

Accessible Customer Service Online Learning Module – Text-Only Version

Produced by the Manitoba Accessibility Office

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Section 1: Key Features and Module Overview

Key Features

Welcome to the Accessible Customer Service learning module. Before you continue, please review the following information about the key module features.

Navigation

This module is organized into five sections and includes a glossary of terms. You can navigate through this module by using the Previous and Next links at the bottom of each page, or the main menu on the left side of the page.

The main menu is organized into module sections. When you select a section title, the menu will expand to show all content in that section. Selecting a different title will open new content. You can use the main menu to move freely between module sections.

To help you track your progress, a green checkmark will appear in the menu beside each page that you have visited.

If you have any technical or access issues, please visit the contact page on our website.

Knowledge Checks

Sections two, three, and four of this module end with a Knowledge Check to help you check your understanding of the material.

When you complete all four Knowledge Checks, you will receive a certificate of completion.

Glossary

This module includes a glossary of terms. To open the glossary, go to the upper right corner of this page and select the Glossary link. The glossary will open on the right side of the page. You can scroll or tab through the terms.

Audio

Each page offers you the option to listen to the contents of the page. To play the audio, navigate to the upper right corner of the page and click the Listen button. You can use the forward and backward buttons to control the audio for the page. Remember to turn your speakers on first.

Video

This module includes a series of videos called "Manitoba Voices". The brief videos "give voice" to topics to demonstrate the importance of accessibility. These videos are captioned.

Transcripts are also provided for each video.

Learning Resources

The Manitoba Accessibility Office offers a variety of resources that can assist with compliance of The AMA and accessibility awareness.

Module Overview

Introduction

This free learning resource provides Manitoba organizations with an opportunity to meet the minimum requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

The module information should be complemented by a review or discussion of your organization's policies, practices and measures related to accessible customer service.

The module has been designed for individual use. However, group discussion is the best way to determine how accessibility laws affect your organization. Please view the Facilitator's Guide (PDF) (http://amalearningmb.ca/resources/CS_FacilitatorsGuide_En.pdf) (Word) (http://amalearningmb.ca/resources/CS_FacilitatorsGuide_En.docx) for assistance.

Module Overview

The module has been organized into five sections, including the one you are currently in.

Section 1 : Key Features and Module Overview

Section 2 : Manitoba's Accessibility Law

Section 3 : Requirements for Accessible Customer Service

Section 4 : Creating Accessibility for Customers

Section 5 : Continuing Your Learning

By actively participating in this module, you will:

- Learn how Manitoba's accessibility law and The Manitoba Human Rights Code help to remove barriers to access.
- Become familiar with the requirements to guide accessible customer service.
- Learn how to remove various types of barriers, and other tips to create accessibility.

Certificate of Completion

To obtain a certificate of completion for this module, you must complete all five sections and Knowledge Checks. The certificate is a PDF that you can download and print.

Section 2: Manitoba's Accessibility Law: Introduction

Section two focuses on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, its standards and related legislation.

The Five Topics in this Section

1. The Need for Legislation
2. The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)
3. Focus on Barriers, Not Disabilities
4. The Human Rights Code and The AMA
5. The Business Case for Accessibility

There is a Knowledge Check at the end of this section.

The Need for Legislation

Nearly one in four Manitobans face barriers to accessibility in daily living. With an aging population, this number continues to grow.

All Manitobans, regardless of their abilities, have the right to participate fully in society, and to be treated with dignity and respect.

By introducing a law, government organizations (like schools and universities), businesses, and non-profit organizations must all collaborate to make Manitoba accessible.

Section two focuses on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, its standards, and related legislation.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

Goals

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, or AMA, was enacted in 2013. The AMA has two main goals.

Goal 1: Identify, prevent and remove barriers to participation.

Goal 2: Make significant progress towards achieving accessibility in Manitoba by 2023.

Manitoba's efforts will focus on collaboration, awareness-raising and the training of organizations to fulfill the requirements set out in the law. Like other laws, the AMA also sets out enforcement measures, including orders to comply and monetary penalties.

