

Course 2: Customer Service

Vehicle for Hire



Overview

Course Description

This course explores the customer service skills necessary for vehicle for hire drivers to deliver exemplary service. Learners will review the roles and responsibilities of drivers, strategies for providing quality customer service, and the importance of cultural awareness. The course covers best practices for effective and inclusive communication, ensuring safe and positive passenger experiences, and understanding and addressing bias and microaggressions. By the end of the course, drivers will be equipped to provide exceptional service, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all passengers.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Describe the roles and responsibilities of vehicle for hire drivers
- Identify key strategies for quality customer service
- Explain the importance of cultural awareness in vehicle for hire services
- Adapt communication best practices to strengthen inclusive communication

Module 1: Vehicle for Hire Roles and Responsibilities

Introduction

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

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of vehicle for hire drivers

Key Terminology

As you work through this module, you will encounter some important terminology. Let's take a moment to define these terms.

Vehicles for Hire (VFH)

Vehicles for Hire (VFH) include transportation services regulated by the City of Edmonton's *Vehicle for Hire Bylaw*. Included are

- Taxis
- Accessible taxis
- Private transportation providers (PTP) such as limousines or shuttles
- Transportation network companies (TNC) such as Uber or Lyft



Transportation Network Vehicle (TNV)

TNVs are any vehicle, except for taxis and accessible taxis, that can transport eight or fewer passengers for pre-arranged transportation services.

Passenger

Passengers include any customers who receive transportation services from a VFH. *Note:* “passenger” and “customer” will be used interchangeably during this course.

Fare

A fare is the fee customers pay to receive transportation from a VFH.

Street Hailing or Street Flagging

Street hailing or street failing is when a customer accesses a VFH without prior booking or payment. For example, the customer waves at a VFH from the sidewalk and the VFH safely pulls over to pick up the customer. *Note:* Street hailing or flagging is only permitted for taxis and accessible taxis.

Emotional Support Animal

“Emotional support [animals] provide comfort and companionship to the [animal] owner, but are not trained to do specific tasks that assist a disability” (Government of Alberta, n.d.).

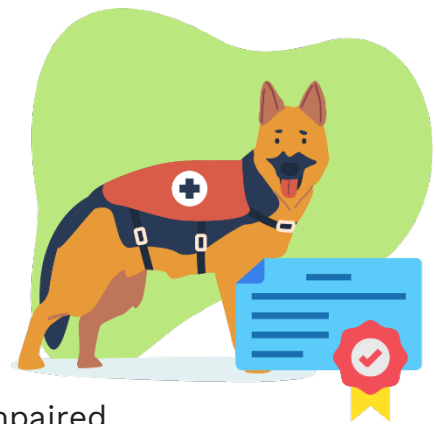
Emotional support animals are **not** service animals. They may support people with depression, anxiety, and specific phobias but do not have the training that service animals receive (ADA National Network, n.d.).

Service Dog

Service dogs are trained and certified to perform specific tasks to support individuals with disabilities or medical needs (ADA National Network, n.d.).

A few examples of service dog tasks include

- Guiding individuals who are blind or visually impaired
- Bringing an individual their medication



- Altering an individual to check their blood glucose level if they are diabetic

VFH Driver Responsibilities

As a VFH driver, you must know your key responsibilities.

Every VFH driver is required to:

- ✓ Drive **safely**, according to Alberta's *Traffic Safety Act*.
- ✓ Provide quality **customer service**.
- ✓ Provide **safe and accessible transportation for everyone** unless the passenger is a risk to the driver, driver's property, or vehicle or the passenger doesn't obey the VFH bylaw (i.e., a driver of a TNV cannot pick up a customer who is street-hailing).
- ✓ Charge **accurate fees** for their service, as per the *Vehicle for Hire Bylaw*.
- ✓ **Check their vehicles after trips** for any personal items left behind by passengers and ensure they are made available to the passengers who left them.
- ✓ Adhere to and have proof of all **licensing requirements** (i.e., correct driver's licenses, insurance). *Note:* These requirements will be covered in detail in Course 4 of this training.
- ✓ Have completed the mandatory **VFH Driver Training** and have their certificate of completion

Inclusive Transportation Services

With the support of every VFH driver, the City of Edmonton wants to provide inclusive and accessible driving services for all passengers.

Respecting Access Needs

Offering inclusive, accessible, and safe transportation services means that if someone has accessibility needs, those needs are respected.

