



Age-Friendly Business Toolkit



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Canada 

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Purpose of the Toolkit & Introduction

This document describes the Age-Friendly Business Accreditation Pilot Program, an initiative of the Nanaimo Seniors Connect project, funded in part by a contribution from the Government of Canada New Horizons Pan Pacific program to reduce seniors' social isolation at the population level. It includes tools and materials developed to support the program. The toolkit can be useful to organizations that wish implement an age-friendly business program in their community.

Background

To create a community milieu that would facilitate seniors' social inclusion, the work of Nanaimo Seniors Connect was framed by the concept of "age-friendly". Age-Friendly is a term coined by the World Health Organization in 2006 to denote structures and services adapted to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs and capacities.

The Age-Friendly Business (AFB) Accreditation Pilot Program was developed as one strategy for creating an age-friendly community where businesses provide friendly and quality services and facilities to seniors by understanding their needs and preferences.

Program Description

The goal of the pilot program was to develop and test the implementation of the Age-Friendly Business (AFB) Accreditation Program with 12 diverse businesses, and to assess its' feasibility and sustainability as a community wide program.

The Process

Interested store-front businesses are given the AFB Accreditation Program brochure (Appendix F) that explains the advantages of being age-friendly and the criteria for accreditation; a document, Information About Making Your Business Age-Friendly (Appendix G) that provides information and ideas for improving age-friendliness; and an AFB Accreditation Assessment form (Appendix B), with which to assess their business.

To become accredited as age-friendly a business needs to score 80% or more on the AFB Accreditation Assessment form. Completed forms are submitted to the accreditation team. The final step is a representative visits the business to verify the self-assessment.

Accredited businesses receive the following:

- Certificate for display
- Window decal
- Marketing to seniors so the decal is recognized
- Use of Age Friendly Business logo
- The business is listed on the City of Nanaimo Age Friendly webpage

Program Development

Existing age-friendly business programs were reviewed. Information was gathered from the public about what factors, in their views, made a business senior age-friendly. Similarly, two focus groups were held with seniors. The process described here, and tools developed, build upon what we learned.

Pre-Launch

To test the program and materials four diverse businesses were recruited, using the AFB Pilot Recruitment and Instructions document (Appendix D). One incentive to participate was that their businesses would be actively marketed during Seniors month. (See AFB Marketing Plan for Pilots (Appendix E).

Each business went through the accreditation process and critiqued the AFB Accreditation Program Brochure and the Information About Making Your Business Age-Friendly document. A focus group was then held with participants who critiqued the process and materials.

- The accreditation process as described was straightforward in practice.
- Suggestions were made that self-assessment might not be as rigorous as an external assessment, undermining credibility of being accredited.
- The accreditation assessment form was described as clear, pertinent and not unduly time-consuming to complete.
- Several suggestions were made about language, which was changed.
- Information About Making Your Business Age-Friendly document was found useful.

Pilot Program Implementation - Recruitment of Businesses

Twelve businesses participated in the AFB Accreditation Pilot Program, recruited through the following:

- Presentations about the AFB Accreditation Program were made to the Nanaimo Seniors Services Network (NSSN).
- Information about the program was disseminated through publications including Seniors Connection and through the Nanaimo Magazine, both free publications, widely distributed.
- Information was distributed to businesses and the public visiting the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce Expo, the Nanaimo Seniors Services Network Fair, and other community events (Appendix E).
- At the Nanaimo Seniors Expo seniors were asked to identify businesses that they felt were senior friendly. A team member made direct contact with these businesses and told them about the AFB Accreditation Program.

Promotion of Accredited Businesses

All participating businesses achieved scores of 80% or more on the AFB Accreditation Assessment form.

The businesses were then promoted through free spots on radio and television, in print media and through presentations to seniors' organizations.

Issues and Challenges

Recruitment was challenging and time-consuming. Large organizations were unable to make decisions about participating. We addressed this by creating a generic letter to management that could be used (Appendix D).

An important incentive for becoming accredited was that successful businesses would be listed on the City of Nanaimo Age Friendly website. Unfortunately, this was (and is) delayed as Nanaimo has not yet completed the Age-Friendly City application and staff changes.

