



Lecture & Presentation Notes

BASIC SECURITY TRAINING

SENSITIVITY TRAINING INTRODUCTION

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Reading Time: 15 minutes

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INTRODUCTION

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Security guards interact with the public on a daily basis. It is important that all individuals are approached with respect.

The purpose of Sensitivity training is about enabling people to understand about themselves and others reasonably, which is achieved by developing within them Social Sensitivity and Behavioural Flexibility.

SOCIAL SENSITIVITY

Social Sensitivity is empathy. It is the ability of an individual to sense or relate to what others feel and think from their own point of view. Empathy is an awareness of the needs and feelings of others both individually and in groups. Empathy helps us to develop a stronger understanding of other people's situations. It includes understanding others, having a service orientation, leveraging diversity, and a cultural awareness. Unlike sympathy or compassion which is "feeling for" an individual or group, empathy is "feeling with" that person or group based on your own experiences and imagination. Compassion goes a step beyond sympathy, in that it often involves an emotion to physical action outcome. It could be said that sympathy and compassion are emotional responses, whereas empathy is an intellectual response.

Social Sensitivity, empathy can often be difficult to achieve. Learn to listen effectively to both the verbal and non-verbal messages of others, including body movements, gestures and physical signs of emotion. Use open-ended questions to find out more about other people and what they are feeling, and feedback to clarify you have correctly understood their feelings. Acknowledge and respect the feelings of others even if you disagree, and avoid making comments or statements that are judgmental, belittling, rejecting, dismissive or undermining.

BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY

Behavioural Flexibility is the ability to behave responsibly and in a socially acceptable manner, in light of understanding diversity in society through Social Sensitivity. It is the ability to not make assumptions or to introduce one's bias into conversations or decisions that may affect an individual or group.

As individuals, each one of us has our own prejudices. The Oxford Dictionary defines prejudice as a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason, fact or actual experience. We as humans are visual creatures; therefore we tend to form an opinion of individuals at first sight before we speak to them or know anything about who they are. This visual prejudice, so to speak, comes from our base survival instinct when humans may have been less civilized and society was not as structured as it is today. As well, it is our base survival instinct that makes us feel more comfortable with those who we believe are like ourselves culturally, intellectually and physically. In essence, those who we believe are like us, we like. These perceptions are quite often based on merely the initial appearance, language and what we may have heard, but not actually experienced with regards to another person. As an old saying goes, "I love everyone, but there are some I would prefer to spend a great deal of time with, and then there are those not so much." Recognising we all have, and are capable of prejudice to some degree is a step to understanding more about ourselves and how we can practice Behavioural Flexibility in our daily lives.

Prejudice as with any human characteristic may be mild to extreme. Typically, when describing mild prejudice, this is often referred to as a bias but it is nonetheless, prejudice. In our modern society, the most common prejudices are based on ethnicity, education, religion, gender, sexual orientation, financial situation and physical or mental disability. Racism is the belief that one race or ethnicity is superior or inferior to another. Prejudice and discrimination in this specific example would be the result of racism. Discrimination is the unjust treatment of people based on these prejudices. Discrimination is not tolerated in Canadian society and is illegal.

As a security guard it is important for you to carefully, and honestly consider and identify what your own prejudices may be, in order to manage these so they won't affect the way you interact professionally with members of the public. You should also understand the ways in which miscommunication and misinterpretation can take place between two people who come from different backgrounds, or where English may not be a primary language. Thus, requiring you to be sensitive to these differences when dealing with people.

INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

Canada is an extremely diverse intercultural country with people of different ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages to name only a few areas of diversity. The ability to communicate with a diverse society is often challenging but not unmanageable nor impossible. Equity does not equal Equality. Equity means fairness and Equality means sameness. You cannot be fair if you treat everyone the same. When we treat people the same, we ignore their differences; when we treat people with equity, fairly, we recognize their differences. Communicating with diverse people doesn't mean you treat everyone in the exact same way, but you adapt the way you interact with others to accommodate their needs, feelings and situation.

Intercultural awareness is having an understanding of both your own and other cultures, and particularly the similarities and differences between them. These similarities and differences may be in terms of values, beliefs, or behaviour. They may be large or small, and they matter very much when you as a Security Guard are meeting or interacting with people who are from another cultural background. Understanding that people from different cultures have different values is the foundation to good intercultural relationships. Lack of intercultural awareness, may often damage or derail a security guard's ability to perform their duties effectively.





STEPS TO DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

Admit you don't know.

Acknowledging your ignorance is the first step towards learning about other cultures.

Develop an awareness of your own views, assumptions and beliefs, and how they are shaped by your culture.

Ask yourself questions like: what do I see as 'national' characteristics in this country? Which 'national' characteristic do I like and dislike in myself?

Take an interest.

Read about other countries and cultures, and start to consider the differences between your own culture and what you have read.

Don't make judgements.

Instead, start by collecting information. Ask neutral open-ended questions and clarify meaning before assuming you know what's going on.

Once you have collected information, start to check your assumptions.

Ask other security guards or friends who know more about the culture than you, and systematically review your assumptions to make sure they are correct.

Develop social sensitivity - empathy.

Think about how it feels to be in the other person's position and try to imagine their situation.

Look for what you can gain, not what you could lose.

