types of disabilities [PowerPoint]. In *DATS vehicle for hire training*.

The answer is both. These are the same individual.



Data from: (Statistics Canada, 2023)

The following is closely adapted from the City of Edmonton (n.d.a)

Physical disabilities include mobility, flexibility, and dexterity limitations.

- **Barriers** for individuals with physical disabilities are most often experienced during activities involving range in motion, function, stamina, and/or sensation in one or multiple parts of the body.
- **Common recognizable physical disabilities** include:
 - spinal cord injury
 - cerebral palsy
 - muscular dystrophy
 - aging, arthritis
 - people with absent or shortened limbs and pain

Visual disabilities include persons with blindness or low vision.

- **Barriers** for individuals with visual disabilities are most often experienced when participating in activities involving various levels of vision, colour perception, or contrast sensitivity.
- **Common visual disabilities** include:
 - *Blindness* is a lack of vision. It may also refer to a loss of vision that cannot be corrected with glasses or contact lenses.
 - *Low vision* is a condition caused by eye disease, in which visual acuity is 20/70 or poorer in the better-seeing eye and cannot be corrected or improved with regular eyeglasses.
 - *Partially sighted* includes people who are partially sighted are not completely blind but can see very little
 - *Deafblind* is a unique and isolating sensory disability resulting from the combination of both hearing and vision loss or impairment. This has a significant effect on communication, socialization, mobility, and daily living.

Auditory disabilities relate to hearing loss.

- **Barriers** for individuals with auditory disabilities are most often experienced when participating in activities that rely upon hearing.
- There is a difference between hard of hearing, deaf, and capital D Deaf.
 - "Hard of hearing" refers to a hearing loss where there may be enough residual hearing that an auditory device, such as a hearing aid or FM system, provides adequate assistance to process speech.
 - "deaf" usually refers to a hearing loss so severe that there is very little or no hearing.
 - The "uppercase D" Deaf is used to describe people who identify as culturally Deaf and are actively engaged with the Deaf community. Deaf with a capital D indicates a cultural



identity for people with hearing loss who share a common culture and have a shared sign language.

Cognitive disabilities are sometimes visible disabilities, but oftentimes invisible to the eye.

- **Barriers** for individuals with cognitive disabilities are most often experienced when participating in activities that involve mental functioning, cognitive processing, and skills such as communication, self-help, and social skills.
- **Common cognitive disabilities** include:
 - Down syndrome
 - Acquired brain injury
 - Alzheimer’s and dementia

[Sub-set of Cognitive Disability: Neurodiversity]

Neurodiversity is a naturally occurring diversity in thinking and seeing the world, caused by genes and environment (Robinson, 2013). This means that neurodivergent individuals are born with brains that are naturally wired differently than the status quo.

- **Barriers** that neurodivergent individuals often experience occur when participating in activities involving overstimulating environments, being required to communicate in a status quo manner, and being required to hide, or “mask”, their neurodivergent tendencies.
- **Common neurodivergencies** include:
 - Autism, or the Autism Spectrum (avoid using the term *Autism Spectrum Disorder* as most autists do not identify as having a disorder)
 - ADHD
 - Tourette’s Syndrome
 - Dyslexia
 - Epilepsy]

Mental health-related disabilities are when someone experiences barriers in their daily activities because of difficulties with an emotional, psychological, or mental health condition.

- **Barriers** that people with mental health-related disabilities face are most often experienced whenever stigma against mental health is applied.

- **Stigma** is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have a mental health condition are common. Stigma can lead to discrimination (i.e., someone avoiding you because the person assumes you could be unstable, violent, or dangerous due to your mental illness).



Module 4: Accessible Customer Service

Introduction

As you work through this module, you will learn to:

- Apply standards-compliant accessibility best practices for transportation providers within various scenarios, including the use of ramps, mobility aids, and service animals

Assisting Customers with Disabilities

Physical Disabilities

As explained by the City of Edmonton (n.d.b)



Permission: Always ask permission before touching someone's mobility aid or device.

