



How can I make my place of business a positive experience for a person with an invisible disability?

The short answer is that you treat the person with a disability with dignity, in the same manner that you treat every other person that enters your public space. The long answer provides some suggestions that may ensure that every person entering your place of business has a positive experience.

Specifically, in Ontario, an employer has an obligation to train employees respecting persons with disabilities with and without a service animal, as:

80.49 (1) In addition to the requirements in section 7, every provider shall ensure that the following persons receive training about the provision of the provider's goods, services or facilities, as the case maybe, to persons with disabilities:

- 1. Every person who is an employee of, or a volunteer with, the provider.*
- 2. Every person who participates in developing the provider's policies.*
- 3. Every other person who provides goods, services or facilities on behalf of the provider. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.*

(2) The training must include a review of the purposes of the Act and the requirements of this Part and instruction about the following matters:

- 1. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disability.*
- 2. How to interact with persons with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a guide dog or other service animal or the assistance of a support person.*
- 3. How to use equipment or devices available on the provider's premises or otherwise provided by the provider that may help with the provision of goods, services or facilities to a person with a disability.*
- 4. What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing the provider's goods, services or facilities. O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.*

Courageous Companions strongly encourage employers to call upon persons with disabilities to be part of this training. If an employer or an employee has concerns about specific types of disabilities, they should call the organization advocating for persons with that disability and engage them to have a representative to speak to their employees. After all, a person with that disability knows more about what persons with that disability can and cannot do - they live it; they can tell you the real story.

Incidents of poor experiences will rapidly disappear as employers and employees become informed about their obligations and employees learn to talk to persons with disabilities, in the same manner and with the same dignity they do to other persons entering their place of business.