

THE WESTIN

NOVA SCOTIAN

HALIFAX

Accessible Guest Services Standards

The Westin Nova Scotian aims to provide people with disabilities the same amazing customer experience as any guest staying with us.

Communicating with People with Different Types of Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of disability. Openly communicating and responding to your guests' needs is the key to excellent customer service for all. If you're not sure about the best approach, just ask a person with a disability how you can best communicate with them.

Below are a few tips for interacting with people who have various disabilities.

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 someone who uses a wheelchair or scooter, consider sitting if possible so you can make eye contact at the same level
- Do not touch items or equipment, such as canes or wheelchairs, without permission
- If you have permission to move a person's wheelchair, do not leave them in an awkward, dangerous or undignified position, such as facing a wall or in the path of opening doors

Vision Loss

Vision loss can restrict someone's ability to read, locate landmarks or see hazards. Some guests may use a guide dog or a white cane, while others may not.

- When you know someone has vision loss, do not assume the individual cannot see you. Many people who have low vision still have some sight.
- Identify yourself when you approach and speak directly to the guest
- Ask if they would like you to read any printed material out loud to them (for example, a menu)
- When providing directions or instructions, be precise and descriptive
- Offer your elbow to guide them if needed

Hearing Loss

People who have hearing loss may be Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. They may also be oral deaf – unable to hear, but prefer to talk instead of using sign language. These terms are used to describe different levels of hearing and/or the way a person’s hearing was diminished or lost.

- Once a guest 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 guest’s attention before speaking. Try a gentle touch on the shoulder or wave of your hand.
- If your guest 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 Deaf-blind

A person who is deaf/blind may have some degree of both hearing and vision loss. Many people who are deaf/blind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional support person who helps with communication.

- A guest 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 your guest, not to the intervener

Speech or Language Impairments

Cerebral palsy, hearing loss or other conditions may make it difficult for a person to pronounce words or may cause slurring. Some people who have severe difficulties may use a communication board or other assistive devices.

- Do not assume that a person with a speech impairment also has another disability
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with “yes” or a “no”
- Be patient. Do not interrupt or finish your guest’s sentences.

Learning Disabilities

The term “learning disabilities” refers to a variety of disorders. One example is dyslexia, which affects how a person takes in or retains information. This disability may become apparent when a person has difficulty reading material or understanding the information you are providing.

- 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 guest’s disability. For example, some people with learning disabilities find written words difficult to understand, while others may have problems with numbers and math.

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.

- Do not make assumptions about what a person can do
- Use plain language
- Provide one piece of information at a time

Mental Health Disabilities

Mental health issues can affect a person’s ability to think clearly, concentrate or remember things. Mental health disability is a broad term for many disorders that can range in severity. For example, some guests may experience anxiety due to hallucinations, mood swings, phobias or panic disorder.

- If you sense or know that a guest has a mental health disability be sure to treat them with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else
- Be confident, calm and reassuring
- If a guest appears to be in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help

Interacting with People Using Assistive Devices

An assistive device is a tool, technology or other mechanism that enables a person with a disability to do everyday tasks and activities, such as moving, communicating or lifting. Personal assistive devices can include things like wheelchairs, hearing aids, white canes or speech amplification devices.

- Do not touch or handle any assistive device without permission
- Do not move assistive devices or equipment, such as canes and walkers, out of your guest’s reach

- Let your guests know about accessible features in the immediate environment that are appropriate to their needs (e.g. public phones with TTY service, accessible washrooms, etc.)
- Make sure you are familiar with any equipment or devices we have for guests with disabilities and make sure you know how to use them

Interacting With a Person who has a Service Animal

People with vision loss may use a guide dog, but there are other types of service animals as well. Hearing alert animals help people who are Deaf, deafened, oral deaf, or hard of hearing. Other service animals are trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure.

Under the standard, service animals must be allowed on the parts of our premises that are open to the public. In some instances, service animals will not be permitted in certain areas by law (for example, our kitchen).

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. Avoid touching or addressing them.
- If you are not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your guest.

Serving a Person Accompanied by a Support Person

Some people with disabilities may be accompanied by a support person, such as an intervener. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member or a friend. A support person might help your guest with a variety of things from communicating, to helping with mobility, personal care or medical needs.

We welcome support people to our hotel. They are permitted in any part of our premises that is open to the public. Please be sure to advise the support person of any charges they may incur while using our services.

- If you are not sure which person is the guest, take your lead from the person using our services, or simply ask
- Speak directly to your guest, not to their support person

Assisting People with Disabilities Who Need Help Accessing Our Services

If you notice that your guest is having difficulty accessing our services, a good starting point is to simply ask “How can I help you?”

Your guests are your best source for information about their needs. A solution can be simple and they will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.

Tips during Check In:

- Ensure accessibility rooms are always available, and avoid checking guests into accessibility rooms if they do not require it
- Ensure notes are entered into our PMS system so that other departments are aware of any special requirements
- Offer to fill out forms for guests who are visually impaired, or have a learning disability
- Explain all accessibility features to guest who may have a disability