Don't assume: Don't assume a customer using a wheelchair wants to be pushed.

Path of travel: Make sure there is a clear path of travel.

Patience: Be patient and understand some customers might move more slowly than others.

Visual Disabilities

As explained by the City of Edmonton (n.d.b)

Always ask if assistance is needed, never assume.

Speak directly to the person and introduce yourself and anyone who is with you.

Communicate. Always tell the customer when you are leaving, never leave a person who is blind talking to an empty space. When giving directions be clear and precise (i.e., the number of stairs up or down, the distance in feet to the door of the bathroom, use the face of a clock to describe where an object is, “your water is at 4 o’clock”).

Watch for any potential hazards that may not be cane detectable and advise the customer of any hazards well in advance.

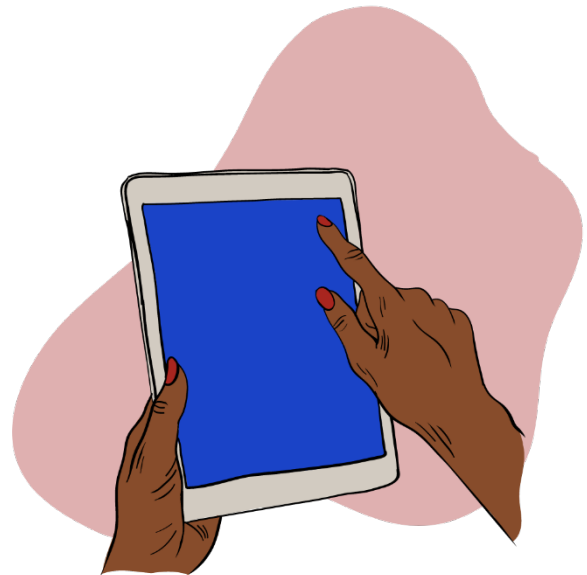
If driving a bus with many passengers and stops, **call out the stops** as you come to them. If you are driving a vehicle with only one passenger or party, **inform them of the destination when you arrive.**

Communication Disabilities

As explained by the City of Edmonton (n.d.b)

Most people who have a speech or language disability do not have hearing loss and do not have a cognitive disability.

- Give the customer time to speak without interrupting them and resist the urge to finish their sentences.
- Avoid speaking loudly at the person and maintain eye contact.
- Don’t pretend to have understood.
- Consider using alternate forms of communication such as writing or typing out questions on paper or a tablet.
- If the customer is still having difficulty communicating, try asking questions which require only a short answer, yes/no or a nod of the head.



- If the customer is deaf or hard of hearing, make sure you get the customer's attention prior to speaking (i.e., wave your hand to indicate you have something to communicate).
- Always speak directly to the customer, not their sign language interpreter or intervenor (a support person for persons who are deaf-blind).

Cognitive Disabilities

As explained by the City of Edmonton (n.d.b)

Never assume the person's level of intellectual functioning, instead begin interacting as you would with any other customer and adjust based on feedback and observations.

- Always begin speaking directly to the customer.
- Be prepared to repeat or rephrase an explanation or direction.
- Extend patience and support; take time to listen when the customer speaks.
- Break instructions into small steps.
- Be careful not to over-assist or be patronizing.

Mental Health Disabilities

As explained by the City of Edmonton (n.d.b)

- State clearly who you are and speak in a normal tone of voice.
- Ask customers what accommodations (if any) they require.
- Avoid unnecessary and intrusive questions.
- Remember mental health needs vary from person to person.

Mobility Aids

Each person is unique and experiences their disability in their own way. Some people face many challenges in travelling and their driver or operator can impact their day.

Always ask how you can help, don't feel uncomfortable about asking the best way to assist someone, the best person to ask is them!