Home-based businesses were interested in participating but did not meet the criteria of being “store front”.

Without a critical mass of accredited businesses, it was difficult to promote the AFB brand and recognition to seniors so they could patronize accredited businesses – not enough choice in variety or location.

We didn’t have a practical way of determining if accredited businesses had increased numbers of senior shoppers/clients. This meant we couldn’t build on the success of accredited businesses to recruit more businesses.

Feasibility as Community-Wide Program

With sufficient resources, the AFB Accreditation Program could be scaled up. Following are some suggestions:

- Only launch the program once the concept of Age Friendly has been effectively marketed—this is a large and expensive endeavor that should be spearheaded by the municipality as part of becoming an Age Friendly community.
- To implement the AFB program community wide strong connections first need to be made with existing business groups/networks who could promote the concept to their members. These groups could be useful in developing methods to assess the success of accreditation in increasing business.
- There needs to be sufficient manpower for recruitment-cold calls, fielding questions, follow up, and sufficient budget for promotion to both businesses and seniors.
- Seniors need to be made aware of the AFB Accreditation program and to recognize the symbol. The program would be most likely to be successful if launched when a large critical mass of businesses have been recruited. Once this has been achieved, marketing the accredited businesses to seniors could be undertaken.

Sustainability

The Nanaimo Seniors Services Network will implement the AFB Accreditation program. They have the manpower and access to free media and print outlets for promotion. The program is of value to them as an incentive to increase their membership and raise awareness of their organization.

Appendix A: BECOME AN AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS: ACCREDITATION PILOT

We are looking for businesses to help us to pilot the Age-Friendly Business Accreditation program. In return, we will actively promote your business throughout Seniors month (October).

Interested?

- ✓ Review the Age-Friendly Business assessment form and the Information About Making Your Business Age-Friendly that explains issues related to aging and suggest ways to provide exceptional service to older adults.
- ✓ Complete the assessment looking at your business through the eyes of an older adult
- ✓ Take note of "No" response and think about how these areas could be improved and at what cost (time, money)? Consider if making the change would be worthwhile for your business, and what support you might need to go ahead.
- ✓ Attend a focus group on XX/XX/XXXX, 3:00-4:30 pm
 - Provide feedback on the clarity, utility and applicability of the assessment questions to your business and the feasibility of making changes.
 - Brainstorm with us about how to effectively promote the Age-Friendly Business program to businesses. What are the most persuasive messages?
 - Brainstorm ideas for promoting recognition of the age-friendly business decal (and what it means), to seniors.
 - Make suggestions about how to assess the impact of being an age-friendly business on your business---number of seniors, sales, etc.

FOR MORE INFORMATION or for PILOT SUPPORT CONTACT:

Contact Name

Phone #

Email address

Appendix B: AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS ASSESSMENT FOR STOREFRONT BUSINESSES



Age-Friendly Business Assessment for Storefront Businesses

Part 1

Safety: Provide for people with reduced mobility, agility and balance

Outside space: access to your business is free of hazards

	N/A	Yes	No
Sidewalk access from transit stop and parking areas is level and well maintained, with curb cuts where needed.			
Pick up and drop off areas are convenient, sheltered and clearly marked.			
Sidewalks and parking lot are well and evenly lit.			
Accessible and seniors' parking spaces are designated and enforced.			
Shopping carts are close to handicapped parking			
Parking lot and sidewalks are promptly cleared of snow, wet leaves, puddles and other hazards (including paths from parking lot to sidewalk).			
Parking ticket machines have clear instructions and large print.			
Pavement is smooth, without cracks or dips and bumps.			
Entrances are kept clear of street furniture and other obstructions (such as tied up dogs or snow)			
Entrance doors open automatically or have access buttons; they stay open long enough to get through.			
Building has at least one level entrance, with threshold flush to the floor.			
Doors are wide enough for wheelchairs.			
There is clearance by the door for a person waiting with a wheelchair or walker.			
Wheelchair access routes are well marked.			

