



DIMENSIONS IN DIVERSITY

CUSTOMER SERVICE

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE HELPS THE COLLEGE FULFILL ITS MISSION. SCC IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING "... COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES, ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS, AND STUDENT-CENTERED PROCESSES."

One in Five Americans has a Disability

According to recent census data¹, there are approximately 57 million Americans with mobility, sensory, neurological, intellectual, and other types of disabilities.

This diverse group represents a growing market for higher education and businesses. Individuals with disabilities are a valuable source of talent and support for employers, public programs and activities.

Spending Power of Individuals with Disabilities

The annual spending power of Americans with disabilities is currently about \$220 billion.² Wounded veterans, an aging baby boomer generation and other factors continue to swell the population of those with disabilities. These individuals, as well as their family members, friends and associates, are people you want to include in your business or organization as customers, participants, volunteers, and support.³

Consumer Expectations

Consumer expectations are rising and not just the expectations of consumers without disabilities; the expectations of consumers with disabilities also are increasing. The ADA requires us to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access and use the programs and services that SCC offers whether onsite or online.

If our services and programs are easy for individuals with disabilities to locate and use, these same services and programs will be more user-friendly and accessible for **everyone**.

The basic ADA requirements for customer service are:

1. Remove barriers
2. Provide auxiliary aids and services for effective communication
3. Reasonably modify policies, practices, or procedures
4. Ensure there are no unnecessary eligibility criteria

Why Good Customer Service Matters

Providing effective customer service helps the College fulfill its mission.

SCC is committed to providing "... Comprehensive student support services, enrichment programs, and student-centered processes."

It is important to learn how to, and practice, making the services offered accessible and to advertise that they are, including relevant details. Otherwise students with disabilities will find a school that does meet their needs.

Good Customer Service

Try to ensure that disabled customers can access services and programs that are offered in the same way or as close as possible to the same way as customers without a disability. Think flexibly and creatively about the way you serve disabled customers in order to meet their needs.



Can customers with disabilities access your services in the same or similar way as non-disabled customers?

If not, what are reasonable alternatives or methods?

When it isn't possible to provide a customer with exactly the same service, be prepared to offer the customer a reasonable alternative. This may mean providing the service by a different method.

Don't Make Assumptions

All of us want to be treated as independent people. Don't assume a person with a disability needs help. If the setting is accessible, people with disabilities can usually get around independently. People with disabilities will often ask if they need help, but offer assistance if a person appears to need it. If help is requested or accepted, ask what to do or how to do it before you act.

THE ONE UNIVERSAL RULE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Never assume you know what assistance, if any, a person with disability requires.

Ask if and what assistance they need.

When a person with a disability asks for an accommodation, it is not a complaint; it shows that the person is comfortable enough in your establishment to ask for what he or she needs.

Top Quick Tips for Excellent Customer Service

- Treat everyone as a valued customer; treat a person with a disability in the same manner and with the same respect as you would anyone else.⁴
- When offering assistance, wait for the individual to respond; listen, ask for instructions, and respect the individual's wishes. If your offer of help is declined, do not insist.
- Familiarize yourself with the accessibility features at your place of business (e.g., is there a ramped or level entrance?). You will help employees answer questions and provide accurate information.⁵
- Make sure there is a clear path of travel. Customers using mobility devices or service animals and individuals with strollers or who are carrying small children all benefit from a clear path of travel.
- Clear, easy-to-read signs benefit every customer.



KEEP PAYMENTS SIMPLE					
College bookstores, the cafeteria and the financial aid office are among the places on a college campus that engage in financial transactions. Good customer service tips include:					
CLEARLY STATE HOW MUCH ITEMS COST AND THE TOTAL DUE	ASK HOW THE CUSTOMER PREFERS TO PAY	IF A CUSTOMER PAYS IN CASH, COUNT CHANGE OUT LOUD, COIN-BY-COIN, AS IT IS PLACED IN THE CUSTOMER'S HAND	IF NEEDED BY VISUALLY IMPAIRED CUSTOMERS, ALLOW THEM TO PICK UP A CARD MACHINE SO THEY CAN HOLD THE MACHINE NEARER TO THEIR FACE TO ENTER THEIR PIN	OFFER PAYMENT BY CHIP AND SIGNATURE. SOME CUSTOMERS MAY HAVE A SIGNATURE STAMP	TELL CUSTOMERS IF YOU OFFER CONTACTLESS PAYMENT OR AN ONLINE PURCHASE SITE

Effective Communications

Do not make assumptions about the existence or absence of a disability; many people have disabilities that are not visible or immediately apparent.