Types of Mobility Aids



Manual Wheelchair



Power Wheelchair



Cane



Walker



Scooter

Images:
[manual wheelchair]. Jeanvdmeulen. (2018). [Pixabay](#). Public Domain.
[power wheelchair]. Rollz International. (2022). [Pexels](#). Public Domain.
[cane]. Thirdman. (2021). [Pexels](#). Public Domain.
[walker]. Sani-aktiv. (2022). [Pixabay](#). Public Domain.
[scooter]. sabinevanerp. (2016). [Pixabay](#). Public Domain.

Transporting Patrons Using Mobility Aids

As explained by the Government of Alberta (2023) in their publication *A Guide for Drivers of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities*

[Mobility aids] are often custom-made for individuals, very expensive and some are easily damaged. Most people do not have an extra wheelchair or other mobility aids so damage could result in a loss of mobility until repairs are done. (p. 13)

If someone moves from their mobility aid into a vehicle seat, their mobility aid will need to be safely and securely stored during travel.

- Passengers must not sit on their walkers while being loaded on the lift.
- Passenger walkers should be stored and secured in the designated location. Drivers should use one or two tie-downs to secure the walkers and prevent them from moving while in transit. To make more space, try to fold the walkers, when possible. For walkers with baskets, drivers may ask the passenger to hold the basket (or its contents) when feasible. (p. 21)

Elderly Patrons

“Alberta’s senior population is projected to grow from 735,000 (as of Dec. 31, 2022) to more than one million by 2035, at which point more than 50 per cent of seniors will be over age 75” (Government of Alberta, 2023).

Physical and mobility-related disabilities are the most common experienced by elderly patrons, and many will use mobility aids. However, elderly patrons also have unique transportation needs that have not yet been covered.

The 5 As of Senior-Friendly Transportation

As explained by the Beverly Foundation (n.d.)

Availability alone is not the solution to transportation challenges for older adults.

Acceptability suggests senior passenger criteria of comfort and convenience of service.

Accessibility means that passengers must be able to access the vehicle and the service.

Adaptability calls for the service to meet the assistance needs of older adults.

Affordability not only aims for transportation to be affordable to passengers but also to transportation services.

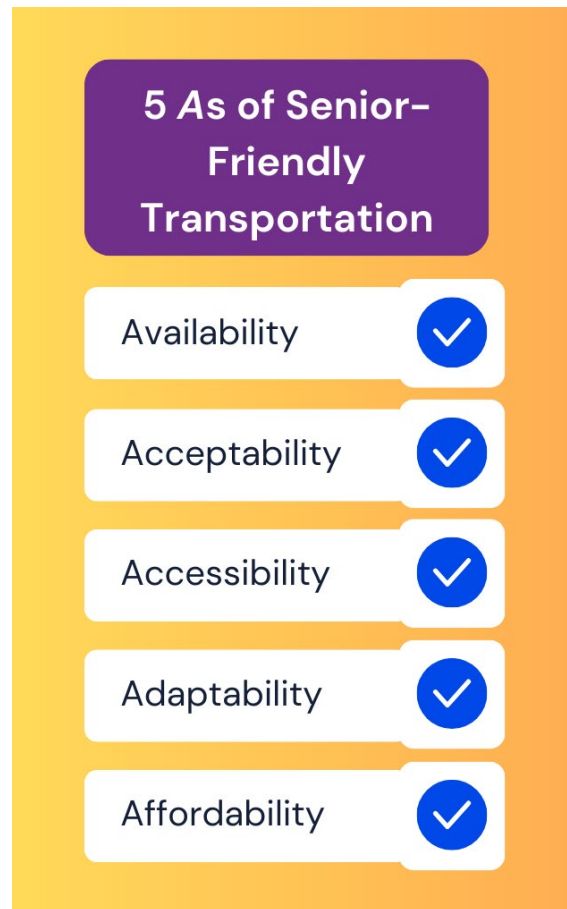
The Beverly Foundation (n.d.) goes on to explain

Older adults say that limitations which make it difficult or impossible for them to drive also can make it difficult if not impossible for them to access public transit as well as many community, human service, and senior transportation options.

