

Helpful hints for accessibility

1. Assess the accessibility of your communication channels and document what needs to change

When you get back to the workplace, go through the accompanying checklist and think about what you've learned during today's session to assess what might need to change. Document the improvements that are needed and make a list of the people you will need to speak to in order to make these changes happen.

2. Have an internal and external focus

Businesses often make the mistake of only viewing people with disability as customers. In actual fact though, people with disability are business owners and colleagues as well. It is good for your workforce to reflect the diversity that exists within the community you serve, so you should think about how you can make your internal processes more accessible to ensure people with disability have the opportunity to work and thrive in your business.

3. Build it in, don't bolt it on

Take the time to consider the needs of people with disability whenever you're designing or implementing a new service or procedure. It's always easier and more cost effective to build accessibility in rather than bolt it on.

4. Talk to the experts

If you aren't quite sure how to approach accessible communications within your business, talk to the experts. AFDO's member organisations collectively represent the lived experience of people with autism; brain injury; blindness/vision impairment; deafness/hearing impairment; Down syndrome; people with intellectual disability and physical disability. For further advice on who you should consult with, phone AFDO on (03) 9662 3324.

5. Recognize people with disability as experts in their own lives

No two people with disability are the same, and everyone's experience is slightly different. You should never assume you know what will be needed by a person with disability in a particular situation and should treat each customer with dignity and respect. Take the time to talk to people about their needs and don't simply dismiss them all together based on what you assume they might need and how difficult you think it might be to implement.

6. Ensure everyone is on the same page

In order for your accessible communications channels to be effective, it is important for all staff to be on the same page; particularly those working in front-facing roles. You can help to imbed accessibility across your business by:

- Adopting internal policies and procedures that deal with matters of accessibility
- Ensuring your commitment to accessibility is covered in all staff induction and training processes
- Ensuring that all relevant information on this topic is readily available for staff to access when needed
- Regularly discussing disability access at staff meetings

7. Promote what you have to offer

You might like to consider:

- placing a statement about accessibility in your email signature
- Ensuring the accessibility measures you have put in place are clearly communicated on your website, and in any printed materials you have available
- including information about accessibility features in your pre-recorded phone messages.

8. Spread the word

Keep Visitor Information Centres and your Regional Tourism Board up to date on what you are doing to make your services more accessible. You could also think about promoting your commitment to accessibility through the accessible Victoria website. The website includes information on accessible accommodation, activities and attractions across Victoria.

9. Help people with their research

According to a study undertaken by Tourism Research Australia, Forty per cent of respondents stated that not knowing what to expect' was a barrier to travel. This highlights the benefit of having more detailed information available to assist with trip planning. 86% of respondents stated that they would like to have access to more practical information Such as the location of accessible toilets. While it is important to provide this information as it relates to your own business, you could consider how you can help people with their research when it comes to accessing other parts of the local area as well. You could start by talking to your local council to see if there is a mobility map available for your area. Mobility maps show the location of accessible toilets, parking and paths of travel and are a good resource for all visitors. You could also consider linking to the Accessible Victoria website via your own webpage to promote other inclusive services within your local area.

10. Demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and be willing to learn from others

Be willing to take feedback on-board and be open to changing the way you do things.