

Accessibility for Manitobans: Everyone Benefits Online Training Transcript

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Accessibility for Manitobans: Everyone Benefits

Welcome to the Disabilities Issues Office online training video outlining the basic elements of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

Feel free to take a look around our website for other tools, like Employee Tips and Frequently Asked Questions, that can help you create accessibility at your organization. This training resource has been developed to assist your organization to meet the basic training requirements under Manitoba's Customer Service Standard Regulation. This training is to be used in addition to your organization's own policies, practices and measures related to accessible customer service. We have created an additional Facilitator's Guide to lead discussion for those taking this training in groups or teams. For individual learning, we have provided the Knowledge Check for Learners with quizzes to test your knowledge. We hope these training resources will help you continue the conversation regarding accessibility.

People with disabilities shop, work and travel with family and friends, just like everyone else. They are some of the people you serve. You might call them service recipients, customers, patients, clients, members, or patrons. In the course of this video, we will be calling them your customer. By focusing on how to serve people with disabilities, your organization or business may attract more customers, enhance customer loyalty, and improve services for all.

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Learning Overview

This training has been organized into four modules.

By actively participating in this training you will...

1. Understand barriers to accessibility
2. Learn about Manitoba's accessibility law and how it helps remove barriers to access
3. Understand how to offer accessible customer service, as required by law.

And 4. Learn tips to create accessibility for the people you serve.

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Module 1: Understanding barriers to accessibility

All Manitobans, regardless of their abilities, have the right to participate fully in society.

This image shows a senior accompanied by a young man in a wheelchair, both using the ramp that leads to the main entrance of Manitoba's Legislative Building.

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One in six Manitobans face barriers to accessibility, and with our aging population, this number continues to grow.

For people with disabilities, a barrier is anything that interacts with their disability in a way that may impact, or even prevent, their full and effective participation in society.

While most barriers have not been set up on purpose, there are many ways to inadvertently or accidentally limit access to goods and services. By identifying, removing and preventing barriers, we will create a more inclusive society for all Manitobans. Improving accessibility is the right thing to do.

This image shows two women, one young boy and two young girls at a playground. Some of them are holding hands. One of the women is using a cane.

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For Manitoba businesses, removing barriers is also the smart thing to do.

Canadian Business Sensability reports that 3.8 million Canadians identify as having a disability. That's an estimated annual spending power of \$55.4 billion. Removing barriers to access often costs little or nothing.

The image shows a grocery clerk assisting a man in choosing between two cans by reading the labels.

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Barriers to accessibility are the daily reality for more than 200,000 Manitobans.

Barriers may affect information & communication when not everyone can understand or access the message. For example, in-person communication is difficult for some people when the location is noisy and they are hard-of-hearing or anxious.

Barriers may be affected by technology. For example, a computer or telephone can improve accessibility when someone who is Deaf or hard-of-hearing uses it to communicate. Technology can also introduce new barriers, like when you must have sight and the use of your fingers to use it.

Barriers may be structural or physical barriers resulting from the design of a building - such as stairs, doorways, and the width of a hallway. Physical barriers are also created through everyday practices, for example, by storing boxes in a hallway making it narrow and difficult to pass, or by not shoveling walkways.

Barriers are systemic, when they are a result of an organization's policies or usual practices. An example of a systemic barrier is requiring all customers to use a computer to obtain more information.

Did you know that attitudes can be the greatest barrier of all? Attitudinal barriers result when people think and act based on false assumptions. For example, some people may think that if people are unable to express themselves verbally, they cannot make decisions. This is not the case, but shows how attitudinal barriers can often be based on stereotypes or simply a lack of understanding. The positive thing is that our attitudes and our actions towards others are within our power to change.

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It is important to focus on barriers, not disabilities. Many people think disabilities are the barriers, but it's the environment or society that presents barriers. This training, like Manitoba's new accessibility law, focuses on how to identify, prevent and remove barriers, *not* disabilities.

The most important thing to know about disabilities is that they are more often hidden than they are visible. For example, you cannot see if a person has trouble hearing, remembering or becomes anxious in crowds.

The image states, "Some disabilities look like this" and shows icons for disabilities including walking with a cane, sitting in a wheelchair and seated with a crutch. The image then says "some look like this" and shows a simple stick figure.

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Barrier Example 1

Sarah has low vision. She is given a brochure with a font size that she cannot read.

Sarah's low vision is not the barrier. **The small print size is the barrier.** If Sarah had larger print she could read the material.

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Barrier Example 2

George arrives at your organization and asks for assistance. Due to a recent stroke, his speech is slurred and it is difficult for you to understand him. Your co-worker believes George may have consumed alcohol or another substance.