2. Inside space: customers can navigate safely and without obstructions and distraction

	N/A	Yes	No
Lighting is sufficient, consistent and even throughout			
Stairways have sturdy handrails on both sides			
Stair edges are clearly marked			
Flooring is non-slip and non-shiny			
Necessary mats are securely fastened			
Elevators are available for other floors and there are ramps for changes of level			
Obstacles or hazards are clearly marked (e.g. , Step Up, Step Down, Automatic Door, Wet Floor)			
Aisles are wide enough for two walkers or wheelchairs (approx4 ft), and uncluttered by displays			
Location of elevators, washrooms, customer service and other amenities and services is clearly posted and/or a store layout map is visible near the entrance			
Most-popular items are shelved at medium height			
Emergency training of staff addresses warning and evacuation of the elderly and disabled			

Part 2

Comfort: Consider customers with reduced mobility, agility and balance

1. Provide for people with limited strength and stamina

	N/A	Yes	No
Sturdy, regular-height seating is placed in waiting or line-up areas			
At least one service or checkout counter is accessible for customers in wheelchairs			
Service counters have a place on which to hook a cane so it doesn't fall			
There is a space by the entrance for customers to park scooters			
In areas where customers sit for some time (e.g., restaurant tables), temperature is held at comfortable levels, with no chilly air currents			

An on-line or phone-in ordering/ delivery service is available			
Telephone has large print buttons and amplification capabilities for the hearing impaired			
Washrooms contain at least one accessible toilet cubicle and hand washing area			
Customers are offered assistance when taking items to their cars			

2. Provide for people with poor sight or hearing

	N/A	Yes	No
Premises are well and evenly lit			
Signage has legible fonts and good contrast (e.g., black on white)			
Printed or written materials (e.g., package labels, cash receipts and restaurant cheques) have good contrast and readable font sizes			
Staff speak clearly, and at an appropriate speed, while looking directly at the person			
Some staff are trained to assist customers who have vision or hearing challenges (e.g., reading labels and locating items)			
Sound systems for public announcements are loud enough, distortion-free, and not over-used			
A quiet space is provided for discussing private business such as medications or finances; staff are trained to move to those areas when necessary			
The font sizes on your website can be increased			
The website is easy to navigate			
Background music is absent or low in volume			

3) Respect: Ensure all customers are treated with respect

	N/A	Yes	No
Staff are trained to be friendly and patient with all customers, and try to meet their needs			
Staff are sensitized to avoid condescending behaviours (e.g., speaking too loudly, speaking too familiarly – as in calling someone “dear,” or showing visible impatience)			
Staff are encouraged to move to an area where they can more comfortably serve someone who may have trouble			

seeing, hearing, understanding or making their requests known			
Errors and customer complaints are addressed promptly and courteously			
Staff are trained in how to manage situations, such as a fall or an outburst, while preserving a person's dignity			
Staff can identify if a person is experiencing a medical emergency and can notify the appropriate service, or authority			

CALCULATE YOUR SCORE

Add up each of the 3 columns and total

Subtract the N/As

Divide resulting number by the number of Yes to get a percentage

Example: Your score 10 N/A, 25 Yes, 15 No = 50

$50 - 10 = 40$

$25/40 \times 100 = 62.5\%$

YOUR SCORE: _____

A score of 80% is required for accreditation

Your Signature _____

Email the signed form to: XXXXX You will be contacted.

Now that you have completed the assessment you need to create your plan for a more age-friendly business, take action, and then re-assess.

Where you have said No, what changes could you make? In cases where you do not have the authority to make changes your No can become a Yes if you approach the property owner, or the City about addressing the issue.

For information and ideas for practical and low or no cost things that can be done to improve age friendliness, see the accompanying Information About Making Your Business Age Friendly document, or look at examples in Creating an Age-Friendly Business in BC ¹.

If you feel you are doing an outstanding job in some areas (now or as a result of making an improvement) we would like to hear about it so we can promote great examples of ways businesses are becoming more age-friendly.

CONTACT:

XXXX at XXX-XXX-XXXX

XXXXXX@shaw.

