

Accessibility for Manitobans: Everyone Benefits

Accessible Customer Service Training

Facilitator's Guide

Page 1 of 9

Accessible Customer Service Training: Facilitator's Guide

Introduction

The [Accessibility Standard for Customer Service](#) requires that all organizations with at least one employee provide training that includes:

- an overview of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, The Human Rights Code (Manitoba), the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service and related organizational policies and practices
- how to interact and communicate with people disabled by barriers, including people who use an assistive device, are accompanied by a support person or are assisted by a service animal
- how to use an organization's assistive equipment or devices available on-site (for example, a public computer)

Employers are required to train employees, volunteers and management upon hiring, and when there are changes to policies, practices and measures that affect access to goods and services. Employers with 50 or more employees must document their Accessible Customer Service Policy, including the training plan. Please see the [Employers' Handbook on Accessible Customer Service](#) for further explanations.

Additional tools and resources are available at: [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca).

Please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office, for more information or alternate formats: mao@gov.mb.ca or 204-945-7613.

Note to the Facilitator:

Employees can complete the Accessible Customer Service learning module on their own. However, group participation and discussion is required to best relate the training content to your workplace. It is recommended to select a facilitator to help guide this process.

The role of the facilitator is to help your group identify how the law applies to your organization, whether you work in an office with hundreds of employees, or are a member of a community organization with only one employee and many volunteers.

Step 1. Ensure your organization has an accessible customer service policy to share with employees. Only organizations with 50 or more must document their policy, but writing it down helps to share policy and practices. A [Sample Accessible Customer Service Policy](#) is provided at AccessibilityMB.ca

Step 2. Schedule a meeting to discuss the purpose of the training and its application to your organization.

Step 3. Use the following questions to guide discussions related to each of the four training sections:

1. Understanding barriers to accessibility
2. Manitoba's accessibility law
3. How to offer accessible service, as required by law
4. Tips to create accessibility for the people you serve

Section 1: Understanding Barriers to Accessibility

There are many types of barriers faced by people with disabilities. Most of these are invisible. For more information, including solutions to barriers, see the list of [Barriers and Solutions](#).

Barriers are obstacles that limit access and prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in everyday life. Most barriers are not intentional. Barriers usually arise because spaces, goods or services do not take into account users' diversity of

abilities. For instance, this might be related to height, strength, memory or understanding.

Attitudinal barriers result when people think and act based on false assumptions. Example: A receptionist talks to an individual's support person they assume that the individual with a disability will not understand.

Informational and communication barriers are created when information is offered in a form that suits some, but not all, of the population. Example: A document uses a small font and is difficult to see, or a public announcement system only alerts people who can hear the message.

Technological barriers occur when technology cannot be accessed or used by people with disabilities. Example: A website is not accessible to people who are blind and use screen reader software.

Systemic barriers are policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded. Example: Certain eligibility criteria that exclude people based on a disability, including requiring a job applicant to have a driver's license when a job could accommodate a person to use an alternate form of transportation.

Physical and architectural barriers are physical obstacles that make it difficult for some to easily access a place. Example: Certain door knobs cannot be turned by a person with limited mobility or strength, or a hallway or door that is too narrow to allow a person who uses a wheelchair to pass through safely.

Group Discussion:

1. Who knows someone with a disability who has faced barriers to accessibility? For example, perhaps you know a senior citizen with mobility or hearing issues.
2. What kinds of barriers did the person face? Identify the barrier(s) and what steps were taken by the individual or others to help eliminate the barrier(s).
3. What types of barriers could affect customers accessing our goods or services? (Encourage participants to provide specific examples.)

Section 2: Manitoba's Accessibility Law

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) provides a framework for creating regulations called standards. The Accessibility Advisory Council (Council) helped develop the standards for the Manitoba government. The Council has representation from businesses, municipalities and organizations that represent people with disabilities. Each standard was developed in consultation with the public. For more information, visit accessibilitymb.ca/law.html.

This training focuses on The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. The Manitoba government has a number of tools available for businesses and non-profit organizations to meet the requirements. Visit AccessibilityMB.ca for more information about:

- Employer responsibilities under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.
- How to develop accessibility policies, practices and measures, as outlined in the [Employers' Handbook](#).
- Developing and reviewing policies promoting accessible goods and services, as outlined in The [Sample Accessible Customer Service Policy](#). If your organization has fewer than 50 employees, you are not required to keep a written record of accessibility and training policies. However, we encourage you to do this as a promising practice.

