

PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP Spring 2010

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

The requirements of the **Accessibility Standards for Customer Service**, under the AODA, came into effect for public sector organizations on January 1, 2010. This means that all public sector organizations (including postsecondary institutions, municipalities and school boards) must develop and document policies on how they will provide accessible customer service, and must train staff on how to serve people with disabilities.

On January 1, 2012 the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service will apply to Ontario businesses and nonprofits that have one or more employees. To help organizations understand how customer service applies to people with LDs, LDAO has created a document on [Customer Service for Persons with Learning Disabilities](#).

The proposed standards on **Accessible Information & Communication** and on **Employment Accessibility**, developed by standards development committees, are currently before the Minister of Community and Social Services for consideration.

Safe Schools legislation

On February 1, 2010 changes to Safe Schools provisions in the Education Act came into effect, requiring: all school staff to report serious student incidents to the principal; principals to contact the parents of victims who have been harmed as a result of serious student incidents; and staff to respond to incidents that have a negative impact of the school climate, including incidents of sexual and gender-based bullying or homophobia.

These changes are in addition to previous Safe Schools legislation and regulations that require school boards to: develop and implement policies on progressive discipline; treat bullying as an infraction for which suspension must be considered; consider mitigating and other factors before students are suspended or expelled; and provide programs to students who have been expelled or are on a long-term suspension to allow them to continue their education and access services such as anger management or career counselling.

Students with learning disabilities and with co-existing disorders will be significantly affected by how all these changes are implemented. They could be helped if progressive discipline is interpreted in a positive sense of anticipating triggers, with careful consideration of how the effects of the disability has influenced behaviour, and the planning of a series of steps to manage behaviours.

Law Commission of Ontario Disability Project

The Law Commission of Ontario (LCO) has launched an exciting and ambitious initiative on the law and persons with disabilities. This independent law reform organization works on issues of access to justice, reflecting the needs and experiences of many Ontarians. This project will develop guidelines to evaluate laws and policies in order to ensure that the rights and circumstances of persons with disabilities are respected. LDAO has been asked to participate on the LCO Disabilities Project Advisory Group. This spring, the LCO will conduct the community consultation with persons with disabilities, service providers and advocates. The LCO will travel to 5 cities across the province to conduct focus groups. There will also be on-line opportunities for people to have their say on how the law has affected them as persons with disabilities. The LDAO will alert chapters about opportunities for participation in this process and we will link to the LCO website for you to get more details and background.