Appendix C: SAMPLE Marketing/Promotion Plan for Businesses in Age-Friendly Business Pilot

- A congratulatory note along with logos of the businesses will be placed in the October issue of the free Senior Connections, distributed throughout the City.
- The new Age-Friendly Business (AFB) certification and businesses will be included in a media release to promote Seniors Celebrate Month of October.
- The businesses will be promoted at the Chamber of Commerce trade show where the AFB certification program will be promoted to the public attendees and to businesses.
- A paid Facebook ad will be launched during Seniors Celebrate Month.
- Seniors 101 website and any other free sites
- Ad(s) in the Bulletin and Nanaimo Magazine.
- Spots on SHAW the SHOW (Seniors Connect Segment), Wise Folks, and CHLY radio, to talk about this initiative
- A page will be created on the Nanaimo Seniors Services Network website (NSSN.ca)
- An AFB a window sticker and certificate for display on business premises.

Appendix D: Age-Friendly Business Recruitment Letter for Management



Nanaimo Seniors Connect and the Nanaimo Seniors Service Network (both non-profit organizations) have initiated an age-friendly business accreditation program, based on guidelines established by the World Health Organization²

An age-friendly business is one that knows and takes the needs and preferences of older adults into consideration, by providing friendly quality services and facilities to its customers. Providing services to seniors should involve consideration of the environment, communication, and an understanding of their needs.

The Nanaimo age-friendly business accreditation program recognizes businesses that demonstrate a conscious effort to be senior friendly. You are being approached because your business has been identified by seniors, through a poll, as senior friendly.

Seniors make great customers and currently make up over half of Nanaimo's population 22% are over age 65 and 23% are 55-64—and the numbers are still growing.

- Seniors account for over 60% of all consumer spending.
- Seniors have time to shop in the right environment.
- Seniors shop not only for themselves but for younger and older family members too.
- Seniors tend to be loyal customers and make recommendations to friends.
- Cultivating younger seniors (age 55-65) could create lifetime consumer habits.
- Anything that benefits older people will also benefit others.

Becoming an accredited age-friendly business can help to attract these seniors and others to your business. The process is simple and quick consisting of a short self-assessment of your business/facility that considers the physical layout, lighting, signage, access and comfort from the perspective of seniors. (See attached). Once a score of 80% is achieved the business receives the following:

- ✓ **Certificate for display.**
- ✓ **Window decal.**
- ✓ **Marketing by us to seniors so the decal is recognized.**
- ✓ **Use of Age Friendly Business logo.**
- ✓ **Your business listed on the City of Nanaimo Age Friendly website.**

To get started contact: XXX-XXX-XXXX.

² An age-friendly community is a community where policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable older people to live in a secure environment, enjoy good health, and continue to participate fully in society. (Age-Friendly Program and Application guide, retrieved from <http://www.civicnet.bc.ca/siteengine/ActivePage.asp?PageID=217>).

Appendix E: What, Why and How

INCREASE YOUR BUSINESS! BECOME AN ACCREDITED AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

Older adults make up over half of Nanaimo's population - 22% are over age 65 and 23% are 55-64! And--- the aging population is growing rapidly. AND, seniors account for over 60% of consumer spending!

- Seniors have time to shop in the right environment
- Seniors shop not only for themselves but for younger and older family members too.
- Seniors tend to be loyal customers
- Cultivating younger seniors (age 55-65) could create consumer habits that last a lifetime
- Anything that benefits older people will also benefit others!

ADVANTAGES OF BEING ACCREDITED



Visibility of an age friendly decal, along with our marketing, will help attract older customers to shop at your establishment

- ✓ Certificate for display
- ✓ Window decal
- ✓ Marketing to seniors so the decal is recognized
- ✓ Use of Age Friendly Business logo
- ✓ Your business listed on the City of Nanaimo Age Friendly website

Interested?

The Age-Friendly Business Accreditation Program was created to recognize businesses that have demonstrated and promoted best practices toward independence and services to seniors.

Age-Friendly Business Criteria

An age-friendly business takes the needs and preferences of older adults into consideration, by providing friendly quality service and facilities to its customers. Providing services to seniors should involve consideration of the environment, communication, and an understanding of their needs. It recognizes businesses that demonstrate a conscious effort to be senior friendly.

To find out more about becoming accredited as an age-friendly business, contact..



Age-Friendly Business Accreditation Program Nanaimo, BC

What is an age-friendly business?

