

Food & Beverage Sector

Providing a Welcoming, Inclusive Experience for Travellers with Disabilities

According to the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia, the food and beverage industry accounts for 1725 businesses and \$1.8 billion in sales. People with disabilities, both residents and tourists, represent around 20% of the population.



This information sheet provides resources, tips, and tools to be an open and accommodating business for people with disabilities. This resource is specific to the Food & Beverage Sector and pairs with a broader accessibility guide for all tourism businesses.

Pre-planning and Arrival Experience

- When accepting a reservation, inquire about any special needs or considerations that the guest might have. Note any requests and plan accordingly to ensure that all staff are aware so the guest's needs are met. Online reservation platforms should allow for comments and space to note special needs.
- Consider displaying a large sign of your menu outside the restaurant.
- The host stand should be lowered to greet guests in wheelchairs.
- Have a pen and paper at the host station to help communicate with deaf or hard-of-hearing guests.

Seating and Access

- Consider installing sound dampeners to control the noise levels better. This addition enhances the overall ambiance while assisting guests with hearing impairments.
- When choosing a table for a guest with disabilities, consider noise levels, brightness, and ease of access to washrooms, buffets, and other areas of the restaurant.
- If a guest has an interpreter, seat them directly across from one another.
- Have a variety of seating and table options for people who require different support, which could include chairs with or without arms and tables that a wheelchair can fit into.
- Ensure all televisions, videos, and screens have closed captioning.





Menus, Information & Guest Interaction

- Menus should use a large and standard font, include pictures to help identify menu items, have simple descriptions, and include clear colour contrasts. CNIB provides clear print accessibility guidelines.
- Provide a flashlight, magnifying glass, or reading glasses to those with visibility challenges so they can better view the menu.
- Consider offering braille menus for guests who are blind or have visual impairments. If this is not an option, offer a digital menu with alt-text, ensuring a screen reader easily interprets it. A screen reader is an assistive technology that outputs on-screen text using text-to-speech functionality. This technology is primarily used by those who are blind.
- QR code for a digital menu is helpful to guests with speech impediments. Use bullet points in the menu to show different options clearly. The QR code enhanced with functionality for ordering and payment would be helpful.

Food and Utensil Considerations

- Provide non-paper straws for guests that use straws to drink. Paper straws can collapse in hot beverages and become a choking hazard.
- Some disabilities can prevent a guest from ordering a specific meal, for example a steak, which might be difficult to cut. Ask the guest if they have any preparation preferences and then work with the kitchen to accommodate the request (i.e. bite-size pieces).

Independence and Communication

" Having a menu that offers pictures versus text allows my autistic son, who does not speak, to interact with the server by pointing to his meal choice. " - AH

Resources

- Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate provides resources, guidelines, and tool kits.
- Nova Scotia Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces.
- Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) provides programs and advocacy for tourism issues.
- Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia (RANS) provides advocacy and industry resources.