George's speech impairment is not the barrier. **Attitude is the barrier.**

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Module 2: Manitoba's Accessibility Law

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, also referred to as the AMA, was enacted in December 2013 with the main goals of identifying, preventing and removing barriers to participation. This is done through collaboration of government, business, community organizations and citizens. The Manitoba government provides leadership by identifying the minister responsible for the AMA, as well as a director.

While the focus of the AMA will be to educate into compliance, the AMA addresses enforcement measures, including penalties.

The Manitoba government aims to make significant progress towards achieving accessibility by 2023. This will happen by removing barriers to everyday living, while promoting dignity and respect for Manitobans with disabilities.

The image shows two women walking down a path with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights behind them. One woman has a cane.

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Accessibility Standards, or regulations, are the building blocks of the AMA. They outline who has to do what by when to enhance accessibility.

There will be five standards: Customer Service, passed November 2015; Employment; Information and Communications; Built Environment (which will consider the design of public spaces); and Transportation. An Accessibility Advisory Council helps develop the standards for the Manitoba government and has representation from business, municipalities and organizations that represent people with disabilities.

The image shows a woman assisting a man with no arms to access a computer keyboard.

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Manitoba Human Rights Code

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act complements The Human Rights Code and offers proactive ways to ensure accessibility for everyone, regardless of their abilities.

Reasonable accommodation means adjusting a rule, policy, practice or a physical space to allow changes to the ways we usually do things. In most cases, providing reasonable accommodation in customer service is simple, free and affordable.

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The Human Rights Code says that the duty to accommodate should not create **undue hardship**. For example:

- significant health and safety risks; or
- financial hardship (with significant impact)

Inconvenience, preferences or some costs do not usually qualify as undue hardship.

If an accommodation request creates undue hardship for you, you still need to explore other ways to provide accessible customer service. Collaborate with the person who is making the request to find another way to provide customer service.

With flexibility, openness and good communication, accommodation solutions are usually possible, easy and inexpensive.

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The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service requires all of us to put the customer first; let the values of independence, dignity, access and equality guide you.

Organisations are required to provide flexible, customer-centred service by identifying, removing and preventing barriers. If a barrier cannot be removed, the organization should provide alternative options.

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service applies to any customers, clients, service recipients, patients and members, and any other terms you use to describe people who seek your goods and services.

The image is a portrait shot of a young woman in a life jacket. It is not evident if she has a disability.

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Who has to comply with The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service?

- the **government of Manitoba** had to comply by November 2016
- **public sector organizations** – such as universities, colleges, health authorities, large municipalities and school divisions – had until November 2017

The image shows an event at the rotunda of the legislature building.

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This law also applies to all Manitoba organizations that have one or more employees, including:

- **businesses** like shops, restaurants and hotels, along with legal, healthcare and other professional services
- **non-profit organizations** like charities, unions, places of worship, community organizations and member associations

The image shows a young woman painting a window frame.

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Module 3: How can you offer accessible customer service?

Organizations are required to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessible customer service by creating and acting on policies, practices and measures related to accessible customer service. This module will explain each of the eight requirements of the standard and how they apply to you.

The image shows one woman serving coffee to another in a casual office. They are making eye contact and smiling.

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1. Communicate in a way that best meets your customers' needs.

Speak directly to the person and maintain eye contact. Don't speak to a companion, aide or interpreter.

For longer conversations, invite everyone to sit.

Have a pad of paper or white board handy in case a customer is hard-of-hearing, Deaf or unable to speak and wishes to communicate in writing.

Print publications and documents, such as menus and pamphlets, in at least a size 12 font, with contrasting colours. Also, include a notice about other ways to access the information: "Available in alternate formats, upon request."

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2. Accommodate the Use of Assistive Devices

Assistive devices, like canes or hearing aids, enable people with disabilities to complete everyday tasks and activities when accessing goods, services or facilities.

Refrain from touching assistive devices without permission.

If applicable, let customers know what assistive devices you offer and know how to use them. Some organizations, for example, offer wheelchairs. Others have accessibility features on a self-serve checkout.

Image of a walker (a mobility device).

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Do not move assistive devices out of a customer's reach, if possible.

Make sure there is enough space to accommodate assistive devices. Organize the space so that there is room for wheelchairs, scooters and walkers.

Image of a woman using a scooter near a mirror.

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3. Welcome Support Persons

A support person assists with mobility, personal care, medical needs or with specific tasks like banking.

- Speak directly to your customer or service recipient.
- Be careful not to assume the individual with a support person does not understand. Most people prefer to make their own decisions about what to buy or how a service may affect them.

Image of a woman using a wheelchair in the park, being pushed by a support person.

