

Sample Accessible Customer Service Policy

For Public Sector Organizations

This document is available in alternate formats, upon request.

Please contact the Manitoba Accessibility Office by email at MAO@gov.mb.ca or by phone at 204-945-7613 (in Winnipeg) or toll free at 1-800-282-8069, ext. 7613 (outside Winnipeg).

Sample Accessible Customer Service Policy

Instructions

This sample Accessible Customer Service Policy provides examples of policy statements, practices and measures for each requirement under the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. It is intended to help you create an Accessible Customer Service Policy for your organization. This template can be used to supplement your Accessibility Plan.

Read and select from the examples provided. While all of the examples can be edited so that they apply to your organization, [anything written in brackets] needs to be tailored to meet your specific needs.

Add, edit or remove practices and measures to fit your organization. Use this template, or copy the options below and paste them into a format that works for you.

Please review the [Accessibility Standard for Customer Service](#) to understand your obligations.

[Public Sector Organization Name]

Date of first approval:

[Insert date]

Date updated:

[Insert date]

Introduction:

We are committed to complying with the [Accessibility Standard for Customer Service](#) under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. Our policies, practices and measures reflect the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities.

If a barrier to accessing our goods or services cannot be removed, we seek to provide alternate ways to access the goods or services.

The following policy statements, organizational practices and measures are intended to meet the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and management [specify roles that are specific to our organization].

[Add any other statements that are specific to our organization.]

1: Meet communication needs.

Policy Statement:

We meet the communication needs of our [specify: customers, service recipients, clients, members or others].

Practices and Measures:

- To meet communication needs, when appropriate we offer to communicate in different ways, such as writing things down, reading things out loud, and taking extra time to explain things.
- We use an Access Offer sign with disability icons to let people know we can offer service in different ways.
- We also [list practices/measures]:
 - keep paper and pens available to write things down
 - offer a chair when longer conversations are needed
 - offer a quieter space
 - sit down to engage with someone using a wheelchair
 - [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]
- All of our publications include the statement: “This publication is available in alternate formats on request.” We also specify how a person can request an alternate format.
- We use signs and documents that are easy to read, including using larger fonts and colour contrast, and ensuring messages are not printed on images.
- We write signs and documents in plain language.
- [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]

2: Accommodate the use of assistive devices.

Policy Statement:

We accommodate the use of assistive devices when [specify: customers, service recipients, clients, members or others] are accessing our goods, services or facilities.

Practices and Measures:

- We do not touch or move [specify: customers', service recipients', clients', members' or others'] assistive devices without permission.
- We are trained in how to use the assistive devices that we provide, including [list types of assistive devices provided on-site, such as]:
 - video captioning
 - automatic doors
 - wheelchairs
 - doorbells
 - [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]
- In cases where the assistive device presents significant and unavoidable health or safety concerns, we attempt to use other measures to ensure the person with disabilities can access our goods, services or facilities [specify concerns unique to our organization: e.g., open flame and oxygen tanks cannot be near each other, so we extinguish candles when serving a person with an oxygen tank].
- [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]

3: Welcome support persons.

Policy Statement:

We welcome support persons and we let the public know in advance if support persons have to pay service fees.

Practices and Measures:

- We address the [specify: customer, service recipient, client, member or other], not the support person, unless requested by the [specify: customer, service recipient, client, member or other] to do otherwise.
- We make space for support persons on-site and ensure [specify: customers, service recipients, clients, members or others] have access to their support persons at all times.
- We waive service fees for support persons.
- We let the public know in advance if service fees cannot be waived.
- We share information about fees for support persons with the public in the following ways [list specific locations/methods where fee information may appear]:
 - posted on website, on social media, and/or in newsletters
 - posted at our building entrance, counter or service reception desk, and/or in high traffic areas
 - included in posters, brochures, pamphlets and/or advertisements
 - through employees, volunteers or management (in person, by phone or through recorded greetings)
 - through a public address system or intercom
 - [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]

4: Allow service animals.

Policy Statement:

We allow service animals in all the areas available for public access.

Practices and Measures:

- We:
 - treat a service animal as a working animal
 - do not distract a service animal from its job by petting, feeding or playing with it, unless given permission by the person with the service animal to do so
 - know how to identify a service animal by its harness or vest and by the assistance the animal is providing
- If we have concerns, we may ask if the animal has been trained to help a person with a disability-related need.
- We do not inquire about the disability.
- We expect the person who is handling the service animal to maintain control of the animal physically or through voice, signal or other means.
- If the service animal is showing signs of not being controlled (i.e., by barking, whining or wandering), we may provide a warning to the handler to control the animal.
- If the service animal continues to misbehave, we may ask the handler to leave.
- If another law prohibits service animals (e.g., sterile laboratories, and food preparation areas), we explain why the animal cannot enter the space and discuss with the person another way of providing goods or services.
- [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]

5: Maintain accessibility features.

Policy Statement:

To ensure barrier-free access to our goods, services or facilities, we maintain our accessibility features so they can be used as intended.

