

Explanation of “Access Offer” Signs

Most disabilities are invisible, so businesses have no way of knowing which of their customers face barriers that affect access to products or services. Placing the “Access Offer Sign” on a counter or wall or in a brochure lets clients know that your business or organization will take steps to welcome all customers, including persons with disabilities. These signs support compliance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. The ***highlighted tips** are requirements of the Customer Service Standard.



In a parking lot this image tells customers with disabilities that a space meets their physical access needs. In a reception area, it tells customers that staff will assist people who have problems moving around, standing, or who face other barriers that limit service. Tips include:

- Speak to the customer directly and ask, “How can I help?” instead of assuming what a person can understand or do.
- Have seating available, for example, when customers must wait for service or during longer conversations.
- Create space in aisles and offices for wheelchairs, walkers and scooters.
- ***Welcome “assistive devices” such as wheelchairs or walkers, and do not touch or move them out of the users’ reach without permission.**
- When asked to help by pushing someone in a wheelchair, follow instructions. Do not leave the person in an awkward place, facing a wall or in the path of opening doors or crowded corridors.
- Inform your customer about accessibility features, for example an elevator or ramp, and ensure they are available. ***If not, notify customers in advance (website) and offer an alternative.**



This image shows face-to-face communication . It tells your customers that *staff will communicate in the way that works best for persons who have disabilities affecting their speech, or who are hard-of-hearing, Deaf, or have other communication disabilities. Tips include:

- Speak directly to the customer to ask, “How can I help,” instead of assuming what a person needs or can understand or do.
- If necessary, use a gentle tap on the shoulder or wave to gain the attention of someone who cannot hear you. Do not shout.
- If you are unsure what was said, repeat it back to confirm or politely ask the customer to repeat the information. Pen and paper may help.
- If you are unsure the customer understood you, repeat or rephrase what you said. Confirm that you have been understood.
- Use body language, gestures and facial expressions to help you communicate.
- *Welcome “assistive devices” to help with communication, for example hearing aids, computers, or even cell phones.
- If someone requires assistance with instructions or forms, speak clearly and find a private place for confidential matters.



This symbol represents disabilities affecting the brain. It tells your customers that staff will assist persons with intellectual disabilities, dementia or brain injuries that affect learning and understanding and psychological disabilities that could cause anxiety. Tips include:

- Speak directly to the customer to ask, “How can I help,” instead of assuming what a person needs or can understand or do.

- *Welcome support people, who are there to assist your client. Ask your client whether to include the support person in confidential matters.
- If an entrance fee is required, preferably charge only your client. Let clients know in advance if there are charges for a support person.
- Be patient. Some people may take a little longer to respond.
- *Communicate in a way that works for the customer: use a normal tone, speak clearly, and move away from a busy, noisy area.
- Use plain, easy-to-understand language. Offer precise directions. It may help to provide one piece of information at a time.
- *Welcome service animals, which are there to assist persons with a variety of invisible disabilities, including anxiety. See below for details.



This symbol shows someone who is blind. It tells your customers and clients that staff will assist persons with low or no vision. Tips include:

- Identify yourself as you approach someone with low or no vision.
- Speak directly to the customer to ask, “How can I help,” instead of assuming what a person needs or can understand or do.
- If customers with very little or no vision request guidance, offer them your elbow to act as a guide.
- *Welcome service animals, which assist persons with low or no vision and a variety of other disabilities.
- The Human Rights Code (Manitoba) states that service animals can accompany an individual with a disability in all public places. The customer must be in control of the service animal.

- Do not distract service animals by addressing them, petting or feeding them. They are working animals, not pets.
- If you are not sure if the animal is a service animal, ask if it is trained to assist the person with a disability. Do not ask the person with a service animal what their disability is.
- Offer assistance, for example reading or completing a form with them in a private place.
- *Welcome assistive devices, such as a cell phone, iPad or computer to assist with communication.
- Offer to provide information in alternate formats (for example, in large print or by email).
- *Make written communication easier to see and read by using contrasting colours (black on white), clear lettering (this is Arial font); in large print (this is 14 font). Avoid *italics*, underlining, or **bold script**.



The Manitoba Government and other public sector services may have a fifth icon on their “access offer signs” showing sign language. While hand written notes and texts are useful, some discussions with Deaf clients will require professional American Sign Language interpretation.

- If a consultation or discussion is required, make arrangements with the client to book a professional interpreter.

*Ask for feedback to learn more about how to meet the accessibility needs of your customers and clients. Tell customers about your feedback process and keep a record.



For more information visit www.AccessibilityMB.ca