For example, service dogs are considered medical support. Passengers with service dogs cannot be refused service simply because they have a dog.

Note: Sometimes, a driver cannot transport a service dog for safety reasons (i.e., they are allergic). In this case, the driver must request another priority ride for the passenger and their service dog. Details regarding this are covered in Course 1 of this training.



Refusing Service for Safety

Within Alberta's *Human Rights* legislation, VFH drivers cannot refuse service to a customer without reason. They cannot refuse to drive a passenger due to the following **protected grounds**: race, colour, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, gender or gender expression, sex, sexuality or sexual orientation, intellectual or physical disability, age, source of income, or marital or family status (Alberta Human Rights Commission, n.d.). Refusing services based on any of these protected grounds is considered discrimination.

As a safety priority for drivers, there are four circumstances when drivers **can refuse** to drive a customer:

1. If a passenger is a **danger to the driver's safety**.

If a passenger becomes a hazard to the driver's safety while the driver is already driving, the driver should alert their company for help and pull

over when it is safe to do so.

2. If a passenger has a proven (not assumed) risk of **causing property damage**.

Deciding if a passenger will cause property damage should be based on an observable fact, not an assumption. For example, if the driver witnesses the potential passenger kicking, screaming, or pushing others. Assuming that a passenger will cause property damage without fact is *discrimination*.

3. If a passenger **refuses to pay their fare**.

An example of this is if a passenger refuses to pay the fare of a TNV, such as an Uber or Lyft, by cancelling their trip as soon as they have been picked up. In this case, the driver may pull over when it is safe and refuse to transport the passenger.



4. If providing service to the passenger would **not adhere to the Vehicle for Hire Bylaw**.

For example, a TNV cannot pick up a street-hailing passenger.

Drivers must remain respectful and professional when refusing service. The driver should communicate the service refusal professionally and clearly state the reason.

Complaint Process

What happens when a customer submits a complaint about a VFH driver's services?

When complaints are filed to 311, the City of Edmonton will start an investigation. This will include the City's review of records, trips taken, and photo and video surveillance.

The time it takes to investigate an incident depends on the nature of the complaint.

Module 2: Positive Customer Service Experiences

Introduction

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

- Describe the importance of safe and positive customer experiences during vehicle for hire rides
- Identify critical principles of exceptional customer service

Key Terminology

As you work through this module, you will encounter some important terminology. Let's take a moment to define these terms.

Customer Service

Whether good or bad, customer service involves receiving help from a company or worker before, during, or after paying for services.



Consent

Consent means that agreement or permission has been confirmed before doing something. For example, a VFH driver should obtain consent before pulling over to drop a passenger off.

Importance of Positive Customer Service Experiences

According to Kaňovská (2010), “customer services [are everything] a company does for [the] satisfaction of its customers” (pp. 562).

When VFH drivers demonstrate strong customer service skills:

- **Passengers feel more comfortable** and, in turn, have a positive transportation experience.
- As a result, **drivers also feel more comfortable**, contributing to a more positive and safer work environment.

Besides rider and driver comfort, positive customer service experiences benefit drivers' and provider companies' earnings. When passengers have positive riding experiences, taxi and transportation companies receive more customers, which means more earning potential for drivers.

Providing Positive Customer Service Experiences

In the context of VFH transportation services, customer service experiences received by passengers should be:



Safe. Drivers must follow traffic safety regulations and be proactive and responsive regarding health and safety strategies.
Note: Course 3 of this training will cover details regarding this.



Accessible. Drivers must meet each passenger's needs by assisting them with their belongings and supports (i.e., wheelchair, crutches) or communicating with them in the manner they need.

Note: *Safe* and *accessible* also means that drivers ensure their vehicle is clean, has working heat and air-conditioning, has working seatbelts and windows, etc.



Inclusive. Drivers must create an inclusive space that accepts every customer regardless of identity, appearance, or ability.



Mutually respectful and professional. Through the practice of consent, both drivers and customers can achieve mutual respect.

Mutual Best Practices

Both drivers and passengers have rights and responsibilities regarding mutual respect and professionalism.

