

# It's easy to provide good service to customers with disabilities; just follow these tips on communication and assistance:

## 1 Communicating with Customers with Disabilities

Proper communication with people with disabilities follows the basic rules of customer service and good manners. It is important to emphasize the person, not the disability, and to use words that accurately portray an individual person or situation. For example, say "person who uses a wheelchair" instead of "wheelchair user." Use "person who is deaf or hard of hearing" rather than "deaf person" or "hearing impaired" and "seniors" or "older adults" in place of "elderly," etc. To be best prepared to communicate with your customers, it's smart to always have a pad of paper and a pen available.

## 2 Communicating with Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Face the customer when speaking to them, and don't let objects obstruct their view.
- Speak clearly. It is not necessary to raise your voice when speaking to a customer with a hearing impairment. Raising your voice distorts your lip movement and makes lip reading difficult.
- If you are picking up a passenger with a hearing impairment, you may need to knock on their door or use their accessible doorbell to let them know of your arrival.

## 3 General Guidelines for Serving Customers with Disabilities

- Treat customers with disabilities as you would like to be treated.
- Take the time to identify the customer's needs and determine how best to serve them when you first meet.
- Never make assumptions about your customer's physical or mental abilities.
- Customers with similar disabilities often have different needs to make independent travel possible.
- Ask customers with disabilities if they need assistance. Don't automatically assume they do.
- Do not touch a customer without his/her permission.
- Speak directly to customers with disabilities, not their companions.
- Speak clearly with a normal tone and speed, unless the customer requests otherwise.
- If you are asked to repeat or write what you said, do so calmly and pleasantly.
- Smile, listen, and show respect. Be friendly and courteous.
- Talk to customers at their eye level. It may be appropriate to sit when having a long conversation with a person using a wheelchair.
- Give customers with disabilities the same information and choices that you give other customers.
- Solve problems in a professional manner.

## 4 Serving Customers Who Use Wheelchairs

- People who use wheelchairs are easy to accommodate - don't pass up the fare!
- Ask the customers how you can assist them. The customers know what works best for them and must be able to manage their transfer to the passenger compartment of the taxi.
- Wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and other mobility aids are part of the customer's personal space. Do not hold or lean on them without the customer's permission.
- Wheelchair and other mobility aids are individualised. Do not make assumptions about how they operate or store.
- Whenever possible, mobility aids such as canes and walkers should travel in the customer compartment of the taxi. Wheelchairs and other large devices can be stored in the boot (trunk).
- Drivers of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis must ensure that they safely operate hoists or ramps as fitted (e.g. comply with the 300 kg weight limit on these devices), secure wheelchairs or scooters using the approved tie-down facilities prior to travel, and provide assistance to passengers as required to fit seat belts.
- Under Australian laws, passengers are currently not allowed to remain seated in a scooter while the taxi is moving. Large (motorised) wheelchairs and scooters must be able to fit into a maximum space of 1300mm by 800mm and must be fitted with secure anchorage points.

## 5 Serving Customers Who Use Service Animals

- Service animals are highly trained and allowed by law to ride in the customer compartments of taxis.
- People with various types of disabilities use service animals. Guide Dogs are the most common service animals, but other animals may help people with disabilities.
- Some, but not all, service animals wear identification like a tag, vest, or special harness. If you are not sure that the animal is a service animal, ask. Certification or identification is not required for the animal.
- The owner must stay with the service animal and keep it under control at all times.
- Never touch or talk to the service animal - it is working!

## 6 Serving Customers with Visual Disabilities

- Identify yourself, and use the customer's name if you know it.
- Respond verbally when the customer gives you information, so that he/she will know that you have heard them.
- Ask the customer what type of assistance is needed and how you can best provide it.
- When giving the customer their change, count out aloud, and identify the denomination of the notes.
- Give specific directions to help the customer safely reach their destination. Say "turn right," or "turn left to reach the front door." Ask if further assistance is needed.

**Serving Customers with Disabilities is Smart Business**

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## Rights & Responsibilities of Drivers and Customers:

The law protects both customers with disabilities and taxi drivers, and each has their own set of rights and responsibilities. While these standards ensure safe and fair treatment for customers and drivers, they are also a formula for good service!

### DRIVERS MUST:

- Provide transportation to any person with a disability.
- Offer assistance to passengers if requested (not to include actual lifting).
- Serve customers with disabilities travelling alone and only use the assistance of family members, companions, or medical/public safety personnel if the customer requests or agrees to help from such persons.
- Give the same reservation services to customers with disabilities as are available to other customers.
- Not deny service to a customer with a disability solely because the disability results in appearance or involuntary behaviour that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience the driver.

- Not charge customers with disabilities extra fees for necessary assistance (unless authorised under State/Territory Regulations). For example, drivers can only charge the same amount to stow a wheelchair or other aid device in the boot (trunk), as they would charge for a piece of luggage.

### CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES MUST:

- Know whether or not they can use a conventional taxi vehicle. Not all taxis can accommodate large, heavy or bulky mobility aids.
- Tell drivers if they need help and explain what assistance they need.
- Control their service animals at all times.
- Know their destination.
- Pay their fare.
- Know what works best for them and manage their transfer from their mobility aid to the passenger compartment of the taxi (unless travelling in a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi).

### Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 serves to eliminate discrimination against persons on the ground of disability in the areas of work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and the provision of goods, facilities, services and land; and to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community.



The Australian Taxi Industry  
providing accessible transport  
services for our communities

# Taxi Pocket Guide

Serving Customers with  
Disabilities is Smart Business!

### Inside, You'll Learn About:

- 1 Communicating with Customers with Disabilities
- 2 Communicating with Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- 3 Serving Customers with Disabilities
- 4 Serving Customers Who Use Wheelchairs
- 5 Serving Customers Who Use Service Animals
- 6 Serving Customers With Visual Disabilities

Approximately four million people in Australia today live with disabilities. These people have jobs, families, classes, meetings, travel plans, and other activities that keep them on the move, and they need transportation, including taxis, to help them get where they're going! Think about it: 4,000,000 fares just waiting to give you their business...

Smart business people make it their goal to meet or exceed customers' expectations. Your customers, including those with disabilities, want and expect good and safe service. If you treat persons with disabilities with courtesy and respect you will gain:

- loyal customers
- repeat business
- referrals & additional business
- increased revenue
- recognition and reward
- personal satisfaction