Group Discussion:

1. Identify examples of how your business or organization has removed barriers to customer service, and how you provide reasonable accommodations. Consider any physical barriers, communication barriers, or other ways to provide accessible customer service.
2. The AMA does not require organizations to make renovations to increase accessibility. If your building is not accessible, what are other ways you could provide access to goods or services?

Section 3: How to Offer Accessible Customer Service, as Required by Law

Share your organization's Accessible Customer Service Policy as part of mandatory staff training. Provide employees with the resources, such as the [Tips for Employees on Accessible Customer Service](#).

Accessibility – Related to The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, accessibility means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. Accessibility refers to the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product or environment.

Service Animal – Defined by The Human Rights Code (Manitoba), a service animal is trained to assist a person with a disability. The work or tasks a service animal performs must be directly related to a person's physical or mental disability. Animals that provide comfort and companionship, but are not trained to assist with a person's disability, are not service animals. For more information on service animals, please visit the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

Group Discussion:

1. What does accessible customer service mean for your organization? Discuss the various aspects of your policies, procedures, and expectations of staff.
2. Do employees or customers use service animals? If so, what stands out about the service animal, compared to a pet??
3. How should staff interact with customers with service animals? What questions should you ask? When should customers be warned about maintaining control of their animals?

(For more information about service animals, please see the [Fact Sheet](#) prepared by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.)

4. What must staff know about requesting and responding to feedback about accessibility?

5. How can we encourage and foster a workplace culture that encourages dialogues, questions, feedback, and concerns about providing customer service? How can staff provide anonymous questions or feedback?
6. Share the list of [FAQs on AccessibilityMB.ca](#) to help respond to questions. You may wish to contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office for other issues raised by staff.

Quick Tip: Provide flexible customer service. If a customer requires a consultation for your products or services, consider an online or telephone meeting.

Section 4: Tips to Create Accessibility for the People You Serve

The most important “take home message” is to not make assumptions about a person’s abilities or needs. Instead, simply ask: How can I help?

Respectful communication ensures customers feel respected. Some examples of respectful communication and language are included in this training, and other examples can be found under Resources on [AccessibilityMB.ca](#), including a card and poster called [Words with Dignity](#).

One of the last slides of this section shows an image of the Manitoba government’s [Access Offer Sign](#). This invitation for accessible services is available for download under Resources or in hard copy from the Manitoba Accessibility Office. The following [scenarios](#) offer tips on ways to welcome customers by removing barriers to goods and services.

Scenarios for Final Group Discussion:

The following scenarios provide opportunities for collaborative problem solving:

(Note: there may be multiple answers depending on rationale)

1. Ren has multiple disabilities. The person providing service assumes that Ren cannot communicate or make decisions herself and talks directly to the support person. What is the barrier? What better service could Ren expect?

- The barrier is attitudinal. Ren should expect the service provider to communicate with her directly.
2. Fred uses a wheelchair and is hard of hearing. The counter is high and the room is noisy. He indicates he does not understand your answer. What is the barrier? How can you offer Fred better customer service?
 - The barrier is related to information and communication. It may also be structural. You can offer Fred a quiet space. Another option may be writing the information down.
 3. Your organization has a staircase to the front door. What is the barrier? Consider ways of equitable customer service.
 - The barrier is structural. Depending on your organization, you can offer to take the good or service directly to the customer. You can offer to meet at an accessible location. There may be another accessible entrance.
 4. You have a coupon for a price reduction on your goods or services. You inform your customers that it is only available online. What is a possible barrier(s)? What can you do to make sure the coupon is available to everyone?
 - This may be a technological barrier. It may also be a barrier related to information and communications. You could read the coupon to your customer if they are unable to access it, or offer alternate formats if they would like it printed, for example. You can also accept printed copies.

For more information, please contact the:

Manitoba Accessibility Office

630 - 240 Graham Avenue

Winnipeg MB R3C 0J7

Phone: 204-945-7613 (in Winnipeg)

Toll-Free: 1-800-282-8069, Ext. 7613 (outside Winnipeg).

Fax: 204-948-2896

Email: mao@gov.mb.ca

Visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://accessibilitymb.ca) to learn more

Subscribe to our newsletter [Accessibility News](#)

Join the [#AccessibleMB](#) conversation on Twitter and Facebook

For more information, please see the [Employers' Handbook](#) on the [Accessibility Standard for Customer Service](#).

Legal disclaimer: This training resource is not legal advice. It aims to assist organizations to meet the basic training requirements under Manitoba's Customer Service Standard Regulation. The training does not replace the content of the Customer Service Standard Regulation or The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. If there is any conflict between this training resource and the regulation or the act, the latter two shall prevail.