VFH Drivers		Passengers	
Right to...	Responsibility to...	Right to...	Responsibility to...
Ride Refusal, Ending a Ride			
End the ride or refuse service if a passenger is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causing physical harm to the driver and their property Using hateful or discriminatory language toward the driver 	Report the service refusal and document the ride details and reason(s) the passenger was refused service	End the ride if they are not being treated with respect Contact the VFH company's customer service or 311 about the incident	Pay the fee for the transportation that they have received
Inclusiveness, Accessibility			
Ask each passenger if they need any help or support accessing the vehicle	Offer inclusive and accessible transportation services	Choose to share their access or accessibility needs or not	Communicate if they are on their way to the vehicle, going to be a few minutes late, or cannot find

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drivers can say, “Hello, I’ve arrived. Do you have any belongings or anything else I can help you with today?” 			where the vehicle is located
Respect, Professionalism			
Keep personal boundaries by sharing only what they feel comfortable sharing	<p>Keep professional boundaries by not asking passengers personal questions</p> <p>Keep professional boundaries by only sharing appropriate information</p>	<p>Create and keep their boundaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This means only sharing what they feel comfortable sharing 	Be respectful and appropriate
Vehicle Operations, Safety			
Operate the air conditioning and heater of their vehicle	Only operate a well-maintained vehicle	Feel comfortable during their ride	Communicate their needs in a professional and respectful manner
Radio, Music, Podcasts			
Play their media (i.e., radio, music, podcasts)	Play only appropriate and respectful media at a reasonable volume	Request a lower volume for the media being played in the vehicle during their ride	Request that the volume of the media be lowered in a professional and respectful way

Critical Principles of Exceptional Customer Service

There are four fundamental principles to exceptional customer service. **Consistent professionalism, active listening, respectful communication,** and

proactive safety can help you strengthen your customer service skills to create a more welcoming, inclusive, and safe riding experience.

Consistent Professionalism

Professionalism starts with **acknowledging every passenger's needs**. For example, if you know that a passenger does not communicate vocally, ensure you work with them when they enter your vehicle according to their communication channels. This could include using their assistive device, phone, or other communication method.



Greet every passenger as they enter the vehicle.

- “Good morning/afternoon/evening, how are you?”
- “Is your name [insert name]?” *This way, the passenger knows they’re entering the correct vehicle.*

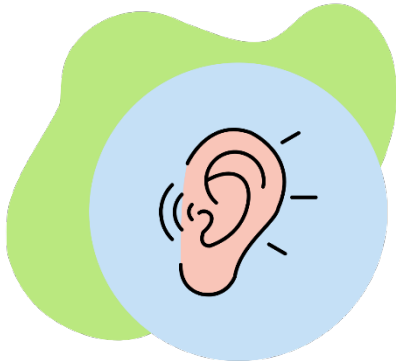
Thank every passenger as they leave.

- “Have a great day!”
- “Thank you for choosing our company for your trip.”

Respect and maintain professional boundaries. While some passengers like sharing about their personal lives, some do not want to share details about where they are going, who they are, or even their occupation. It is important to treat your vehicle as a workplace and maintain professionalism to respect any boundaries a passenger may have.

Keep a clean vehicle. Maintaining cleanliness in your vehicle should be a priority when offering transportation services. This is a health, safety, and service requirement.

Active Listening



While being professional is important, being open and approachable is equally crucial so that passengers feel comfortable and encouraged to communicate when they would like. Positive body language, like relaxed shoulders and a smile, makes you approachable.

Every customer is different and has different transportation experience expectations and behaviours. When passengers want to talk with you, active listening is essential.

Active listening requires that we listen to understand and not to respond. With this, empathising with a passenger's experiences – especially negative ones- is important. This shows you care. This can be done by using phrases such

- “Thank you for sharing. I’m sorry that happened to you.”
- “Thank you for sharing. That’s unfortunate that happened. “

Remember, vehicles for hire are workplaces. Every vehicle should be a no-judgment space. This means that a person's appearance or identity should not be commented on or questioned.

A positive experience can override a negative one.

“74% of customers say they will forgive a company for its mistake after receiving excellent service” (Kelwig, 2024).

Respectful Communication

Communication in customer service environments should be based on the customer's, or in VHF's case, the passenger's, ability to choose and how much they want to communicate. Even though passengers have this choice, they are also responsible for communicating with every driver with respect and dignity.

Allowing passengers to take the lead on communicating with you enables them to show you whether they want to chat or spend their ride doing something else.

If a passenger is quiet or is doing something else (e.g., checking emails on their phone or computer), how can we respect their boundaries while ensuring that we are offering a positive riding experience? The best way is to **ASK!**

For example:

- Would you mind if I opened the window?
- Is the heat or air conditioning okay?