The Five Accessibility Standards

Accessibility Standards, or regulations, are the building blocks of the AMA. They outline who has to do what and by when to enhance accessibility. To fulfill the AMA, the Manitoba Government appointed an Accessibility Advisory Council to assist in developing five standards affecting accessibility in customer service, employment, information and communications, the design of public spaces and transportation.

The Standards

Standard 1: Customer Service (enacted November, 2015)

Standard 2: Employment (enacted May, 2019)

Standard 3: Information and Communications

Standard 4: Design of Public Spaces, and

Standard 5: Transportation

Public consultation is key to the development of the standards.

Learn More

To learn more about each of these standards, select their titles below.

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service addresses business practices and training requirements to provide better customer service to people with disabilities. It is now law.

The Employment Accessibility Standard

The Employment accessibility standard addresses practices related to employee recruitment, hiring and retention.

The Information and Communications Accessibility Standard

The Information and Communications accessibility standard will address barriers to accessing information – information provided in print, in person, on websites or in other formats.

The Design of Public Spaces Accessibility Standard

The Design of Public Spaces accessibility standard will deal with access to those areas outside the jurisdiction of The Manitoba Building Code, such as sidewalks, pathways, parks and other aspects of the environment that we design and construct.

The Transportation Accessibility Standard

The Transportation accessibility standard will apply to public transportation to address barriers Manitobans might encounter while getting to work or school, shopping, socializing and other aspects of daily life.

Source: [AccessibilityMB.ca/law.html](https://accessibilitymb.ca/law.html)

Focus on Barriers

The AMA focuses on barriers, not disabilities.

What is a barrier?

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

For example, Mike has low vision. He is given a book with a font size that he cannot read. Mike's low vision is not the barrier. The small print size is the barrier. If Mike had larger print, he would be able to read the material.

While most barriers have not been set up on purpose, awareness is critical to ensure everyone has equal access to goods and services.

Types of Barriers

What do you imagine when you think of an accessibility barrier?

Physical Barriers

If you are like most people, you may be thinking of physical or structural barriers, such as steps, curbs, or narrow passageways. Heavy doors or doorknobs, versus levers, are also structural barriers that affect many seniors and others with arthritis.

Information and Communications Barriers

Barriers to information and communications are easy to miss, if they do not affect you, but are present in almost every aspect of daily life.

Barriers to information and communications occur when not everyone can understand or access the message being delivered.

For example, in-person communication may be when a location is noisy and if a person is hard-of-hearing, or anxious.

Technology Barriers

Technology can enhance access. For example, a computer can improve accessibility for someone who is Deaf or hard-of-hearing. However, technology can also create new barriers. For instance, a barrier is created when an individual must have good vision or use of their fingers to use a device to pay a bill.

Systemic Barriers

Barriers are systemic when they are a result of an organization's policies or usual practices. For example, a store policy that requires that customers bag their own groceries is a systemic barrier, as not all customers are physically able to do so.

Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers result when people think and act based on false assumptions. For example, a bank teller would be wrong to think a client who is unable to express herself verbally cannot make a financial decision. Breaking myths and stereotypes is the first step to creating the foundation of a fully inclusive society.

Did you know?

Attitudes are the greatest barrier of all. With the right attitude, most barriers can be avoided.

Manitoba Voices: Catherine Smorang

Catherine Smorang is a proud mother of a university student. She loves helping others and, in the absence of a pandemic, she is frequently at “Shop CNIB” explaining or demonstrating accessibility aids to others.

Video Transcript, Manitoba Voices: Catherine Smorang.

Narrator: Accessibility is good for everyone.

Catherine Smorang: To me, accessibility means equal opportunity, equal access, equal everything – an equal playing field for people with any kind of a disability.

Narrator: Learn more about Manitoba’s Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. Visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://accessibilitymb.ca).

End transcript.

The Manitoba Human Rights Code and The AMA

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

Reasonable Accommodation

Providing reasonable accommodation is a legal requirement and failure to reasonably accommodate an individual can result in “discrimination,” as defined in the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Simply put, reasonable accommodation means adjusting a rule, policy, practice or a physical space to allow changes to the ways things are usually done.