An age-friendly business is one that takes the needs and preferences of older adults into consideration, by providing customers with friendly quality services and facilities.

Advantages for your business

INCREASED BUSINESS!

Visibility of an age friendly decal, along with our marketing, will help attract older customers to shop at your establishment.

- Seniors have time to shop in the right environment
- Seniors shop not only for themselves but for younger and older family members too.



- Seniors tend to be loyal customers
- Cultivating younger seniors (age 55-65) could create consumer habits that last a lifetime
- Anything that benefits older people will also benefit others!

Did you know?

Older adults make up over half of Nanaimo's population - 22% are over age 65 and 23% are 55-64! And--- the aging population is growing rapidly!



About the Program

The Age-Friendly Business Accreditation Program was created to recognize businesses that have

demonstrated and promoted best practices toward independence and services to seniors.

Age-Friendly Business Criteria

An age-friendly business takes the needs and preferences of older adults into consideration, by providing friendly quality service and facilities to its customers. Providing services to seniors involves consideration of the environment, communication, and an understanding of their needs. It recognizes businesses that demonstrate efforts to be senior friendly.



ENTIRE
SPENDING

60 %

SPENT BY
SENIORS

“ *Seniors account for over 60 per cent of all consumer spending. Through their consumer spending zoomers and seniors substantially improve Canada’s economy for all age groups.* ”

David Cravit
CARP 2013





How the program works

Step 1

Review the age- friendly business criteria above and contact XXXXX if your business would like to move forward.

Step 2

You will be given accreditation package that includes an assessment form and Information About Making Your Business Age-Friendly that explains issues related to aging and suggests ways to provide exceptional service to older adults.

Step 3

Use the assessment form to rate your business. Make the necessary improvements (if required) to your business, to reach 80%. Use the Information document or us for suggestions as needed.

Step 4

Complete, sign and submit the age-friendly business assessment when you meet 80% of the criteria. Someone from our accreditation team will visit to verify your assessment, and you will receive the following benefits:

- ✓ **Certificate for display**
- ✓ **Window decal**
- ✓ **Marketing to seniors so the decal is recognized**
- ✓ **Use of Age Friendly Business logo**
- ✓ **Your business listed on the City of Nanaimo Age Friendly website**

CERTIFICATION MUST BE RENEWED EVERY TWO YEARS.

This brochure is adapted with permission from Moncton NB Senior Friendly Business program.

Appendix G: INFORMATION ABOUT MAKING YOUR BUSINESS AGE-FRIENDLY

This document has been created to support the Nanaimo Age-Friendly Business program. The purpose of the document is to provide information and ideas about how to make your business age-friendly for seniors and others.

Serving Seniors Better¹

Most older people are healthy, independent individuals, but changes can occur with age. Attending to some of the common issues related to aging will increase the age-friendliness of your business.

By fostering safety, comfort, visibility and clarity, and respect, your customers/clients of all ages will benefit.

Safety

Consider how people with mobility limitations access your place of business. They will find it easier if you have:

- Fewer stairs, sturdy railings, and non-slip surfaces (tripping hazards or shiny surfaces could lead to falls)
- Wider aisles and uncluttered pathways to better accommodate walkers and wheelchairs
- Easily-opened or automatic doors that provide more accessibility

Comfort

Consider places to rest and refresh, such as:

- A place to sit while waiting, and a place to put packages down;
- Chairs that are sturdy and stable, with arms for people who need to push themselves up, and that are not too low or too soft
- An easily accessible customer washroom

Visibility and clarity

People are able to see what you want them to see, and hear what you say when:

- Lighting is adequate and glare-free;
- Signage has good contrast, and wording is easy to follow – including website and phone service;
- Telephone answering services are not automated or do not require pressing a lot of numbers before customers can connect with a “live” person;
- The service desk is clearly visible so people can ask for help;
- There is no background music and machine noise, which can be distracting and uncomfortable;
- Staff speak clearly, and at an appropriate speed, while looking directly at the person;
- Staff know how to assist customers with vision or hearing challenges (such as, reading labels and locating items);
- A quiet space to discuss people’s business or concerns in privacy is available.