Golden Rule Versus Platinum Rule

The commonly-stated *Golden Rule* says: Treat others as *you* would like to be treated.

However, we should treat customers how *they* feel most comfortable and respected. This is the *Platinum Rule*: Treat others as *they* want to be treated.

This can be achieved by being aware of how a passenger behaves. For example, if a passenger has earphones in, is talking or texting on their phone, or has closed their eyes, their behaviour and body language are mostly likely demonstrating that they are taking time to themselves during the ride. This passenger likely does not want to chat. Some passengers may exchange greetings at the beginning and end of their ride, but they may choose to have time to themselves during the ride, it's important to respect that choice.



Proactive Safety



Health and safety are to be prioritised as a customer service skill.

An example of being **proactive** is picking up and dropping of your passenger at a safe location. Your customer can assist you with this. Confirm where the customer is going and ask where they'd like to be dropped off.

An example of **prioritising health and safety** is ensure that your vehicle is clean and safe to operate. This could include have winter safety supplies, ensuring the air-conditioning and heater are working, only accepting phone calls hands-free.

It is also important for a driver to be adaptable. This may include a change in route, parking location when dropping off a passenger, etc.

With consistent professionalism, active listening, and respectful communication, delivering exceptional customer service for the overall satisfaction of every passenger is very achievable.

Module 3: Strengthening Cultural Awareness

Introduction

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

- Explain the importance of diversity, inclusion, and belonging in vehicle for hire services
- Describe psychological safety increases experiences of safety and inclusion for passengers and drivers
- Identify tools for safely recognising and responding to bias, microaggressions, and discrimination

Key Terminology

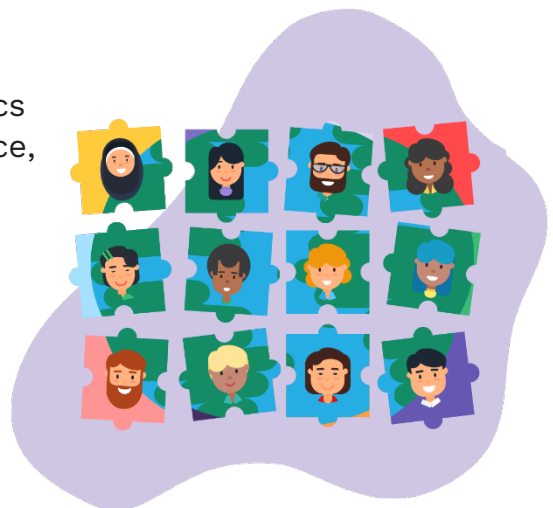
As you work through this module, you will encounter some important terminology. Let's take a moment to define these terms.

Diversity

Diversity includes the different characteristics that make up a person's identity, such as race, age, spirituality, sexual orientation, gender, disabilities, communication, and problem-solving approaches.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the experience of feeling valued and welcomed.



Bias

Bias is any prejudice toward a person based on their identity.

Bias can be either conscious (you are aware you have the bias) or unconscious (you are not aware that you have the bias).

- **Conscious Bias Example:** Knowing that you prefer to work with younger individuals rather than people who are elderly is an example of conscious bias. You know that you have that preference.
- **Unconscious Bias Example:** The tendency to prefer and gravitate towards people similar to you without realising it is an example of unconscious bias.



Stereotype

A stereotype is an unfair and usually untrue belief that is assumed about a person or group of people based on their identity. For example, the stereotype that “boys don’t cry.”

Discrimination

Discrimination involves any behaviour where a person or group is mistreated based on their identity (Canadian Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

Microaggression

A microaggression is an indirect, subtle, or unintentional statement, action, or incident of discrimination. For example, saying, “When I look at you, I don’t see colour” is a microaggression. Saying this denies the significance of that person’s racial experience.

BIPOC

BIPOC (pronounced “bye-pock”) is an acronym that stands for *Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour*.

2SLGBTQQIA+

2SLGBTQQIA+ (pronounced by saying each number and letter and then “plus” at the end) is an acronym that stands for *Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and any other sexual orientation and gender*.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

EDI stands for *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*.

EDI refers to the values, strategies, and goals that are important when creating fair, diverse, and inclusive environments.

How do we know if we are providing fair, diverse, inclusive, and accessible vehicle for hire services?

A person’s **sense of belonging** is one of the best ways to determine whether we have created an inclusive environment. To learn more about this, let’s examine each EDI component.