Duty to Accommodate

In most cases, providing reasonable accommodation in customer service is simple and affordable. Reasonable accommodation requires a business or organization to take responsibility for an accommodation – including bearing the costs – up to the point of undue hardship. Undue hardship arises from substantial costs or health and safety risks to an accommodation. Inconvenience, preferences, or having to bear some costs do not usually qualify as undue hardship. Although undue hardship is not defined in the AMA or the Manitoba Human Rights Code, case law tells us that it is more than minimal hardship and it must be based on actual evidence of hardship.

If an accommodation request creates undue hardship for you and/or your organization, you and/or your organization still need to explore other ways to provide accessible customer service. Collaborate with the person 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.

The Business Case for Accessibility

Creating accessibility is the law in Manitoba.

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

Currently, millions of Canadians have a physical disability that affects their mobility, vision, or hearing. This number is expected to increase substantially by 2030, when persons with physical disabilities are anticipated to make up over one fifth of the consumer market, with a spending power of \$316 billion. Removing barriers to access often costs little or nothing.

Infographic: One in four Manitoba adults has a disability.

People disabled by barriers have an estimated buying power of about \$55 billion annually in Canada. They do business, shop and travel with their friends and families in our communities, just like everyone else. Learning how to eliminate barriers may attract customer loyalty and improve service for everyone.

Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2017.

End infographic.

Section 2 Knowledge Check

Instructions

Now it is your chance to check what you have learned in this section. There are three questions in this Knowledge Check. Select your response to each question and then select Check My Answer for feedback.

Question 1

Which of the following statements about The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) is false?

Option 1 of 4: Accessibility laws apply to Manitoba's businesses and non-profit organizations, as well as government organizations.

Option 2 of 4: The AMA only considers physical barriers.

Option 3 of 4: One of the goals of the AMA is to make significant progress toward achieving accessibility in Manitoba by 2023.

Option 4 of 4: The first accessibility standard related to Customer Service was enacted in 2015.

Check My Answer Feedback

Option 2, "The AMA only considers physical barriers" is the false statement.

The AMA considers all barriers, such as attitudinal, information and communications, technological, systemic, as well as physical barriers.

Question 2

What does providing "reasonable accommodation" mean?

Option 1 of 4: Adjusting a rule

Option 2 of 4: Modifying a policy, practice or a physical space to allow changes to the ways things are usually done

Option 3 of 4: Usually making a simple, free or affordable accommodation when providing customer service

Option 4 of 4: All of the above

Check My Answer Feedback

Option 4, “All of the above” is the best answer.

Reasonable accommodations include a wide range of modifications or adjustments to meet the needs of people in a respectful manner and ensure discrimination does not occur.

Usually simple and inexpensive, reasonable accommodations consider the needs of persons or groups who have characteristics protected under The Manitoba Human Rights Code, such as a disability.

Question 3

Select the option that best completes the following sentence:

We all have a duty to provide reasonable accommodations by removing barriers...

Option 1 of 5: up to a small financial cost.

Option 2 of 5: up to minimal hardship.

Option 3 of 5: up to undue hardship.

Option 4 of 5: for everyone in every case.

Option 5 of 5: regardless of cost, time or effort.

Check My Answer Feedback

Option 3, “up to undue hardship” is the best answer.

The duty to provide reasonable accommodation is a requirement established by The Manitoba Human Rights Code. Reasonable accommodation is required up to the point of undue hardship, which arises from substantial costs or health and safety risks to an accommodation.

Section 3: Requirements for Accessible Customer Service: Introduction

This section focuses on the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, who must comply with this regulation, and the eight main requirements.

The Four Topics in This Section

1. The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service
2. Who Must Comply With This Law?
3. The Eight Requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service
4. Additional Requirements

There is a Knowledge Check at the end of this section.

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service requires all of us to put the customer first.

“Customer” means anyone who benefits from an organization’s goods or services, including non-paying learners, patients, organizational members and participants. The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service requires organizations to provide flexible customer-centred service by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers.

If a barrier cannot be removed, the organization should provide alternative options, up to the point of undue hardship.

Who Must Comply With This Law?

Since November 2018, this regulation applies to all Manitoba organizations that have one or more employees, including **businesses**, such as shops, restaurants and hotels, legal, healthcare, and other professional services. **Non-profit organizations**, including charities, unions, places of worship, and member associations must also comply with this law.