Although the most frequent access solution is to provide training on how to use transportation services, what can be even more important to older adult passengers is assistance and support.

In other words, while destination-oriented transportation may not meet their needs; the solution to senior access requirements can be the provider that takes services to passengers, and offers them assistance and support prior to, during, and following their travel.

This often is referred to as door-to-door, door-through-door, and at-the-destination assistance. (p. 2)



Accessibility Challenges	Acceptability Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance to and from vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going where seniors need to go Going to destinations any time Offering satisfactory vehicles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance into and out of vehicle • Assistance opening doors • Help with coats, shoes, and boots • Help in and out of chairs • Help carrying packages • Help with assistive devices • Assistance at destinations • “How to” training for passengers • “How to” training for drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering well-maintained vehicles • Offering a comfortable ride • Ensuring a convenient service • Ensuring vehicle cleanliness • Ensuring minimal wait times • Ensuring ease of scheduling • Training drivers to be senior-sensitive
<p>Availability</p>	<p>Adaptability</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing demand response services • Making multiple stops • Ensuring seniors know about services • Making sure seniors can reach services • Picking passengers up at their door • Crossing jurisdictional boundaries • Traveling to desired destinations • Offering service evenings and weekends • Offering on-time pick-up and delivery • Providing assistance to passengers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering multiple-stop services • Offering door-through-door service • Offering transportation escorts • Accommodating assistive devices • Accommodating passengers’ pets • Adapting procedures to rider needs • Linking passengers with other services • Recruiting and organizing escorts • Offering special destination services • Offering transit beyond usual hours

Affordability

- Creating awareness of actual transportation costs
- Maintaining and operating vehicles
- Maintaining and supporting a driver pool
- Organizing for least expensive operations
- Offering reasonably priced transportation services
- Providing necessary assistance and support
- Ensuring affordability for senior passengers
- Linking passengers with less expensive services
- Ensuring affordability for community donors
- Conveying cost information on vehicle ownership

Service Dogs

People with disabilities are often required to live their lives in unique ways that are tailored towards their unique needs.

There may be confusion regarding what a service dog is and how to identify an authentic service dog versus a pet or an emotional support animal.

What are service dogs?

Service dogs are not the same as pets. They are dogs with special skills and special behaviours that pet dogs do not have. They are considered a type of “working dog,” meaning they are given jobs where they use their special skills and behaviours to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.

Not every person with a disability will be able to get a service dog. Only people with very specific medical conditions and very specific disabilities who can prove they need a service dog will qualify to even be allowed to apply to be matched with one.

In Canada, the *Accessible Transport of Persons with Disabilities Regulations* (ATPDR) defines a service dog as a dog that (Canadian Transport Agency, n.d.a):

- has been individually trained by an organization or person specializing in service dog training; and
- performs a task to assist a person with a disability with a need related to their disability.



This means that service animals are as important to the health and quality of life for a person with a disability as other mobility aids and medical devices.

People with many different types of disabilities will use assistive devices, mobility devices, and mobility aids that are specific to their unique needs. Sometimes these devices and aids are non-living tools, like wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs, sometimes these devices and aids are living tools, like service dogs.

Role of Service Dogs

Service dogs perform a large variety of tasks. Not all service dogs will be trained to do all the same tasks. They are specifically matched based on their size, skills, and special behaviours to meet the very specific needs of their handlers.