¹ Reproduced from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors/about-seniorsbc/seniors-related-initiatives/age-friendly-bc/age-friendly-businesses/how-to-become-age-friendly>

Respect

A business shows that it promotes respect when:

- Older adults are not treated impatiently or dismissively;
- Staff are sensitized to avoid condescending behaviours (e.g., speaking too loudly, speaking too familiarly – as in calling someone “dear,” or showing visible impatience).
- Staff know how to address people’s needs without stereotyping or drawing conclusions about people based on their age or other characteristics;
- Staff have options for serving customers in a more comfortable way;
- Staff are rewarded for being respectful;
- Staff respond to errors and complaints promptly and courteously;
- Staff are trained to handle incidents like a fall or an outburst while preserving the customer’s dignity;
- Staff know how to recognize signs that a person needs help, or is being physically or financially abused

Communicating with Seniors²

Effective and respectful communication with seniors, through print, on-line or in person is imperative for attracting them as customers. If they cannot find, read or hear the information you want to share, you will not reach them. The quality of face-face communication is crucial in bringing them back to your business and whether or not they recommend you to their friends. Ensuring staff understand and appreciate seniors needs and can communicate with them respectfully is a great investment and will reap rewards with other age groups too.

Before you begin a communication initiative (perhaps a website, a brochure, a blog), consider how you are thinking about your audience—your words will reflect your thoughts and attitudes!

Check Your Attitude:

- Avoid stereotyping or reinforcing incorrect perceptions about seniors; show older people as you know them to be—active participants, using a full range of abilities in a full range of roles and activities
- Shun ageism, racism and sexism in conversation, text, illustrations and photographs. They are prohibited by law
- Avoid ageist language (that categorizes seniors negatively), such as “the aged”, “the elderly,” “oldsters,” “senile,” “feeble.”
- Use “seniors,” “older persons” or “older adults” if you need to indicate the age group
- Beware of patronizing, condescending or childish expressions and tone when talking with or about seniors. Their lifelong experience comes in handy in detecting flattery and insincere deference.
- Remember that the way you use language reflects your attitudes and your respect for the audience.

² Reproduced from *Age-Friendly Communication: Facts, Tips and Ideas*, Public Health Agency of Canada.
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/various-varies/afcommcommavacaines/index-eng.php

Checklist for Providing Assistance to Seniors over the Phone

Here is a checklist to support organizations in communicating effectively with seniors.

- ☐ Availability of a live person option on telephone calls.
- ☐ Does your phone system invite callers to talk to a real person without waiting for endless messages and menu choices?
- ☐ Does the system accommodate rotary phones?
- ☐ Are the instructions on your automated answering system spoken clearly and slowly, with options to repeat a menu?
- ☐ Does your message start by advising callers to have a pen and paper handy?
- ☐ Does your system provide for teletypewriter users, to accommodate callers who are deaf or hard of hearing?
- ☐ Does the system give callers the option of leaving a message and having someone return the call?

Checklist for Easy-to-Understand Print Materials³

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Simply Put checklist can be used to review your materials. This will help you ensure that your materials effectively communicate to your audience in ways that it can relate to and understand.

Message Content

- ☐ Have you limited your messages to three to four messages per document (or section)?
- ☐ Have you taken out information that is "nice to know" but not necessary?
- ☐ Is the most important information at the beginning of the document?
- ☐ Is it repeated at the end?
- ☐ Have you identified action steps or desired behaviours for your audience?
- ☐ Have you post-tested your materials?

Text Appearance

- ☐ Does your document have lots of white space? Are margins at least ½ inch?
- ☐ Is the print large enough (at least 12 points)? Does it have serifs?
- ☐ Have you used bold, italics and text boxes to highlight information?
- ☐ Have you avoided using all capital letters?
- ☐ Is text justified on the left only?
- ☐ Did you use columns with a line length of 40 to 50 characters of space?
- ☐ Have you post-tested your materials?

Visuals

- ☐ Is the cover attractive to your intended audience? Does it include your main message and show who the audience is?
- ☐ Are your visuals simple and instructive rather than decorative?
- ☐ Are your visuals placed near related text? Do they include captions?
- ☐ Do visuals help explain the messages found in the text?
- ☐ If you read only the captions, would you learn the main points?
- ☐ Have you post-tested your materials?