Be patient and give your full attention to each customer. Every customer deserves your full attention; individuals who may have difficulty communicating or in expressing themselves especially benefit.

Treat individuals with disabilities as you would anyone else; treat adults as adults, not children. A disability does not negate the need for common social courtesies such as a handshake when speaking with a customer.

Use a normal tone of voice and speak directly to individuals with disabilities; don't avoid eye contact or speak only to their companions. In fact, an individual with a disability may not introduce a personal assistant or other human aid. Take your lead from the person using the services of a human aid.

If you don't understand someone, don't pretend you do; ask questions that will help you understand. In addition, do not be embarrassed about using common expressions that could relate to someone's impairment, e.g. "See you later" or "I'll be running along."

If your organization has other communication aids on hand (large-print materials, assistive listening devices, etc.) familiarize yourself with what these resources are and where these aids are kept.



LEANING ON A WHEELCHAIR IS THE EQUIVALENT OF LEANING OR HANGING ONTO A PERSON. A WHEELCHAIR IS A USER'S PERSONAL SPACE.

Wheelchair Users and Persons of Short Stature

If you are talking for more than a few moments to a person of short stature or someone using a wheelchair or scooter, move to the front of high counters. Position yourself so you are at the same level to avoid stiff necks; sit down if possible or place yourself at their eye level to make the conversation easier. It can be tiring for a wheelchair user to have to stare up at the person they are talking to, especially if the conversation becomes lengthy.⁶

Familiarize yourself with the challenges of navigating a wheelchair in public when accompanying a person who uses a wheelchair. For example, locate accessibility ramps. Accessibility ramps are usually located to the sides of doors or near restrooms, stairs and elevators. However, do not assume ramps solve everything.

The ramp may be too steep or too slippery.

Unless you know it is easy to move around your building in a wheelchair, offer to help. Heavy doors or deep-pile carpets are just two of the hazards to watch for. If the path of travel contains multiple obstacles, ask, "What's the easiest way for you to do this?" Listen to and follow his or her instructions carefully. However, do not be offended if your offer of help is refused. Many wheelchair users prefer to travel independently whenever possible.⁷

Customers who Use Canes, Walkers, or Crutches

Basic safety considerations for all customers include keeping aisles and floor space free from obstacles in order to aid navigation, but this is especially important for people who use wheelchairs or scooters and people who have difficulty walking. (This also is helpful to customers with small children, especially if using a stroller.)

Keep in mind that people who use walking aids may find it hard to use their hands when standing up, such as to count out money. Offer them a place to sit or ask if there is something you can do to assist. Also, offer to open doors if needed to assist them in leaving.

If a customer has difficulty walking, be prepared to offer a more personalized service. Find a place for the customer to sit down and bring goods directly to them.

A MOBILITY DEVICE SUCH AS A CANE WALKER OR OTHER DEVICE IS PART OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONAL SPACE. DO NOT LEAN ON OR MOVE SOMEONE'S CRUTCHES, WALKER, OR OTHER DEVICE WITHOUT PERMISSION!

Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

There are different types of deafness, as well as different degrees of deafness. Thus, there also are different ways for those who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate.

In most instances, you won't immediately be aware that someone is deaf or hard of hearing. It may only become evident when they fail to hear you when you speak to them or when they speak to you. Some deaf people use sign language and may have an interpreter with them, but many will rely on lip reading and hearing aids.

IF THE PERSON IS USING A SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER, SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE CUSTOMER, NOT TO THE INTERPRETER.

Tips for More Effective Communication

These common courtesies are good manners toward all customers but are essential for interacting with a customer who is deaf or hard of hearing.⁸

- Make sure your customer is looking at you before you begin to speak. If necessary, attract the customer's attention with a light touch on the shoulder, which is a good place to touch someone you don't know well; use a couple of short taps.⁹
- Always ask the person what is the best way to communicate with them.
- Always ask how you can best help; do not guess.
- Write it down. If the customer can't hear what you say, write it down.
- Minimize background noise (e.g., piped-in music, televisions, etc.) which can make it more difficult for hearing aid users to hear or understand. Move to a quieter location if necessary.
- Hand and facial gestures can be used to help convey meaning, but don't over-exaggerate them. Keep your hands away from your mouth so as to not obscure what you are saying.
- Give the person a cue when changing subjects; give keywords for a new topic.
- Use shorter sentences; be willing to reword or restate phrases if needed.
- If either party doesn't understand, don't be afraid to repeat. Verify information.
- When the conversation ends, offer to summarize but don't insist if the individual indicates it is unnecessary.