The following information has been adapted from the Canadian Transport Agency (n.d.a):

Some examples of tasks service dogs can do that cause them to be considered mobility devices:

- Guiding persons who are blind to walk and travel safely in public spaces.
- Pulling a wheelchair

- Retrieving dropped items the person with a disability cannot retrieve on their own
- Opening and closing doors and drawers
- Assisting a person with a mobility-related disability with dressing and undressing
- Bracing during balance loss

Some examples of tasks service dogs can do that cause them to be considered medical devices:

- Alerting persons who have hearing impairments to the presence of people or sounds, such as an alarm or telephone
- Recognizing specific changes that happen before a sudden sugar low or heart condition episode and alerting a person
- Physically supporting a person with narcolepsy, fainting disorder, or epilepsy who might suddenly lose consciousness so they do not injure themselves when they fall
- Providing deep pressure for an autistic person by lying on top of them if they become overwhelmed, keeping them safe, regulated, and able to remain independent while completing daily tasks within overstimulating environments often found in public
- Assisting a person with post-traumatic stress disorder by physically nudging or pawing at them to bring them back from a flashback if they have an episode



- Some dogs are even trained to find someone to help their handler if they experience a medical crisis

In short, if you would not deny someone service for needing to use a wheelchair, you must not deny someone service for needing to use a service dog.

What types of dogs become service dogs?



Service dogs are often shown in media as being golden retrievers, but in reality, they can potentially be any breed. There are some breeds that are commonly known to have certain temperaments and natural abilities and instincts that can make them suitable to be service dogs. However, determining if a dog is suitable to be certified as a service dog is based on their individual

temperament and ability to pass rigorous training, not their specific breed.

Service dogs come in all sizes.

- Large breeds are often selected for tasks that require strength, like bracing an adult who cannot balance well or who might become unconscious and fall.
- Medium and large breeds are the perfect size to perform tasks like laying on top of their handler during a medical crisis to provide deep pressure or standing between their handler and others in public to allow their handler to have enough space to safely move or to not become overwhelmed in busy spaces.
- Small breeds do not often do tasks like bracing or balancing but do other tasks like being alert dogs. This is because they can actually smell when the blood sugar of a person who has diabetes suddenly drops, or when a person with epilepsy is about to have a seizure and can alert

their handlers so they can take emergency medications or sit down in a safe place so they do not fall and become injured.

- Dogs of all sizes can retrieve items and do the tasks of a hearing dog.

The training a service dog must have to be certified is extremely difficult. Very few dogs are selected to be trained because they do not have the correct behaviours or the natural skills and instincts.

Even out of the dogs who are selected to be trained, many are not able to pass the strict training required. Dogs who do not pass do not become certified. Only dogs who pass the strict training become certified as registered and documented service dogs.

What does all of this mean for you? This means that if a person has documentation showing that their service dog is certified, you can be assured that the service dog has passed the strict training requirements, is not in any way a risk to you or your vehicle, will not misbehave or bother you, and the handler will always have complete control of their service dog.

How do I determine if a dog is a service dog?

Sometimes a dog will wear a harness that tells the public they are a service dog. However, sometimes they will not if the harness would prevent them from being able to properly do the mobility or medical task they are trained for.

In Alberta, the responsibility of service dog handlers is to maintain control of the dog at all times. to clean up if their service dog toilets in a public place, and to provide, upon request, documentation that their service dog is certified (Government of Alberta, n.d.).

A legitimate service dog is certified because they never growl, bark



aggressively, snap, bite, or lunge. If a service dog in training displayed any of these behaviours even once, they would automatically fail the training. This means that, while the handler is absolutely responsible if these behaviours occur, you will likely never see any of these behaviours from a legitimately certified service dog.

Difference between Service Dogs, Therapy Dogs, and Emotional Support Dogs

Service Dogs	Therapy and Emotional Support Dogs
<p><i>Service dogs</i> are considered mobility aids and medical devices and are therefore allowed to access public spaces and services in the same way that the general public can. By law in Alberta, service dogs are required to be certified and the handler is required to carry their <i>Alberta Government-issued Service Dog ID</i> to show that their dog is a legitimate service dog.</p>	<p><i>Therapy dogs</i> and <i>emotional support dogs</i> (or other animals) are not considered mobility aids or medical devices. They are considered pets and companion animals. There are training programs for therapy animals, but therapy animals are not considered by law to be officially certified even if they complete this training. This means that in Alberta, the skills and behaviours of therapy dogs cannot be officially certified. As such, businesses can choose to refuse to allow them.</p>

What does all this mean for you?