³ Reproduced from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2009 publication *Simply Put*, which can be found at: www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/simply_put.pdf

Layout and Design

- ☐ Is information presented in an order that is logical to your audience?
- ☐ Is information chunked, using headings and subheadings? Do lists include bullets?
- ☐ Have you eliminated as much jargon and technical language as possible?
- ☐ Is technical or scientific language explained?
- ☐ Have you used concrete nouns, an active voice, and short words and sentences?
- ☐ Is the style conversational?
- ☐ Have you post-tested your materials?

Translation

- ☐ Are the language and content culturally appropriate?
- ☐ Are the visuals culturally appropriate?
- ☐ Have you had the piece back-translated?
- ☐ Is the translator fluent in the same linguistic variation as the intended audience?
- ☐ Have you post-tested your materials?

Understandability

- ☐ Have you tested the complexity of the language used in your material for comprehension?
- ☐ Have you pre-tested your materials with members of your intended audience?
- ☐ Have you post-tested your materials with members of your intended audience?

Addressing Special Needs

Some seniors (but not all) experience challenges in vision, hearing and/or mobility. If businesses take the time to understand these challenges, they will be able to make often simple adaptations that benefit affected seniors and others with similar challenges.

Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing People⁴

Communication Barriers

Culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people face systemic barriers to communication and information every day. And when your customers (patients/students) or employees face barriers communicating with you, you in turn face barriers communicating with them. By making your workplace, business, products and services more accessible to Deaf people and people with hearing loss, you can break down those barriers.

Attitudinal Barriers

In addition to barriers to communication and information, and commonly experienced by Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people, are serious attitudinal barriers. Examples of attitudinal barriers are lowered expectations of Deaf and hard of hearing people; perceptions and beliefs of reduced intelligence and capabilities of Deaf and hard of hearing people; and fear and avoidance of communicating with Deaf and hard of hearing people.

Here are some helpful tips for communicating with people with hearing loss.

- Get the person's attention before you speak. A shoulder tap is appropriate if the person is near you or wave your hand if s/he is at a distance.
- Always face the person you're talking to. Be aware that when you're looking away from a person or covering your mouth, your lips can't be seen.

⁴ Reproduced from Accessibility Guide to Businesses and Service Providers THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY
<https://www.chs.ca/sites/default/files/ACCESSIBILITY-GUIDE-CRP.pdf>

- Make sure you're well-lit (avoid backlighting). Dim areas make it difficult to speech read. If there's a light source behind you, such as a window, this often makes it difficult to see your lips.
- Reduce ambient noise. When speaking to someone who is hard of hearing, try to minimize surrounding noise.
- Maintain eye contact. Don't look down or sideways.
- Speak normally, don't yell or scream. Yelling causes you to speak abnormally, making it difficult for people to understand you.
- Don't speak too quickly. What you're saying needs to be processed and figured out.
- Body language helps to project the meaning of what you're saying; be animated. Use facial expressions and gestures when appropriate.
- Explore alternative ways of communicating, such as writing on a whiteboard, using pen and paper, using text or email on a smartphone, or showing examples of what needs to be done.
- Confirm with clarification. If there's a chance you were misunderstood, a great way to clarify is to have someone repeat what you've said. This works for hearing people as well.

Communicating with Blind and Vision Impaired People⁵

An individual is considered legally blind when they cannot see at six metres what someone with normal vision can see at 60 metres. An individual is also considered legally blind if their field of vision is less than 20 degrees in diameter rather than 180 degrees for a normal sighted person and there is no possibility of correcting a person's vision through treatment or medical intervention.

Various forms of vision impairment may mean that a person is able to see well in one environment or situation however has difficulty seeing in another environment or situation. For example, a person with night blindness may be able to see in daylight but cannot see at night or in darkened rooms.