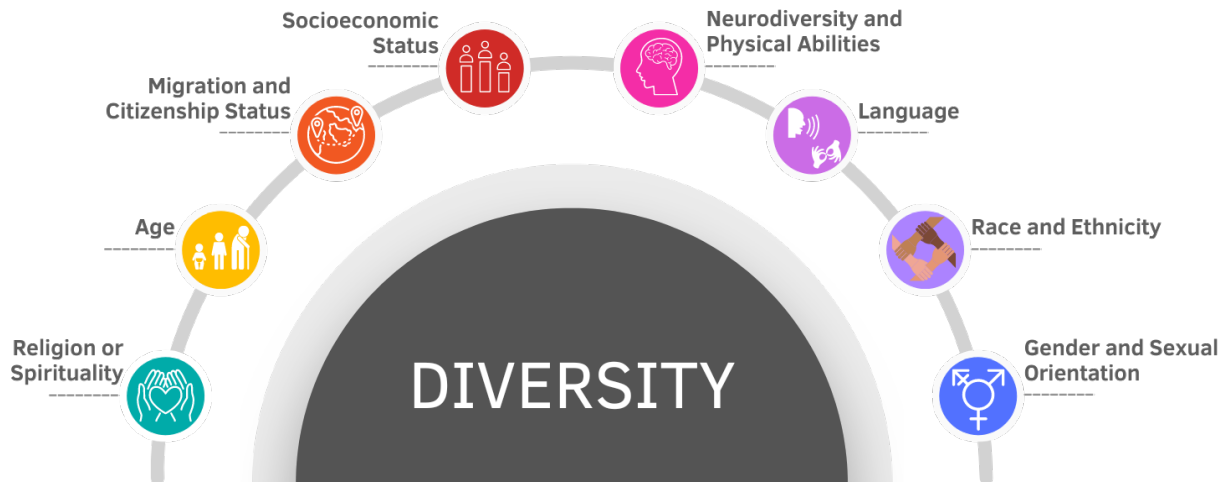
Note: We will explore them in a different order than that acronym states. We will look at *diversity* first, followed by *inclusion*, and then *equity*.

Diversity

If we think about our identity, some parts of it may explain how we see or describe ourselves. We may see ourselves based on race, ethnicity, country of birth, gender, etc.

Diversity includes the different characteristics that make up a person’s identity. Diversity is often defined by a person’s race, ethnicity, gender and gender expression, disability, sex and sexual orientation, religion or spirituality, age, marital and family status, or source of income. The Alberta and Canada

Human Rights Act protects these parts of our identity. This means that all of us—drivers and passengers—are protected from exclusion and discrimination based on any of these characteristics.



Diversity also includes our

- Unique perspectives and values
- Communication styles
- Problem-solving approaches
- Ways we see the world

Characteristics of diversity can **be visible**, such as race and age; **partially visible**, such as ethnicity or spirituality; or **invisible**, such as some disabilities, neurodiversity, and access to post-secondary education.

Privilege

Related to our identities is privilege. Privilege can be described as unearned advantages that individuals receive based on characteristics such as race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Privileges affect everyday situations and opportunities. Regarding VFH, for instance, people without disabilities typically don't worry about whether rideshare software is accessible.

We all have unearned privileges and disadvantages. As VFH drivers, it is important to practice awareness and allyship. How can you best meet your

passengers' needs and increase or improve access to the transportation services that you offer?

Inclusion

Inclusion is the different ways that individuals try to make others feel welcomed and valued. An inclusive vehicle for hire is one that tries to make each passenger feel valued and welcomed no matter who they are, their identity, or what they look like.

When people feel valued and welcome, they feel comfortable and safe to be themselves. When passengers feel safe and comfortable accessing your vehicle for hire services, their positive experiences represent the transportation services that you offer and can even reflect on the whole company.

Workers and companies that do not practice inclusion face consequences that cost money that can include a loss of customers and legal consequences for discriminating against someone's protected identity.