If you can take the best from both your own and someone else's views and experiences, you could get a far greater whole that will benefit both of you. However, this requires you to take the approach, you don't necessarily know best, and even perhaps you don't necessarily know all there is to know.

In the final analysis, intercultural awareness leads ideally to a point of celebrating diversity. In a multicultural country such as Canada, most of us need at least some intercultural awareness every day.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Another and equally important consideration in Social Sensitivity and Behavioural Flexibility is when it comes to those with a physical or mental disability. Whilst most physical disabilities may be apparent, mental disabilities may not be. As a Security Guard you must be attentive to the possibility that an individual may have a non-visible disability. The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) ensures non-discriminatory and equal access to services for those with disabilities. However, the real value of the AODA is how it is applied on a daily, practical level to ensure that all persons with disabilities are treated with the utmost courtesy and consideration. This involves learning and knowing how to interact and communicate with persons with disabilities and understanding how assistive devices may be used by them. A disability may be physical, or it may not be as immediately apparent such as a mental or learning disability. As well, the disability may be short term or long term.

As a result of their disability, a person may encounter communication barriers such as those with visual, audible or speech disabilities; architectural barriers such as steep stairs, no elevator access, narrow doors or poor lighting; and organizational barriers such as corporate or internal government cultures and systems that may limit or restrict those with disabilities from participation or advancement, or access to public transit.

In order to provide accessible customer service to those with disabilities, the AODA requires you to:

- Consider a persons disability when communicating with them.
- Allow assistive devices such as canes, wheelchairs, oxygen tanks and walkers on the premises.
- Allow service animals on the premises.
- Welcome support persons; those who assist a disabled person, on the premises.
- Inform customers when accessible services such as elevators or escalators are not available by posting signs and personal contact as applicable.

When communicating with a person having a disability it is important to take into consideration the type of disability the person may have. However, it is inappropriate to, and you must never ask a person what their disability is, or the details of their disability.

When in communication always exercise common sense, patience, respect and try at all times to be helpful. You should always identify yourself by name to a person with a disability. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Do not automatically assume that every person with a disability needs assistance. Ask first, then listen to how you can help or ask for further instructions.

Here are some considerations when communicating with or working with an individual with disabilities:

The Hearing Impaired:

- Consider someone has a hearing impairment but can read perfectly well.
- Look directly at the hearing impaired person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish if the person may be able to read your lips.
- If a person is wearing a hearing aid, don't assume they have the ability to hear everything.
- Don't shout but try speaking in a normal tone of voice first, but remember there may be some who prefer you speak in a louder voice.
- Some may prefer you write out what you want to say or use a sign language interpreter.
- Gently tap a person who has a hearing disability on the shoulder or wave your hand to get their attention.
- Never assume the person cannot hear or understand everything you say.

The Visually Impaired:

- Do not assume they cannot see you.
- Speak directly to the individual and offer your elbow to guide them.
- Be patient and wait for permission to assist.
- Describe landmarks and be precise with your information, particularly when navigating or passing stairs or escalators.

The Speech Impaired:

- As your speech may set the pace of the conversation, speak clearly and a little slower.
- Listen attentively when speaking with people who are speech impaired and wait for them to finish.
- Never pretend to understand but summarise what you have understood and allow the person to respond.
- Do not assume they cannot understand what you say.

Persons in Wheelchairs:

- Never lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair.
- A person with a disability who has a wheelchair will treat and see their wheelchairs as an extension of their own body.
- Place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair.

Persons with Assistive Devices:

- Assistive devices can be canes, wheelchairs, walkers, oxygen tanks, electronic visual or audible devices.
- Do not touch, handle or adjust any assistive devices without permission of their owner or operator.
- Do not move assistive devices out of your customers reach.

Persons with Support Persons:

- A support person may be a family member, a friend, a specially trained volunteer or a certified health care professional.
- Address and speak to the person with the disability – not the interpreter or support person.
- Look at, and speak directly to the person with the disability.
- You do not need to ignore the support person. However, make sure your main focus is on interaction with the person with the disability.

Persons with Service Animals:

- Do not pet, whistle at, or feed the animal as this may distract it from its duty.
- Never ask the handler (the person with the animal) what disability or medical condition the animal is for. As a security guard, they are not legally bound to reveal this information to you.
- Service animals accompanying persons with disabilities are welcome by law in all public buildings and facilities.
- A service animal may be any type of animal, not just a dog.
- They are a working animal and must be respected as such.
- Never touch or address the animal.
- Service animals are used to assist those with physical and mental disabilities.



Legally, security guards must comply with the Code of Conduct Regulation under the Private Security & Investigative Services Act (PSISA) as well as the *Ontario Human Rights Code* (OHRC), and you are therefore legally obliged to treat all persons equally and without discrimination.

The Ontario Human Rights Code is a provincial law that gives everyone equal rights and opportunities without discrimination. Of equal importance are the requirements and standards in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) which ensures non-discriminatory and equal access to services for those with disabilities.



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Robert Ing is a forensic intelligence specialist and has appeared on North American news networks on the issues of technology crime, computer security, privacy and identity theft. With over 25 years experience in the public and private safety and security sectors, he has worked in the biomedical, technical, privacy and risk management aspects of safety and security.

He is an approved instructor for the Ontario Security Guard Curriculum, an Ontario CPO approved training provider instructor and Ontario TSSA training program instructor.

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