Communication Strategies

When communicating with a person who is blind, or vision impaired it is important to acknowledge that each person is an individual and should be approached. As such:

- Do not assume that people who are blind or have a vision impairment cannot comprehend because of the disability.
- Always face the person when speaking to them.
- Do Not Shout. Speak naturally and clearly. Loss of eyesight does not mean loss of hearing.
- Ask first if the person would like assistance.
- Speak directly to the person and not to someone who is with them.
- Introduce yourself by name, even if the person may already know you.
- If there are several people in the room (meeting), include a self-introduction by all in attendance and address the person by name so they know they are being spoken to.
- Avoid moving around the room or leaving the room during the conversation and always advise the person you are doing so.
- Continue to use body language. This will affect the tone of your voice and give a lot of extra information to the person who is vision impaired.
- Use everyday language. Don't avoid words like "see" or "look" or talking about everyday activities such as watching TV or videos.

⁵ Retrieved from <https://imvc.com.au/youthservices/broaden-your-horizons/disability-information/blindness-and-vision-impairment/>

- Be specific with verbal directions and instructions. Direct a person to their left or right, NOT yours.
- Be aware that a person who is blind or vision impaired will be disadvantaged about knowing what is going on. Therefore, describe about what is happening.
- Do not leave people who are blind, or vision impaired without telling them you are going.

Written Communication Strategies

- When providing information, do so in a format that is appropriate to the person's needs.
- Ensure information and language used is appropriate to the individual's needs
- When preparing written communication for a person with a vision impairment use font size suitable to person's needs. It is suggested that bold 18-point font or larger be used.

Supporting people who are Blind or Vision Impaired

- Always ask first if help is needed.
- If they require assistance touch the back of their hand with yours and allow them to hold your arm just below the elbow. Remember to walk on the side opposite their cane or guide dog.
- Give the person a choice in using lifts, stairs or escalators.
- Use accurate and specific language when giving directions. For example, "the door is on your left", rather than "the door is over there".
- Open and close doors fully rather than leaving them ajar.
- Be aware that lighting needs can be quite different and ask the person.
- Always tell a person if you have moved objects or furniture.

People who use a guide or mobility dog

- A guide dog or any animal trained to assist a person with a disability will be highly disciplined. Do not feed, pat or talk to a dog that has its harness on as this will distract them from working.
- If the animal is inside, ask the owner if there are any special requirements for the dog i.e. water, exercise or toileting. Remember also that Anti-discrimination legislation makes it unlawful for guide dogs to be refused entry to any building or public transport.

Physical Disability⁶

There are many different kinds of physical disability making it difficult to generalise. A person with a physical disability may require some assistance or the use of some sort of equipment to aid with mobility.

Implications

- People with mobility impairment rely on effective signage that is up to date and consistent in both style and placement.
- Provide clear and frequent signage to direct people around the building and to decrease the need for assistance.
- For people who use a wheelchair it is like a part of the person's body; do not lean or hang on to the chair.
- Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but do not assume a person with a disability will require or accept it.
- Make sure that there is a clear pathway for a person in a wheelchair and do not leave articles such as chairs or boxes in areas that may block access.

⁶ <https://imvc.com.au/youthservices/broaden-your-horizons/disability-information/physical-disability/>

Communication Strategies

- When communicating with a person with a physical disability it is important to acknowledge that each person is an individual and should be approached as such.
- Do not assume that people with a physical disability cannot comprehend because of physical appearance.
- Speak directly to the person and not with someone who maybe assisting them.
- DON'T SHOUT. Speak in a tone and volume appropriate to the setting.
- Make eye contact.
- Where possible, position yourself at the same level as the person.
- Make sure the person has understood you. If necessary, write the information down.
- Check with the person about use of adaptive technology to aid with communication.

Further Reading

Guidelines for Making Services Accessible for People who have Communication Disabilities

This document, created by Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC) is intended for businesses, private, public and non-profit organizations and government services. It informs service providers about ways to comply with accessibility legislation for people who have speech, language and communication disabilities and who are Deaf, deafened or have a significant hearing loss. It is useful for managers, front-line staff and policy makers who are responsible for providing face-to-face and telephone customer services, hosting meetings and events, and communicating information in any way to and from the public. We welcome your feedback on the document and encourage you to share this resource with organizations and businesses in your community.

<https://www.cdacanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Guidelines-for-Communication-Access-1.pdf>