

Accessible Customer Service



FRONTIER
SCHOOL DIVISION

What can you do? It can be as easy as asking,
“How can I help?”

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*** All information used in this handout is from the Disabilities Issues Office, *Introducing Manitoba’s Accessibility Standard for Customer Service* handout, available at: accessibilitymb.ca/customer-service-standard.html

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Understanding the Law

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

In 2013, *the Accessibility for Manitobans Act* became law and its main goal is for Manitobans of all abilities to reach their full potential. It provides a clear and proactive process for the prevention and removal of barriers that restrict people from full participation in daily living. Over time, five accessibility standards will become regulations: customer service, accessible employment, information and communication, transportation, and the built environment.

The act builds on the requirements of *The Human Rights Code* (Manitoba) to create a made-in-Manitoba solution to eliminating barriers.

The Human Rights Code (Manitoba)

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service requires that training includes the rights and responsibilities covered by *The Human Rights Code* (Manitoba). *The Code* overrides any other law, unless that law specifically says otherwise.

The definition of discrimination in *The Code* includes the failure to reasonably accommodate the needs of individuals or groups such as those with mental and physical disabilities.

Reasonable accommodation means adjusting a rule, or even a physical space, allowing for changes to the way things are usually done. Organizations should have a policy in place to help determine if the accommodation is reasonable. If it is not possible for the provider to grant the request in full, or in part, he/she must show that it would cause undue hardship.

What is the Accessible Customer Service Standard?

Overview

In 2015, the Government of Manitoba introduced the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, the first standard in *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act*. Accessibility standards are the building blocks of the act. They will be introduced gradually to create understanding and to allow for planning among affected organizations.

Accessible customer service means that organizations and businesses provide products or services in an efficient, fair and respectful manner to people of all abilities. Often, this can be done at no cost.

Becoming aware and removing barriers offer new opportunities for people across a full range of disabilities, including physical, vision, hearing, mental health, developmental, learning and other disabilities.

Improving accessibility is the right thing to do. It's also the smart thing to do. What benefits people with disabilities, often benefits everyone.

Nearly every Manitoban has a disability, knows someone with a disability or will acquire a disability in the coming years.

Did you know...Barriers to accessibility are a daily reality for more than 200,000 Manitobans, and an accessibility barrier is anything that limits or prevents a person from being able to receive information, services and goods, or to access space or activities. Attitude can be the biggest barrier.

Who Needs to Comply with the Standard?

Public sector organizations have until November 2017 to comply, including all school divisions.

The standard includes a number of legal requirements. Organizations and businesses with at least one employee must introduce policies and practices in the following areas:

- Ensure **communication** with a person disabled by a barrier is done in a way that removes the barrier.
- Welcome the use of **assistive devices**.
- Welcome **support persons**.
- Welcome **people with service animals**.
- Create **barrier-free access** to goods and services, so they benefit everyone as intended.
- Inform the public when there are **service disruptions**.
- Introduce a process to receive and respond to **feedback**, including what action will be taken to respond to complaints. (Feedback can be sent to accessibilityfeedback@fsdnet.ca)
- Ensure employees receive **training** on how to serve people disabled by barriers.

See Frontier School Division's Accessibility Plan for more information on Frontier's commitment to removing these barriers (<http://www.frontiersd.mb.ca>).

Serving Our Community

Complying with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service can be as easy as asking, "How can I help?"

Here are some general tips for respectful communication and interaction with people disabled by barriers:

- Focus on removing the barrier rather than determining the disability.
- Consider various approaches to making communication accessible, depending on the situation and the person's needs. For example, ensuring you are sending out accessible PDF's.
- Let the public know information is available in other formats, on request. Examples of alternate formats are large print and electronic versions.
- Use respectful language. Refer to an individual as a person with a disability – not handicapped.
- Avoid making assumptions. Instead, ask how you can help. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.
- By being accessible, we are creating an inclusive environment for all.

What can you do? It can be as easy as asking, "How can I help?"

The Division must make public events accessible to all people by announcing events in a manner that is accessible, holding events in accessible locations, and making active offers such as "Please contact us in advance if you have any particular accommodation requirements [contact information]."

What are the Barriers to Customer Service?

Attitudinal Barriers

When people think and act based on false assumptions.

Example: Thinking you will automatically know when someone has a disability because it will be visible.

Information and Communication Barriers

When information is offered in a form that suits some but not all of the population.

Example: Signs that are small or visually confusing.

Technological Barriers

Focusing on information and service delivery on technology that is not accessible for all.

Example: A website that cannot be used by people who are blind or visually impaired through a screen-reader.

Systemic Barriers

Policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.

Example: Eligibility criteria that effectively exclude people based on a disability.

Physical and Architectural Barriers

When the environment presents challenges that make it difficult for some to easily access a place.

Example: Classroom aisles that are too narrow for a person with a walker or wheelchair.

Additional Requirements

Public sector organizations must let customers know that documents are available upon request, for example:

“This handout is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the facilitator for the word format of this document.”

More Information

For more information on Accessibility Legislation please visit:

<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/index.html>

or email accessibilityfeedback@fsdnet.ca

This document was originally created by The University of Manitoba, Accessibility Department and has been modified with their consent.

Customer Service Standard Training videos:

Module 1 - https://youtu.be/U_INmKn3-wQ

Module 2 - <https://youtu.be/L4bvoekgT5g>

Module 3 - <https://youtu.be/PiJXGcYCxYs>