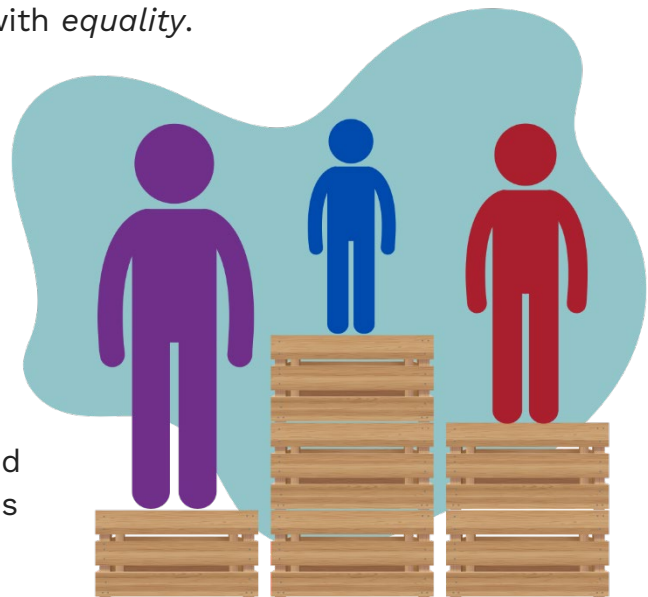
Equity

If we want to work towards belonging we must address equity.

It is important not to confuse *equity* with *equality*.

- **Equality** means treating everyone the same
- **Equity** involves creating conditions for everyone to achieve similar outcomes

Acknowledging individual differences and starting points is crucial for equity. Equality is supported by laws and gives everyone the same rights and opportunities. However, equity requires adapting support based on individual needs to ensure everyone can thrive. Equity creates fairness.



For example, a person who uses a wheelchair may require an accessible taxi. Accessible taxis often have more space inside. A person who is non-disabled does not require an accessible taxi and will likely end up riding in a taxi with less space inside.

- *Equality* here would mean that both individuals would ride in the same taxi size. In that case, either the needs of the person who uses a wheelchair would not be met in a smaller taxi, or the non-disabled individual would be riding in an unnecessarily large taxi.
- *Equity*, instead, creates a fair condition in which both individuals can access a taxi service and safely reach their destination.

Fairness can be achieved through mutual respect and understanding of diverse experiences. To treat everyone fairly, we need to treat each other equitably instead of equally.

Building Cultural Awareness

Building cultural awareness is an essential step in working towards creating welcoming and inclusive transportation services. The benefits of cultural awareness include that it

- Increases our awareness and understanding of other cultures
- Promotes effective communication and stronger customer service skills
- Demonstrates respect for cultures, worldviews, and ways of life that may be different from yours
- Prevents misunderstanding



Unlearning Unconscious Bias

Remember, a **bias** is any prejudice toward a person based on an aspect of their identity. A **stereotype** is an unfair and usually untrue belief that is assumed about a person or group of people based on their identity. Learning

about cultures different from ours is integral to unlearning biases and stereotypes.

We all have unconscious biases based on learned assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, or stereotypes. Remember, an **unconscious bias** is a bias you are unaware you have or act on, such as preferring people similar to you without realising it. Unconscious biases or "mental shortcuts" cause us to judge and misjudge people. They can, therefore, influence how we offer transportation services, treat people, and the quality of our customer service.

By being aware of our unconscious bias, we are better able to create positive customer service experiences regardless of who our customers are or our judgements and misjudgments about them.

Seeking to become aware of and understand other cultures while accepting that we will never be fully knowledgeable about them because we cannot experience them is a lifelong process. However, doing so is vital to help us become more aware of our biases.

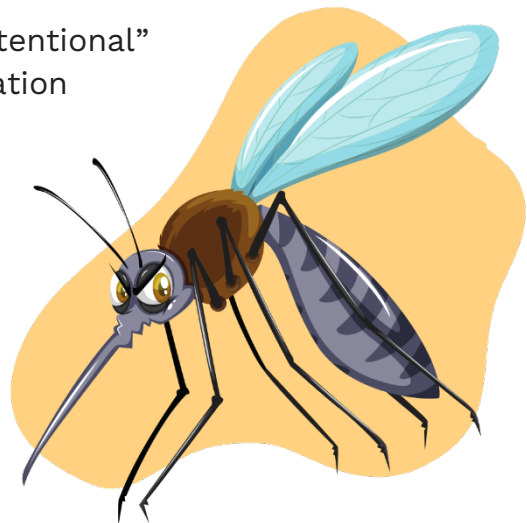
Microaggressions

Microaggressions are “indirect, subtle, or unintentional” statements, actions, or incidents of discrimination (Government of Canada, 2024) against disadvantaged identity groups based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.

Microaggressions are a form of discrimination. They can be **verbal**, such as a comment or question, or **nonverbal**, such as ignoring someone because of their visible identity.