Practices and Measures:

- We organize our space so that there is room for people with wheelchairs, electric scooters and walkers.
- Our seating accommodates people of varying sizes and abilities.
- We keep hallways, aisles, entrance and reception areas, waiting rooms and meeting rooms clear of clutter.
- We keep our entrance area clear of ice and snow.
- We place standing signs out of the way to avoid tripping hazards.
- We use both audio and visual cues to inform customers it is their turn to be served.
- We take our goods and/or services to the [specify: customer, service recipient, client, member or other] when our premises and structures are not accessible.
- Alternatives to our accessibility features include:
 - service navigators or online service with home delivery
 - providing service at alternate locations, such as [specify: at people's homes or satellite offices]
 - [list alternatives specific to our organization]
- Our accessibility features affected by this policy include [list our spaces and accessibility features]: hallways, aisles, entrance and reception areas, waiting rooms and meeting rooms, accessible washrooms, elevators, automatic doors, doorbells and ramps, [add any others that are specific to our organization].

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

Policy Statement:

We let the public know when and why an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable, how long it will be unavailable, and other ways to access our goods and services.

Practices and Measures:

- If one of our accessibility features becomes temporarily unavailable, we prepare and post a notice and/or announcement about the disruption, the reason for the disruption, how long it will last, and whether there are other ways we can provide access to our goods and services (e.g., by using an alternate entrance).
- If requested, we work with the customer to find other ways to provide goods and services.
- We let the public know about disruptions in the following ways [list ways that are specific to our organization]:
 - posted on website, on social media, and/or in newsletters
 - posted at our building entrance, counter or service reception desk and/or in high traffic areas
 - included in posters, brochures, pamphlets and/or advertisements
 - through employees, volunteers or management (in person, by phone or through recorded greetings)
 - through a public address system or intercom
 - [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]

7. Welcome and respond promptly to feedback.

Policy Statements:

We welcome and respond promptly to feedback we receive on the accessibility of our goods and services.

We document the actions we take to respond to the feedback we receive, and that information is available on request in a format that meets the individual's communication needs.

Practices and Measures:

- We invite feedback in the following ways:
 - Visit our reception or service desk, or contact us by phone, email, website or feedback form [add any others that are specific to our organization]
- We invite feedback in the same places that we share our accessibility policies, training policies and Accessibility Plan.
- All feedback is directed to the [specify who and where: position title, committee or department], who determines what action, if any, should occur.
- If the feedback requires us to follow-up, the [specify: customer, service recipient, client, member or other] is notified that the request is being reviewed and when they can expect a response.
- We let the [specify: customer, service recipient, client, member or other] know what action we will take to address their feedback, if any.
- We respond to feedback in a way that meets the communication needs of the individual.
- [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]

8: Provide the required training to employees, volunteers and management.

Policy Statements:

We provide the required training on accessible customer service to employees, volunteers and management. We are trained on:

- How to interact and communicate with people who face barriers to accessing goods and services, use assistive devices, are assisted by a support person and/or are assisted by a service animal.
- How to use any equipment or assistive devices that are available on-site.
- An overview of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, The Human Rights Code (Manitoba), and the Customer Service Standard.
- Our organizational policies, practices and measures, including updates or changes.

Practices and Measures:

- We train new employees, volunteers and management within [specify timeframe: two weeks, one month or other] after hiring.
- We provide refresher training regularly, including updates to policies, practices and measures. Training is offered [specify timeframe: every year, six months, three months or other].
- [Specify position: Supervisors or staff specific to your organization] record who has taken training and when.
- Feedback on the accessibility of our goods and services is addressed in regular staff meetings.
- [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]

9: Keep a written record of accessibility and training policies.

Policy Statements:

We keep a written record of our accessibility and training policies.

Our written documents include a summary of our training material and when training is offered.

We let the public know that our written policies are available on request.

Practices and Measures:

- We let the public know that our accessibility and training policies are available in the following ways:
 - posted in the same places that we share our Accessibility Plan and invite feedback
 - posted on website, on social media, and/or in newsletters
 - posted at our building entrance, counter or service reception desk and/or in high traffic areas
 - included in posters, brochures, pamphlets and/or advertisements
 - through employees, volunteers or management (in person, by phone or through recorded greetings)
 - through a public address system or intercom
 - [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]
- We provide our policies within a reasonable timeframe, at no cost, and in a format that meets the needs of the individual.

10. We make our public events accessible.

Policy Statements:

We take reasonable steps to make our public events accessible in four areas: publicizing, meeting spaces, meeting participant needs, and letting the public know that relevant accommodations can be made on request.

Public events include meetings, hearings and consultations [add any others that are specific to our organization].

Practices and Measures:

- We let the public know that our public events are accessible and that they can request accessibility accommodations in the following ways:
 - posted on website, on social media, and/or in newsletters
 - posted at our building entrance, counter or service reception desk and/or in high traffic areas
 - included in posters, brochures, pamphlets and/or advertisements
 - through employees, volunteers or management (in person, by phone or through recorded greetings)
 - through a public address system or intercom
 - [Add any others that are specific to our organization.]
- To plan and host an accessible event, we use an Accessible Event Planning Checklist [available online for you to adapt to your own organization's needs at: [CSS Public Sector Requirements](#)].

Notes:

Date of next policy review:

Approved by:

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Legal disclaimer: This information complements the application of the regulations under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) and is not legal counsel. For certainty, please refer to the [AMA](#) and the [Customer Service Standard Regulation](#).

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