

# AGE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS RESOURCE GUIDE



# Age-Friendly Cleveland

In 2014, the City of Cleveland joined the World Health Organization (WHO) Age Friendly Cities and Communities Network in order to enhance the city's standing as a community for people of all ages and abilities. The Cleveland Department of Aging's mission is to improve the quality of life in the City of Cleveland by strengthening Cleveland neighborhoods, delivering superior services, embracing the diversity of Cleveland's citizens, and making Cleveland a desirable, safe city in which to live, work, raise a family, shop, study, play and grow old.

Taking time to assess the needs of older adults, through focus groups, community conversations and surveys, data was obtained and used to create Cleveland's Age-Friendly Action Plan. The plan comprises twenty-one strategies covering eight domains, with a focus on transportation, outdoor spaces and buildings, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and inclusion, communication and information and community support and health services. The Age-Friendly Cleveland plan shares the steps that the City of Cleveland, and the many partners and organizations involved, are taking to become Age-Friendly.



# Business Initiative

In 2018, Better Business Bureau Serving Greater Cleveland collaborated with Cleveland's Department of Aging to develop the Age-Friendly Business Certification. This initiative works within BBB's Educational Foundation through the Senior Awareness Initiative, which helps educate older consumers to create an ethical marketplace.

The Age-Friendly Business Certification was created to continue these organizations' efforts by educating, training, and promoting age-friendly Cleveland businesses that engage older adults through changes in marketing, store design and service.

An Age-Friendly Business should welcome older adult consumers and work towards meeting the needs of this diverse and economically powerful consumer base.

This program promotes age-friendly business practices and certifies Cleveland businesses are age-friendly through a review process of their physical environment, staff and personnel, marketing and customer experience.





# 4 benefits to being an age-friendly business

## 1 It's a growing market

- By 2020, older adults will make up 26% of the population in Cuyahoga County, outnumbering children and teens
- In Cleveland alone, adults 60+ are expected to outnumber people 18 and under by 2030

## 2 It helps meet your customers' needs

**As the number of people with disabilities increases, these customers are looking to patronize businesses that meet their needs:**



- Nearly 30% of Americans of all ages have at least one disability
- Nearly 40% of Americans age 65 and over live with at least one disability



# 3

## Older adults have buying power

### Older adults outspend every other age group across the United States

- Adults aged 50+ control 71% of the nation's wealth and account for 51% of consumer spending



# 4

## It's good for business

### Once certified, businesses can promote their certification in a variety of ways to advertise to their customers

#### Once certified, your business will:

- Be featured online in Better Business Bureau Serving Greater Cleveland's Age-friendly Business Directory
- Receive recognition at City of Cleveland Senior Events



- Receive a window cling and certificate to display your commitment to being age-friendly



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# Challenges and Obstacles for Older Adults

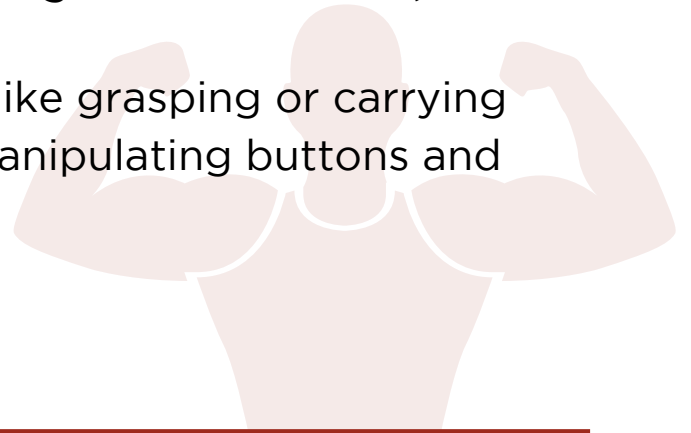
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# Decreased Mobility and Strength

*Older adults experience decreased body mass and nerve activity as they age, which can cause these behaviors:*

- Poor posture
- Holding immobile objects or walls while walking
- Shuffling or dragging of feet
- Difficulty writing—writing or signing name on letters, applications, etc.
- Difficulties in physical activities, like grasping or carrying objects, opening heavy doors, manipulating buttons and zippers, or lacing shoes



*Actions businesses can take to help with older adults' decreased mobility and strength*



- Be patient and allow for more time in transactions and interactions
- Provide more space for writing on documents
- Provide handrails on walls, etc.
- Clear clutter to prevent falls
- Look for hazards like carpet edges, lamps, cords, etc.
- Provide seating and benches



# Things to Consider: Wayfinding

*Decreased strength and mobility can pose various issues to older adults as they navigate a business. See potential places where a business can improve by looking at the list below:*

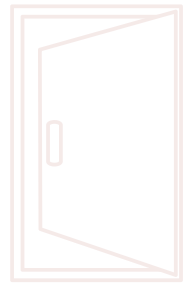
## Parking:



Is it clear where to park?  
Is clearer signage needed?