CUSTOMERS WHO LIP-READ:

- Stay in their field of vision. When communicating with a deaf person, try to keep your eyes at the same level as their eyes. Sit down if they are sitting, or stand up if they are standing.
- Stand a little further away than the normal speaking distance of 3-6 feet. This helps to make sure the person sees any gestures you make.
- If indoors, make sure there's enough light for the D/HOH person to see clearly the person they are communicating with.
- If outside, remove sunglasses. Position yourself so there isn't a shadow cast in the speaker's face and the sun doesn't glare in the listener's eyes.
- Remove gum, cigarettes, food, or other objects from your mouth. Speechreading is easier if the speaker's mouth area is free of objects.
- It is important to maintain eye contact. Your eyes and facial expression help to communicate the tone and demeanor of a conversation. Avoid turning your head away while speaking.
- Try to make sure the D/HOH person is maintaining eye contact. For example, if demonstrating how to use an item and the person is looking at the item, wait for them to be done looking at it before you continue the conversation.
- Speak in a normal voice and tone. Don't shout.
- Whispering or shouting can distort your lip movements, making it difficult for a deaf person to follow your words. Similarly, exaggerated mouth movements make a speaker harder to understand.
 - Increase the volume of your voice or speak a bit slower only if the person asks you to do so.

Customers who are Visually Impaired or Blind

The most important thing to remember is that individuals with visual impairments simply do things differently than those who have sight. Blindness or a vision impairment does not mean that the person cannot do anything, nor does it mean that they have lower-than-average-common sense or intelligence. It is only a physical challenge. Few individuals are totally blind; most have some sight, although it may be blurred, distorted or limited.

WRITTEN OR PRINT MATERIALS

if you provide written materials for customers, it may be necessary to supply these materials in a suitable alternative format such as electronic large print, audio or braille, for customers with visual impairments.

- Always speak to a blind customer when you approach them. Say clearly who you are (but don't shout) and ask how you can help. (e.g., "How may I help you?" "Do you need some assistance?")
 - If the customer accepts your offer of help, ask what they would like you to do.
 - If they say they'd like assistance, do only what is asked, and no more.
 - If the answer is "No," do *not* insist.

IF THE PERSON ASKS FOR HELP GOING SOMEWHERE

Begin by asking, "May I offer you an arm?" and then guide them. (Offer your arm by touching their hand to the back of your arm, just above the elbow. This is a comfortable place for the person to hold your arm as you walk.)

- When you start to move, walk a half step ahead and at a moderate/slow pace.
- When you're guiding someone, walk a bit slower than you normally walk. Walking too fast could cause the person to trip.
- As you walk together, mention any obstacles or stairs and whether the stairs are going up or down.
 - Try to keep aisles free from obstacles and ensure furniture does not restrict access for people with mobility impairments or sight problems.

SERVICE ANIMALS

Individuals who are visually impaired are not the only individuals who use service animals.

Service animals are used by people with a variety of types of disabilities, including visible (blindness, mobility) disabilities or invisible (epilepsy or PTSD) disabilities.

You must allow service animals on the premises even if you have a "no animals" policy.

Service animals are working animals and you should not pet, feed, or distract them.

If you can't tell whether an animal is a service animal, you may ask only two questions:

- ***IS THE ANIMAL A SERVICE ANIMAL NEEDED BECAUSE OF A DISABILITY, AND;***
- ***WHAT WORK OR TASK HAS THE ANIMAL BEEN TRAINED TO PERFORM?***

CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE SERVICE ANIMALS OR WHO USE A WHITE CANE

Individuals who use service animals (or canes) perceive them as extensions of their bodies. Never distract guide dogs from their job or touch, move or grab a cane without the owner's permission.

Service dogs are not super animals. They can be distracted by cooing, talking, whistling, offering food and by other animals. It is the dog's responsibility to ensure the next step a visually impaired person takes is safe, and they cannot do this if they are distracted or bothered.