Do this...

As explained by the Canadian Transport Agency (n.d.a), **by law you can:**



- Request the handler of a service dog show you documentation to assure you that their dog is certified.
- Deny access to a dog that is not a proven certified service dog.

Some examples of documentation that meets ATPDR standards of a service dog are:

- An identification card or other document issued by an organization or person specializing in service dog training that identifies both the person with a disability and their service dog; and
- In the case of any service dog that is not a guide dog, an attestation by that organization or person specializing in service dog training that:
 - The service dog has been individually trained by that organization or person to perform a task or tasks to assist the person with a disability with a need related to their disability;
 - A clear description of the task(s) the dog has been individually trained to perform to assist the person with their disability-related need(s);
 - The credentials of the trainer(s), including any:
 - Qualifications
 - Certifications
 - Affiliations with professional service dog organizations such as the Canadian Association of Service Dog Trainers and the Canadian Association of Guide & Assistance Dog Schools; and
 - A clear description of the specific content of the training program(s) completed by the dog, including the duration of the program, the goals to be achieved by the dog, the involvement of the handler, the assessment methods used and the assessment results achieved by the dog and its handler.



A [vehicle for hire driver] unable to transport the person and the service dog can order another taxi from the company, requesting that a priority response be provided.

Don't do this...

Businesses that discriminate against qualified service dogs and their handlers can be fined. The following is adapted from the Government of Alberta (n.d.) :



By law (*Service Dog Act*), you must not:

- Discriminate against a person who is lawfully using a service dog. Doing so can result in a \$3,000 fine for this offence in Alberta. Common violations of this law that businesses are most often guilty of can be:
 - Asking the service dog handler for details about their disability or demanding any form of documentation from the handler to prove their disability status.
 - This is discrimination because it violates the person's human rights, their right to privacy of their medical information, and their minority rights as a person with a disability.
 - Demanding that the service dog demonstrate its skills.
 - Service Dog ID and documentation is the proof of the dog's skills as determined by professionals who the law states are qualified to certify service dogs. Individuals in the public do not determine if a service dog is legitimate or not.
 - Denying handlers and their service dogs access to any public service or location.
 - Restricting access of handlers and their service dogs to only stay within designated specific areas within public locations when the general public is not also restricted to those specific designated areas (i.e., only allowing outside seating

for service dogs when the general public is permitted both indoor and outdoor seating).

- Service dogs are by law allowed to go everywhere that any person of the general public is allowed to go. Exception to this rule: If there is an area that the general public is denied access to, such as food preparation areas, sterile hospital rooms, or restricted access areas, then access can also be denied to service dogs. In this case, it is not discrimination because access is denied to the general public, not just to the service dog or person with a disability.
- Refuse to return an identification card or certification documentation when requested. Refusal to do so can result in a \$300 fine in Alberta.
 - Even if you question if the documentation is legitimate, you must return the documentation.

Recommendations to Vehicle for Hire Providers Regarding Service Dogs



The ATPDR indicates that the person with a disability must have control of the dog with a leash, tether, or harness during travel. They must also be able to provide a declaration (at the time of booking) and an identification card (before departure) attesting that the service dog has been individually trained by an organization or person specializing in service dog training to perform a task to assist the person with a disability with a need related to their disability.

The ATPDR also recommends that

- “If a carrier requests information or documents from a person who wants to travel with a service dog, the carrier must offer to retain an electronic copy for at least three years. This avoids a person having to

provide the same information or documents each time they travel with the carrier” (Canadian Transport Agency, n.d.a).

- Canadian carriers must provide additional seating to persons with disabilities who require such seating without imposing any additional fares or any other charges for domestic travel (Canadian Transport Agency, n.d.b).