Some examples of microaggressions include:

- Telling somebody, based on their visible identity, that they “Speak good English.” This implies that, based on the individual’s visual identity, it is surprising that they can speak English well.
- Saying the phrase, “That’s so gay!” as an exclamation when you see something abnormal. This implies that being gay is abnormal or wrong.



- Putting your wallet into a closed glove compartment when a person of a particular ethnicity enters your vehicle. This implies that people of that culture are untrustworthy.

There is nothing “micro” or little about microaggressions. The word doesn’t explain the harmful and lasting effects of these experiences of cultural, racial, spiritual, and other forms of exclusion (Tulshyan, 2022). Some people experience microaggressions more than others. Microaggression depends on people’s identity and often harms equity-deserving groups or minoritised identities, such as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, people who identify as 2SLGBTQQIA+, people with disabilities, etc. Depending on a person’s identity, some experience more microaggressions than others.

As a VFH driver, building cultural awareness can assist you in growing your self-awareness about microaggressions you may be using without knowing it.

Responding to Discrimination, Bias, and Microaggressions

As a driver, your safety is a priority. Some proactive ways to ensure your safety include:

- Installing an external dashcam
- Installing an internal dashcam
- Being aware of your company’s safety procedures during incidents of hate crimes, violence, and harassment by passengers
- Familiarising yourself with reporting procedures to Edmonton Police Services (EPS) so that you can use your video and audio surveillance as evidence
- Call 911 in an emergency
- Contact [EPS’ Hate Crime Unit](#) by calling 780 421 2217 or [reporting online](#) **only once you are safe after an incident**



- Familiarising yourself with [Alberta Human Rights reporting procedures](#) in the case that you experience a company-related violation to your identity

There are many safe ways that we can respond to bias and microaggressions. If you find that you are in an unsafe situation where someone is using derogatory slurs or making comments towards you, you should pull over when it is safe to do so.

Only if you feel comfortable and safe during a conversation, you can use the following strategies:

- **Clarify** by asking, “What do you mean by that?”
- **Rephrase** by saying, “It sounds like you said _____. Is that what you meant?”
- **Correct** by offering, “I’m not sure if you know, but what you said is harmful and untrue because...”

Recovering from Harm Caused

The following has been adopted from Harvard University (n.d.)

We all make mistakes. What can we do if we accidentally cause harm to someone else by using harmful or outdated terminology?

Use these steps to apologise effectively:

1. **Pause and Listen.** Actively listen to the person who is expressing how you caused harm to them.
2. **Acknowledge.** Take responsibility for the impact of the words or actions, and thank them for correcting you.
3. **Reflect.** Consider how your words or actions harmed the other person and how you can improve in the future.
4. **Repair Harm.** Learn from the mistake, so your words or actions will not harm others. Teach others.

Lifelong Journey Toward Cultural Humility

Your work on inclusion will not be accomplished by the end of this course. It is a lifelong process. Some ways to continue your cultural humility journey include:

1. **Practicing self-awareness.**

Reflect on how your unconscious bias affects your everyday attitudes and behaviours. Remember, just because you or people you know may have never experienced microaggressions or discrimination, this doesn't mean these experiences of exclusion aren't happening.



2. **Prioritising ongoing learning.**

Seek to learn about Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and experiences, such as residential schools and historical and continual impacts of settler colonisation in response to Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

Look to different sources of information, such as books, podcasts, music, movies, and shows. Learning from the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), 2SLGBTQQIA+, and persons with disabilities and complex needs will help you unlearn your biases and strengthen your understanding.

3. **Consistently challenging your stereotypes.**

Module 4: Communicating with Passengers

Introduction

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

- Explain how various factors can impact communication during vehicle for hire services
- Demonstrate inclusive communication practices

Key Terminology

As you work through this module, you will encounter the following important term.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology includes any technology used to help an individual with disabilities learn, communicate, or work (Assistive Technology Industry Association, n.d.). Some examples include software like text-to-speech, large-print material, crutches, a cane, etc.



Impacts on Communication

Culture can shape how we communicate. Some cultures and individuals favour more direct communication, while others favour more indirect communication.

- **Direct Communication:** "Alex, we received a complaint from a customer about your service yesterday. We need to discuss what happened and how to avoid this in the future."

- **Indirect Communication:** "Alex, I heard there was an issue with a customer yesterday. Is there anything we can do to improve our service and ensure customers are satisfied?"

Sometimes, communication style depends on who we speak to and our relationship with them. For example, how we communicate with our colleagues is likely different from how we communicate with our friends or elders.