If escorting a person who uses a guide dog (or cane), walk on the opposite side.

Customers with Facial Disfigurements

Some people are born with a disfigurement, and others acquire it through accident or illness.

Social attitudes can be the major reason living with a disfigurement can be a major challenge for a person and their family. Though it may be challenging to do so, make contact as you would with any other customer. Focus on the individual person and what they are saying. You will find that you soon overcome any feelings of awkwardness or discomfort.

- Remember that a person's "looks" may be different, but that doesn't mean they are different in any way.
- Concentrate on what they are saying and respond accordingly.
- Don't be put off by someone's different appearance.
- Don't turn away in the hope that someone else will help the customer.
- Be careful not to stare.
- If you feel uncomfortable, try not to let this make your customer feel uncomfortable, too.

Customers who have a Speech Impairment

Patience is the key to communicating with anyone, adult or child, who has a speech impairment. Always let a person finish their sentences. Not only is it rude to cut someone off, but it is discouraging as well.

Ask the person to repeat if necessary. Don't raise your voice or shout.

Be honest if you don't understand, but also be polite in your honesty. If they have particular difficulty communicating, you can ask questions that require a gesture, such as a nod, or a short answer rather than long ones that may be difficult to articulate.

If all else fails, pen and paper may be helpful. Some people with speech impairments opt for American Sign Language or other alternative means of communication.

Remember above all that the customer may already feel frustrated and ashamed as they try to communicate and reflect that understanding in your behavior.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Always ensure people can complete their business without feeling humiliated or as though they are a failure.

¹US Census Bureau Public Information Office. (2016, May 19). Nearly 1 in 5 People Have a Disability in the U.S., Census Bureau Reports. Retrieved Dec. 8, 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html>

²Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. (2010, September). Opportunities for Community Development Finance in the ... Retrieved Dec. 11, 2017, from <https://binged.it/2nMtuGK>

³Mid-Atlantic ADA Center, & ADA National Network. (2017, December). ADA Quick Tips - Customer Service for Front Line Staff. Retrieved Dec. 8, 2017, from <http://adata.org/factsheet/quicktips-customer-service>

⁴Association of Convenience Stores, & Business Disability Forum. (2015, May). ACS Best Practices for Welcoming Disabled Customers. Retrieved Dec. 11, 2017, from https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Images/Business-Advice-Hub/acs_disability_guide.pdf

⁵ADA Standard. (2017, Feb. 14). 10 Tips for customer service and front line staff in line with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Retrieved Jan. 11, 2018, from <http://adastandard.com/10-tips-for-customer-service-and-front-line-staff-in-line-with-the-americans-with-disabilities-act/>

⁶Sowder Group, LLC, & Mobility-Advisor.com. (n.d.). Wheelchair Etiquette - What You Should Know. Retrieved Dec. 13, 2017, from <https://www.mobility-advisor.com/wheelchair-etiquette.html>

⁷Casey, J. B., & W. (n.d.). How to Interact with a Person Who Uses a Wheelchair. Retrieved Dec. 13, 2017, from <https://www.wikihow.com/Interact-with-a-Person-Who-Uses-a-Wheelchair>.

⁸Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. (2005, March 23). Effective Communication with Deaf People. Retrieved Jan. 5, 2018, from <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/mcdhh/programs/communicating-w-deaf-hh/effective-communication-with-deaf-people.html>

⁹Segno Communication cc. (n.d.). Do's & Don'ts - Getting Attention in die Deaf Community. Retrieved Jan. 5, 2018, from <http://www.signgenius.com/info-do%27s&don%27ts.shtml>

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Declaración de política sobre equidad/antidiscriminación - La política pública de Southeast Community College es de proveer equidad, y prohíbe discriminación, en todos asuntos referentes a la admisión, participación, y empleo contra toda persona por motivo de raza, color, religión, sexo, edad, estado civil, origen nacional, ascendencia, condición de veterano, orientación sexual, incapacidad, u otros factores prohibidos por ley o política del Colegio. Preguntas relacionadas a la política sobre equidad/antidiscriminación de Southeast Community College deben dirigirse a: Vice President for Access/Equity/Diversity, SCC Area Office, 301 S 68th Street Place, Lincoln, NE 68510, 402-323-3412, FAX 402-323-3420, o jsoto@southeast.edu.

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