## Entrance:

Where is the entrance?  
Is it easily accessible?  
Are there ways to improve that accessibility?



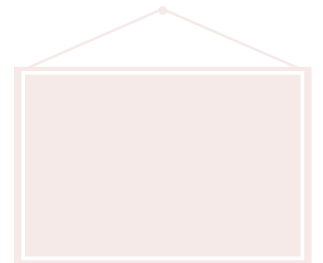
## Aisles and End Caps:



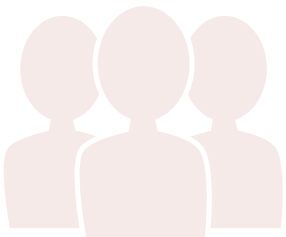
How do the end caps look?  
Are they spacious? Cluttered?

## Signage and Maps:

Are signage or maps present?  
Are they clear and easy to read?



## Staff and Customer Experience:

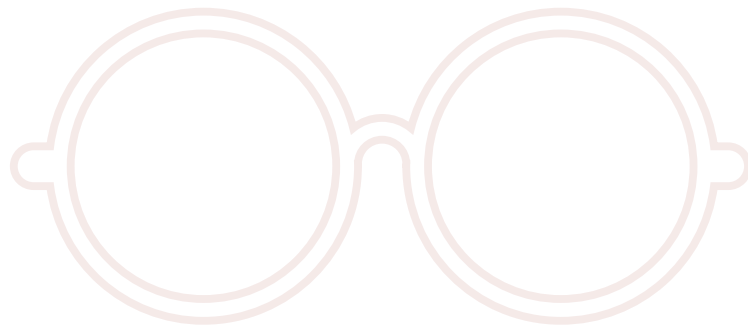


Is staff available?  
Are they offering assistance?

# Vision Challenges and Obstacles

*Older adults can experience various issues and changes in regards to their eyes and vision, which can pose challenges such as:*

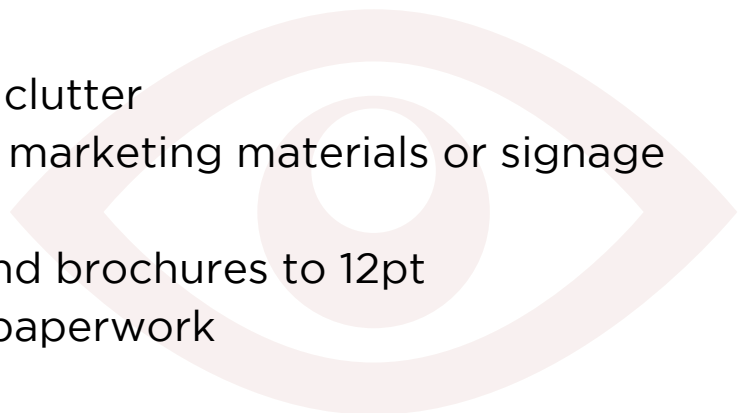
- Depth perception, leading to spills and falls
- Inability to copy
- Difficulty distinguishing objects from their background
- Difficulties with coordination



*Actions businesses can take to help with older adults' changes to and challenges with vision*

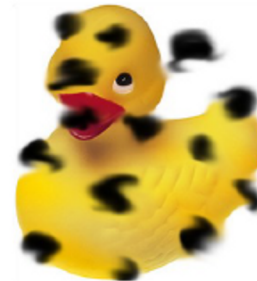


- Position objects in vision field
- Position objects consistently
- Simplify visual field by eliminating clutter
- Use bright or contrasting colors in marketing materials or signage
- Give verbal indication of actions
- Increase font size on paperwork and brochures to 12pt
- Increase contrast on signage and paperwork



# Vision Challenges and Obstacles

## Vision Diseases



Cataracts

Glaucoma

Diabetic  
Retinopathy

Macular  
Degeneration

*Image 1: Examples of common ocular diseases and their effects on vision*

**This is effective**

**This is not as  
effective**

**This is effective**

**This is not as  
effective**

**This is effective**

*This is not as  
effective*

**This is  
effective**

This is not as effective. This is not as  
effective. This is not as effective.

