

**Ottawa Chamber Orchestra
Tip Sheet for Serving Persons with Respect
2014-2015**

People with physical disabilities

If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level.

Don't touch items or equipment, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission.

If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, don't leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors.

People with vision loss

When you know someone has vision loss, don't assume the individual can't see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight.

Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the customer.

Ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (for example, a menu or schedule of fees).

When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive

Offer your elbow to guide them if needed.

People who have hearing loss

Once a customer has identified themselves as having hearing loss, make sure you are in a well-lit area where they can see your face and read your lips.

As needed, attract the customer's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.

If your customer uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move to a quieter area.

If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (for example, using a pen and paper).

People who are deafblind

A customer who is deafblind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note.

Speak directly to your customer, not to the intervener.

People with speech or language impairments

Don't assume that a person with speech impairment also has another disability.

Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or a "no".

Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish your customer's sentences.

People who have learning disabilities

Be patient – people with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond.

Try to provide information in a way that takes into account the customer's disability. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math.

People who have intellectual / developmental disabilities

Don't make assumptions about what a person can do.

Use plain language.

Provide one piece of information at a time.

People who have mental health disabilities

If you sense or know that a customer has a mental health disability, treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.

Be confident, calm and reassuring.

If a customer appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help.

People a guide dog or other service animal

Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal.

Avoid touching or addressing them.

If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.

(Policy 1) It is OCO policy that unless an environment strictly prohibits the entry of service animals (which is rare) that service animals are to be admitted and seated with their owners. Service animals in training are also welcome at OCO events.

Serving a person accompanied by a support person

If you're not sure which person is the customer, take your lead from the person using or requesting your goods or services, or simply ask.

Speak directly to your customer, not to their support person.

(Policy 2) It is OCO policy that support persons do not require a ticket for OCO concerts and are to be treated with the same courtesy as ticketed customers. Please ensure that for OCO events, the patron is seated with their support person.

People with Assistive Devices

Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.

Don't move assistive devices or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your customer's reach.

Let your customers know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, etc.).

If your organization offers any equipment or devices for customers with disabilities, make sure you know how to use them. It could be helpful to have instruction manuals handy or an instruction sheet posted where the device is located or stored.

(Policy 3) For OCO events please ensure that patrons are seated in a location where they can be in close proximity to their assistive devices. If the device (e.g. canes or walkers) is liable to interfere with the flow of traffic, you may ask the patron if you can remove the device to a safer location for the duration of the event. If you do this you must ensure, as a priority, that you return the assistive device immediately upon intermission and at the end of the event (and in the case of any emergency).

Some examples of assistive devices that your organization might offer include:

Lift, which raises or lowers people who use mobility devices

Accessible interactive kiosk, which might offer information or services in Braille or through audio headsets, Wheelchairs

(Policy 4) For patrons in wheelchairs, please ensure that the patron is seated in a location appropriate for wheelchairs – these locations may have been identified in advance of the event by the event co-ordinator. The goal of such identified seating is to ensure that the patron is seated in a location that will enhance their enjoyment of the event and also to ensure that the location of the wheelchair does not block the flow of traffic for safety reasons.

Serving Trans persons with Respect

In our role as service providers we need to understand how best to treat Trans people. If you are unsure if a person is a male or female don't panic. We are not here to "out" or judge a Trans person. Avoid doing things to call attention to a Trans person. Being Trans is one part of that person's human persona. Make them feel comfortable.

Best to use gender neutral language like, "welcome", "thank you for supporting us", "enjoy the concert".

If you are unsure of which pronoun to use, and you really need to know, ask respectfully. For example, "I need your help, how would you like to be addressed?" Most Trans people won't be offended and see this as a sign of respect.

Use common sense and respect and you will be fine.