



MARIPOSA FOLK FESTIVAL ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 was passed by the Ontario Legislature with the goal of improving accessibility across Ontario for people with disabilities.

The first standard issued by the Province is the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, which came into effect for the Mariposa Folk Festival on January 1, 2012.

This policy applies to all persons who enter our office location and at the site of the annual Mariposa Folk Festival.

WHAT IS ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE?

The Mariposa Folk Foundation Festival is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and accessible, and respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities will be given equal opportunity to integrate and access the activities undertaken by the Foundation and benefit from the same customer service experiences as other members of the public. In order to help us maintain these standards, if visiting our office, please advise our staff prior to your visit if you are a person with a disability who requires assistance.

Openly communicating and responding to our patrons' needs is the key to excellent customer service for all. If you're not sure about the best approach, start with "How may I help you?"

SUGGESTED TIPS

Here are some tips for how to interact/communicate with patrons who have various disabilities:

Communication with Persons with Disabilities

When communicating with a person with a disability, Mariposa Folk Foundation staff and volunteers will do so in a manner that takes into account the person's disability. The Foundation is committed to communicating by any of various means including verbally, in writing, by working with a support person, by assistive device or by electronic mail.

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities. Only some people with physical disabilities use a wheelchair. Someone with a spinal cord injury may use crutches, while someone with severe arthritis or a heart condition may have difficulty walking longer distances.

- **If you need to have a lengthy conversation with a patron who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting so you can make eye contact at the same level.**
- **Ask before you help. Offer assistance but don't insist.**
- **Don't touch items, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission.**

Patrons who have hearing loss

- **Attract the patron's attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.**
- **Make sure you are in a well-lit area where the patron can see your face and read your lips.**
- **Do not cover or have anything in your mouth when speaking.**
- **Ask one question at a time.**
- **Speak naturally, with normal expression and at a normal pace.**
- **If the patron uses a hearing aid, reduce background noise or move the patron to a quieter area.**
- **If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier (for example, using pen and paper).**

Patrons who have vision loss

- **Don't assume the patron cannot see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight.**
- **Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the patron.**
- **Ask the patron if they would like you to read any printed material, such as the stage schedules, out loud to them.**
- **When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive.**
- **Offer your elbow to guide them, if needed.**
- **Don't leave without saying goodbye.**

Patrons who are deaf-blind

A patron who is deaf-blind may have some degree of both hearing and vision loss. Patrons who are deaf-blind may be accompanied by an intervenor, a professional support person who helps with communication.

- **A patron who is deaf-blind is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them, perhaps with an assistance card or a note.**
- **Speak directly to the patron, not to the intervenor.**
- **Do not leave without saying goodbye.**

Patrons with speech impairments

Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for a patron to pronounce words or may cause slurring.

- **Don't assume that a patron with speech impairment has another disability.**
- **Be patient. Don't interrupt or finish the patron's sentences.**
- **Give the patron whatever time they need to get their point across.**
- **Tell the patron if you don't understand what they are trying to say.**
- **Ask the patron to repeat the message, tell you in a different way, or write it down.**
- **Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no".**

Patrons who use assistive devices

Personal assistive technologies are permitted and unrestricted in all our office and at the site of the Mariposa Folk Festival. An assistive device is a tool or technology that helps a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities. Devices include things such as wheelchairs, walkers, hearing aids, white canes, or personal oxygen tanks.

- **Allow patrons to keep and use their assistive devices as needed.**
- **Don't touch or handle any assistive device without permission.**

- **Don't move assistive devices, such as canes and walkers, out of the patron's reach.**
- **Let the patron know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs, for example accessible toilets.**

Patrons with Service Animals

Service animals are permitted and unrestricted at the Festival site and in all areas of our office that members of the public are permitted to enter. If it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, the person you are seeing may ask the person with the service animal to provide verification of the animal's duty.

- **Service animals are allowed anywhere on the Festival grounds that is open to patrons.**
- **The patron is responsible for the care and supervision of the service animal.**
- **Don't talk to, touch, or make eye contact**

Patrons who have learning disabilities

Includes a variety of disorders, such as dyslexia, that affect how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when a patron has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

- **Be patient – patrons with some learning disabilities may take a little longer to process information, to understand and to respond.**
- **Speak normally, clearly and directly to the patron.**
- **Provide information in a way that works for the patron. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have a problem with numbers.**

Patrons who have intellectual/developmental disabilities

Developmental or intellectual disabilities, such as Down Syndrome, can limit a person's ability to learn, communicate, do everyday physical activities and live independently. You may not know that someone has this disability unless you are told.

- **Don't make assumptions about what the patron can and cannot do.**
- **Use plain language.**
- **Provide one piece of information at a time: step-by-step instruction.**
- **Use concrete examples and simple concepts.**
- **Be prepared to repeat and rephrase your sentences.**
- **Ask the person to repeat back to you what they have heard**

Patrons who have mental health needs

Mental health needs can affect a person's ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. For example, some people may experience anxiety due to mood swings, phobias, or panic disorder.

- **Treat the patron with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.**
- **Don't be confrontational.**
- **Be confident, calm and reassuring.**
- **Do not judge or "talk down" to the patron.**
- **If a patron appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help**
- **with the service animal; it is working and has to pay attention at all times.**

Patrons who are accompanied by a support person

Mariposa Folk Foundation welcomes all support persons who have been hired or chosen by the client with a disability to accompany them. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to his or her support person while on our premises. A support person can be a paid professional, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help the patron with a range of tasks from communicating, to helping with mobility, personal care or medical needs.

- **Support persons are allowed free admission to the Festival when accompanying a patron.**
- **Do not prevent the patron with a disability from having access to their support person while on the Festival grounds.**
- **Speak directly to the patron, not to the support person, unless requested otherwise by the patron.**

TRAINING REGISTRATION

Thank you for taking the time to read and understand this important information. Your efforts will help us better serve all patrons of the Mariposa Folk Festival, including patrons with disabilities.

We will retain your record of training in our files and make a note of your successful completion of the Accessible Customer Service Training.

You can get more information on anything related to accessibility at www.AccessON.ca.