*Image 2: Examples of effective and ineffective text/design on marketing materials*



# Hearing Challenges and Obstacles

*One in three adults over 60 have hearing loss. Hearing loss can also differ between adults—it might be difficult for some to hear intensity or volume, whereas others might find it hard to hear pitch. Hearing loss can cause some of these behaviors:*

- Increased speaking volume
- Tipping head or moving to hear better
- Repeating themselves or confusing words
- Inappropriate responses or confusion to questions (i.e., nods when not understanding)
- Isolation from social activities
- Emotional upset—rather than admit they may be experiencing hearing loss, some older adults may lash out in frustration

*Actions businesses can take to help with older adults' changes to and challenges with hearing*

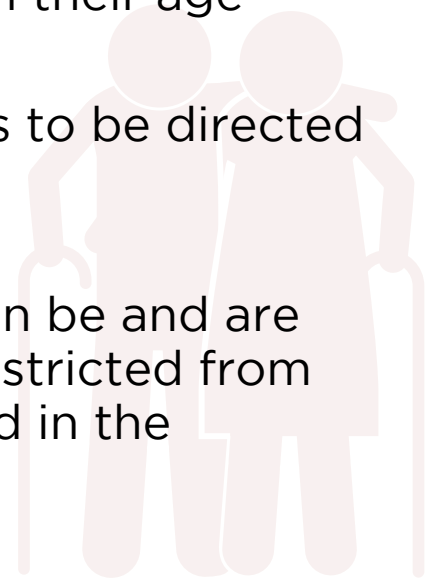


- Move closer to the person you're talking to
- Face the person so that the individual can read your lips
- Reduce background noise
- Do not eat or chew gum while talking
- Enunciate and speak slowly
- Provide cues about the topic of conversation
- Write information down and send a confirmation or summary of conversation
- Ask the person if they can hear you

# Other Challenges for Older Adults

## Ageism

- Ageism is the act of prejudice, discrimination, or stereotyping of an individual based on their age
- It is most common for ageist attitudes to be directed towards older adults
  - Because of this, older adults can be and are overlooked for employment, restricted from social services, and stereotyped in the media

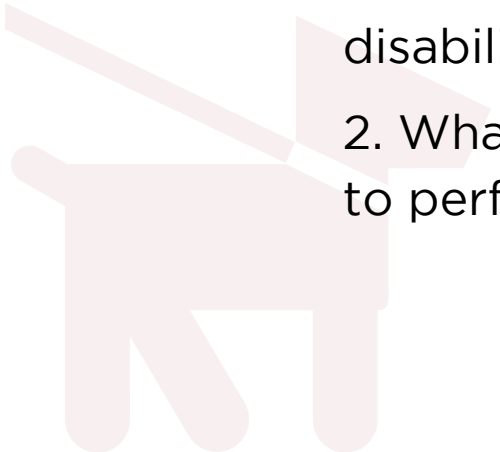


## Service Animals

- Service animals are dogs or miniature horses that are trained to do work and/or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities:
  - Emotional support, comfort, and therapy animals are **not** service animals under Title II and Title III of the ADA

### **Staff may ask only two questions:**

1. Is the service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?



# Communication Techniques

*All of the pages you've just read highlight communication challenges older adults may experience. You can read how a business can avoid some of these common pitfalls below:*



## Face to Face:

- Make sure you can be seen and heard
- Maintain eye contact
- Allow extra time
- Avoid distractions

## Telephone:

- Consider hearing impairments - ask whether you can be heard
- Speak clearly and enunciate
- Reduce background noise
- Address older adults formally - use Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr unless they invite you to call them by their first name



## Written:

- Consider vision impairments or low literacy levels
- Use plain language - clear and to the point:  
instead of: **utilize** choose **use**  
instead of: **in the event** choose **if**  
instead of: **accordingly** choose **so**





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# Tips

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## Physical Environment

- Keep aisles clean – refrain from overcrowding aisles, as this creates barriers. It is recommended to keep a three foot wide route throughout your business
- Place popular items, and products geared towards older customers, within easy reach for most
- Provide seating in a couple of locations inside your store.
- Ensure signs are clear as to where the restroom is located
- Place ramps in areas with changes in floor heights to minimize falls and/or tripping

## Marketing Materials

- Use Sans Serif fonts like Arial or Calibri. Fonts with decorative end strokes like Times New Roman can be hard to read.
- Leave space between lines of text
- Use vivid colors. Avoid pastels and grays
- Create a high contrast between text and background of your materials
- Whenever possible offer lists, menus, and materials in larger fonts for people who may have visual impairments
- Positively portray older adults in photos. Refrain from using images that negatively stereotype older adults

## Customer Experience

- Train staff to communicate more effectively with diverse populations –including those with vision and hearing impairments
- Provide older adults with extra help as needed. Teach staff to offer a lending hand if someone has difficulty reaching an item, reading a label, or loading their vehicle
- Ensure that staff is easy to identify, either by uniform or by identification
- Discourage the use of cell phones by staff during customer interactions/ transactions