What does this mean for you?

Documentation can be requested to help ensure any possible risks to the health and safety of passengers, staff, and other service dogs are avoided. Businesses must work, communicate respectfully, and compromise with service dog handlers, finding reasonable solutions that do not discriminate against the person with a disability or their service dog. There are many ways to do this without negative impacts on the business.

The ATPDR recommends that businesses avoid expecting someone travelling with a legitimate service dog to prove, at every step, that their dog is a service dog. This is inefficient and can damage the business’s relationship with customers. Businesses should instead:

- Give clear confirmation to a person who has provided documentation proving their dog is a legitimate service dog and that their service dog has been approved for travel.
- Empower people with disabilities to navigate the process to book your services and provide the required documentation that their dog is a legitimate service dog as independently and accurately as possible, it is recommended that:
- Clearly communicate information about these services on apps, websites, and customer correspondence - preferably all three.
- Offer to retain the service dog documentation the traveller provides for up to 3 years.

In the same way that people with disabilities would not be charged additional fees for using a wheelchair, crutches, hearing aid, or having a support person, no additional charges should be applied to handlers with legitimate service dogs. The cost charged to the person with a legitimate service dog must be the same as the cost charged to the general public without a service dog.

Service Dogs: This, Not That

This	Not That
<p>Do...</p> <p>Request documentation to verify a dog is a service dog and offer to retain the information for at least 3 years so the person with a disability is not expected to go through this same verification at every step of transportation.</p>	<p>Do not...</p> <p>Ask the handler for details about their disability – this is privileged, private medical information and requesting people to disclose details about their disability is a violation of their human rights and could result in a lawsuit.</p> <p>Drive away or cancel a transportation request without providing reasonable efforts to expediently provide accessible transportation service to people with service animals.</p>
<p>Do...</p> <p>Interact directly with the handler. Ignore the service dog.</p>	<p>Do not...</p> <p>Pet the service dog. Speak to the service dog.</p> <p>NOTE: Though service dogs are highly trained and most likely will ignore others, any possible distraction from the dog performing their job could put their handler at risk of serious medical harm.</p>
<p>Do...</p> <p>Permit service dogs to travel with their handler upon verification that they are a service dog.</p> <p>Collaborate with a service dog handler to find a reasonable compromise if there are any additional concerns.</p>	<p>Do not...</p> <p>Reject service to a person with a service dog.</p> <p>Charge a fare for the service dog.</p> <p>Drive away or cancel a transportation request without providing reasonable efforts to expediently provide</p>

<p>For example, the Government of Alberta suggests, “persons with allergies are encouraged not to touch a service dog and the handler may use a small mat or bed that can be removed for cleaning.”</p>	<p>accessible transportation service to people with service animals.</p>
<p>Do...</p> <p>Ensure sufficient foot space to accommodate the dog to lie at the person’s feet when service is requested by a person with a service dog.</p> <p>Provide a replacement option available as immediately as possible if the vehicle for hire assigned does not have enough foot space.</p>	<p>Do not...</p> <p>Reject service to a person with a service dog.</p> <p>Cause a person with a service dog to experience a major delay if they have provided documentation, including communicating the size of their service dog when they booked service.</p> <p>Drive away or cancel a transportation request without providing reasonable efforts to expediently provide accessible transportation service to people with service animals.</p>
<p>Do...</p> <p>Develop a procedure to communicate with vehicle-for-hire teams a need for a driver without a dog allergy if a person with a service animal requires incidental transportation that is not booked online, through an app, or by phone call (i.e., hailing one of the taxis waiting for passengers at the end of a sporting event).</p>	<p>Do not...</p> <p>Reject service to a person with a service dog without providing reasonable efforts to immediately communicate with your vehicle-for-hire team requesting a driver without a dog allergy if you have a dog allergy.</p> <p>Drive away or cancel a transportation request without providing reasonable efforts to expediently provide accessible transportation service to people with service animals.</p>

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