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Avoid charging entrance or other fees for a support person, when possible.

If you need to charge admission for the support person, provide advance notice. For example, by noting this charge on your website or on a poster.

Image of a woman and a support person being assisted by another woman at a counter.

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4. Allow Service Animals in your premises

People accompanied by service animals have the right to be wherever the public is allowed.

Service animals are working animals focussed on meeting the needs of their handler with a disability.

A service animal might wear a harness or vest. A service animal should not be touched or distracted.

The service animal must be under control at all times. If the customer is not controlling the service animal, you may offer a warning and eventually ask them to leave.

In situations where the animal is prohibited by another law, provide another way for the person to access your goods, services or facilities.

Image of man with a service dog and a woman being served at a restaurant.

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Not sure if an animal is a service animal?

You can ask: "Has this animal been trained to help with a disability-related need?"

Many handlers carry documentation, such as a letter, from a health professional or service animal trainer that states that they require the animal because of a disability-related need.

Consider asking for documentation only when the service the animal is providing is not obvious.

Please remember that a handler should not have to disclose a diagnosis or personal health information.

Image of a man with a service animal and a woman being served by another woman at a coffee shop.

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5. Maintain accessibility features so they can be used as intended.

- Examples of accessibility features include ramps, wide aisles, accessible washrooms, power doors and elevators.
- Organize your space to make room for customers using assistive devices like wheelchairs or walkers.
- Ensure surfaces indoors are clean and that outdoor spaces, including ramps, are clear of snow and ice for easy passage and safety.
- Keep entryways and aisles clear of clutter.

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6. Let the public know when and why an accessibility feature is unavailable

Be sure to notify customers if an accessibility feature, such as an elevator or automatic door button, is temporarily out of service.

Provide notice in different ways, such as posting information online, putting up signs or alerting customers when they call.

Include information on how long the feature will be unavailable, and offer other options when possible.

Image of a woman wearing a hat exiting a building and pushing the automatic door button.

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7. Welcome and respond promptly to feedback on the accessibility of your goods and services.

Ask for feedback to learn more about how to meet the accessibility needs of the people you serve.

Tell customers about your feedback process and keep a record.

Make sure you follow up in a reasonable amount of time, as directed by your organization's policy.

Allow customers to provide feedback in various ways.

For example, an online form may not work for customers using screen readers, so let customers call or email.

Image of an elderly woman using a computer with a young woman sitting next to her.

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8. Complete Training

Take training, such as this one, and discuss what you learned with your colleagues.

Know your organization's Accessible Customer Service policies and practices.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Take the time to speak with your colleagues or manager if you need help understanding how to provide accessible customer service. You can also review the tips we provide on our website.

Help train new staff and, if possible, volunteers.

The image shows two young men using a power door. One man is using a wheelchair.

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Additional Accessible Customer Service Requirements

Organizations with 20 or more employees must write down their policies and share them with the public, upon request. However, this is a great practice for **all** organizations.

The image shows a woman in the library taking down a book off a high shelf for a man using a wheelchair.

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Module 4: Tips to Create Accessibility

If you notice that a customer is having difficulty accessing your services, what would you do?

Great customer service begins with the question: How can I help?

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Create accessibility for your customers

Be aware that people have different individual needs. What works for one person may not work for another.

Ask questions if you are not sure. Your customers are your best source for information about their own needs.

A solution can be simple, and the customers will likely appreciate your attention and consideration.

Contact your manager or supervisor for more support.

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Take time.

- Your customer may need more time to express themselves or to move about.
- Offer to move to a quiet place if a customer seems anxious or has trouble hearing.
- Write information down if a customer needs a reminder or if the environment is noisy.
- Consider other ways to get goods or services to the customer, like home delivery.

The image shows a man at a dentist office having a discussion with a dental hygienist.

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Offer assistance

Most disabilities are invisible, so businesses have no way of knowing which of their customers face barriers that affect access to products or services. Do not be shy about offering assistance. Your customer will appreciate the effort, or perhaps say no thank you.

This slide shows the “Access Offer” sign available to you for free from our office to place on a wall or counter. It tells customers that services are available in various ways.

Electronic copies of this sign can be found on our website, along with a detailed description of the symbols and even more tips.

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Please contact us if you have questions about this video or The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. We’re here to help. Our information can be found on our website: accessibilitymb.ca

Here you can access the latest information on new standards and deadlines under Manitoba’s accessibility legislation. You will also find a variety of resources, such as policy guides and templates, employee tips, and tools to make your organization more accessible.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about Manitoba’s new accessibility law.

Together, we can create an accessible province for all.

This slide has an image of our website home page and a link to sign up for our newsletter.