## Communication Techniques

- Speak clearly and slowly; do not use an exaggerated tone or overly simple words when speaking to an older adult
- Train staff to lightly tap on an older customer to gain the older adult's attention followed by “excuse me sir/ma’am”
- Do not have staff raise their voice to gain the attention of an older adult
- Train staff to use a lower pitched voice when speaking to someone who has difficulty hearing. Lower pitched voices are usually easier to hear

# Age-Friendly Checklist

*Now you know what it takes to be age-friendly—use this checklist to see how your business stacks up!*

## Marketing

### Print Materials

- ☐ Use easy to read sans serif font, such as Arial or Calibri
- ☐ Materials and forms are offered in multiple languages
- ☐ Signage and materials can be easily read and understood by people of varied reading levels
- ☐ Contrasting font and background colors are used for easy visibility

### Website and Online Materials

- ☐ Key information is easy to find, such as hours, address, and contact information
- ☐ Navigation bars and menus are easy to find and use
- ☐ Website has easily found zoom and text resize controls
- ☐ Contrasting font and background colors for easy visibility

### Advertising and Promotion

- ☐ Promotional materials include positive portrayals of older adults
- ☐ Promote your age-friendly services or products in areas or markets where they will be seen and used by older adults

## Experience

### Customer Service

- ☐ Staff are consistently available to offer help (get products, help reading labels, etc) to older adults
- ☐ Staff are trained to assist older adults with vision, hearing, and mobility disabilities
- ☐ Staff know how to handle falls and other accidents in a professional and respectful manner

### Communication

- ☐ Staff are trained to not talk down or use other ageist behavior towards older adults
- ☐ Staff are trained to appropriately communicate with older adults with hearing and vision challenges

# Age-Friendly Checklist

## Environment

### Design and Safety

- ☐ Stairs, inclines, and other safety issues throughout the store are clearly marked
- ☐ Storefront and entryway are consistently cleared of snow, leaves, or other debris that poses a safety risk
- ☐ Paths throughout business are clear of boxes and other clutter
- ☐ Rugs and carpeting are secured to prevent tripping

### Accessibility

- ☐ Entryway door is either automatic or light weight to open, or a staff member is available to assist older adults with strength and mobility issues
- ☐ Pathways throughout the business are wide enough to accommodate mobility assistance
- ☐ Seating areas can accommodate a wheelchair or scooter
- ☐ Entryway is accessible to those with mobility assistance
- ☐ Restroom is publicly accessible for older adults

### Atmosphere

- ☐ Business and entryway are well-lit, particularly in areas where older adults may be asked to read signs or forms
- ☐ Music is at an appropriate level—avoid loud music
- ☐ If possible, have sections of your business reserved as a quiet area

### Shopping

- ☐ Products and materials can be easily reached, or a staff member is available to assist
- ☐ Seating is provided or can be offered for older adults to rest
- ☐ Products or materials marketed towards or popular with older adults are in an accessible area
- ☐ Staff are available and trained to help older adults navigate their way through your business



# Other Resources

## **AARP Ohio**

866.389.5653  
17 S. High Street, Suite 800  
Columbus, OH 43215  
[states.aarp.org/ohio/](https://states.aarp.org/ohio/)

## **Better Business Bureau Serving Greater Cleveland**

216.241.7678  
2800 Euclid Avenue, Floor 4  
Cleveland, OH 44115  
[bbb.org/cleveland](https://bbb.org/cleveland)

## **Cleveland Department of Aging**

216.664.2833  
75 Erieview Plaza, 2nd floor  
Cleveland, OH 44114  
[www.city.cleveland.oh.us/CityofCleveland/Home/Government/CityAgencies/Aging](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us/CityofCleveland/Home/Government/CityAgencies/Aging)

## **Cuyahoga County Division of Senior and Adult Services**

216.420.6750  
13815 Kinsman Road  
Cleveland, OH 44120  
[dsas.cuyahogacounty.us/](https://dsas.cuyahogacounty.us/)

## **LEAP**

216.696.2716  
2545 Lorain Avenue  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113  
[www.leapinfo.org/](http://www.leapinfo.org/)

## **United Way 2-1-1 Help Center**

211  
[www.211oh.org/](http://www.211oh.org/)

# Have more questions on the Age-Friendly Business Initiative?

## Contact for more information:

Better Business Bureau  
216.241.7678  
[info@cleveland.bbb.org](mailto:info@cleveland.bbb.org)

Cleveland Department of Aging  
216.664.2833  
[aging@city.cleveland.oh.us](mailto:aging@city.cleveland.oh.us)