In the case of VFH, the workplace is the vehicle, and communication with our customers—our passengers—can and should be different from how we communicate with others.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication – speaking - is the **most often used** communication between passengers and drivers.

Effective verbal communication requires a combination of clear expression, active listening, and respectful interaction.

- **Clarity and Conciseness:** Use clear and straightforward language. Avoid jargon or overly complex sentences.
- **Active Listening:** Focus on the speaker, avoid interrupting, and provide feedback to show understanding.
- **Tone and Volume:** Ensure your tone matches the message and speak at an appropriate volume.
- **Empathy and Respect:** Show understanding and respect for the other person's perspective.
- **Feedback and Questions:** Ask questions for clarification and provide constructive feedback.



Your first communication, often verbal, with your passenger, may be the most important. Sometimes, TNV passengers are unsure if they are entering the right vehicle. If you are a TNV driver, one way you can assist the passenger is by saying

“Hi, my name is _____. Is your name _____?”

Even though verbal communication is the most often used communication between passengers and drivers, there will be cases where your passenger may not be able to communicate in the same way that you verbally communicate. While you may have already experienced this, some examples include:

- Passengers who are non-verbal or non-vocal and only communicate using sign language or assistive technology
- Passengers who speak English as a second or multiple language
- Passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing

Written Communication

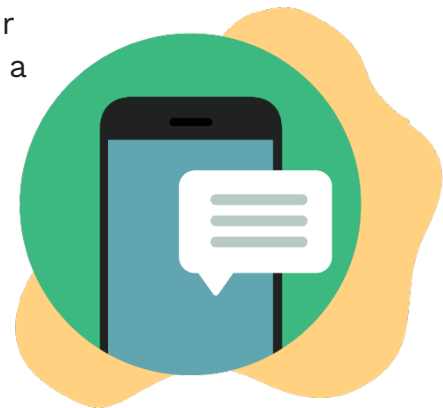
Written communication also takes place between passengers and drivers. Written communication usually happens in the following cases

- When the driver has arrived and sends a message to the passenger to let them know
- Emergencies where a passenger has left their belonging behind, and the driver sends them a message

In these cases, it is best to communicate safely (when you are pulled over) and professionally.

There are also other circumstances when passengers may want to communicate in writing. In fact, three examples are listed within the “Verbal Communication” section above!

- Passengers who are non-verbal or non-vocal and only communicate using sign language or assistive technology. Sometimes, the assistive technology used will involve written communication.
- Passengers who speak English as a second or multiple language. Sometimes, in this case, the passenger will prefer to communicate in writing.
- Passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Sometimes, these passengers will prefer to use written assistive technology.



Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication includes any method of communication without spoken or written words, such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, or body language.

Nonverbal communication is often more observable when passengers are in your vehicle, such as a nod to indicate understanding or a frown to indicate unhappiness. However, it also occurs before a passenger enters your vehicle.

A few examples of nonverbal communication before passengers enter your vehicle include:

- A passenger waving or street-hailing to secure a ride from a taxi or accessible taxi.
- A passenger or passengers pointing towards a handle signalling they cannot open the car door.



Communication Best Practices

- **Have an open mind and be friendly and empathetic.**
- **Be aware and respectful of the passenger's time.**
Sometimes, passengers appreciate talking during the ride, but they may also want to leave when their ride is complete and they arrive at their destination.
- **Make consent a regular practice.**
Ask before doing. For example, ask a passenger before changing the temperature in the vehicle or rolling down a window, and always ask a passenger before touching an assistive device (i.e., a cane or wheelchair).
- **Use the passenger's self-defined gender pronouns.**
It is okay if you accidentally use a wrong gender pronoun (i.e., "he" instead of "them") and a passenger corrects you. Simply apologise and carry on your conversation using the correct pronoun.

- **Mirror your passenger's communication.**

As you know, every passenger is different. Some love to chat, while others use their earphones or take a phone call. Some passengers start a short conversation and then go back to their phone or the book they're reading.

Mirroring or following the direction of the passenger you are driving will help you communicate with them in a way that is appreciated and respectful.

- **You don't have to make eye contact! Safe driving comes first!**

Intent is what we mean to do, while **impact** refers to the actual outcome.

While the impact of our actions speaks louder than our intentions, sometimes – even with good intentions – we still make mistakes and cause negative consequences. In these cases, we apologise, reflect, and learn.

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