The **Manitoba government** had to comply by November 2016 and public sector organizations – such as universities, colleges, health authorities, Crown corporations, large municipalities and school divisions had until November 2017 to comply.

Meeting the Eight Requirements

The Standard is comprised of eight requirements:

- Requirement 1: Communicate in a way that best meets your customers' needs.
- Requirement 2: Accommodate assistive devices.
- Requirement 3: Welcome support persons.
- Requirement 4: Allow service animals in public spaces.
- Requirement 5: Maintain accessibility features.
- Requirement 6: Inform the public when accessibility features are unavailable.
- Requirement 7: Welcome feedback on accessibility. And finally,
- Requirement 8: Complete accessibility training.

This section covers each of the eight requirements and actions that organizations and their employees must take to meet them.

Requirement 1: Communication

Requirement one states that organizations and their employees must communicate in a way that best meets the needs of their customers.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

We all have different communication needs. The key to meeting this requirement is understanding what your customers' needs are and doing your best to meet them.

1. Treat all customers with respect. A friendly smile is a great start.
2. Give customers the opportunity to tell you what they need, including how they wish to communicate.
3. Speak directly to the person and maintain eye contact, rather than speaking to a companion, aide or an interpreter.
4. Print documents in clear, easy-to-read fonts, with lots of colour contrast, including menus, forms and signs.

Requirement 2: Assistive Devices

Requirement two states that organizations and their employees must accommodate assistive devices used by their customers.

What is an assistive device?

Assistive devices, like canes or hearing aids, help people with disabilities complete everyday tasks and create access to goods and services. When a person who is blind or hard of hearing uses a cell phone to communicate, especially during an appointment, the phone becomes an assistive device.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

1. Avoid moving assistive devices out of a customer's reach.
2. Ask for permission before touching assistive devices, if necessary.
3. Let customers know if you offer any assistive devices. For example, some organizations offer wheelchairs. Others have accessibility features at a self-serve checkout.
4. Become familiar with any assistive devices available for customers and be prepared to use or explain them, as required by Requirement 8, Accessibility Training.

Requirement 3: Support Persons

Requirement three states that organizations and their employees must welcome support persons who are assisting customers and allow them to remain together. If you need to charge admission for the support person, provide advance notice.

What is a support person?

A support person assists with mobility, personal care, medical needs or with specific tasks like banking. A support person can be a paid personal support worker (PSW), a volunteer, a family member, or a friend. PSWs are trained professionals. Family or friends usually do not have formal training, but they often have years of experience. Many people have paid and unpaid support. For instance, a person may have a PSW present at their workplace and then go out in the evening with their partner acting as a support person.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

1. Speak directly to your customer or service recipient and do not assume they cannot understand. Most people prefer to make their own decisions about what to buy or how a service may affect them.
2. If the nature of your conversation or service is private, ask your client whether to include the support person. Check with your client on whether he/she prefers to discuss a decision first with the support person.
3. Invite the support person to take notes if this is helpful for your client's understanding of important information or instructions, for instance, at medical appointments.
4. Avoid charging entrance admission or other fees for a support person, if possible.
5. The standard requires that, if you need to charge admission for the support person, provide advance notice, for example, by advertising this charge on your website or entrance fee billboard.

Requirement 4: Service Animals

Requirement four states that organizations and their employees must allow service animals in the public areas of the premises.

What is a service animal?

Service animals are working animals that are trained to meet the needs of their handlers with a disability.

A service animal might wear a harness or vest. Many, but not all handlers carry documentation, such as a letter from a health professional or service animal trainer, which states that they require the animal because of a disability-related need.

How do you know if an animal is a service animal?

A service animal might wear a harness or vest. Many, but not all handlers carry documentation, such as a letter from a health professional or service animal trainer, which states that they require the animal because of a disability-related need.

Important Reminder

A handler need not disclose a diagnosis or personal health information.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

1. Focus on your customer. A service animal should not be touched or distracted.
2. 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.
3. Consider including the statement “service animals are welcome, but pets are not allowed” in your registration information, event details, or business/organization information. The Manitoba Accessibility Office can provide you with an image for

individual use, and/or an adhesive decal for windows. This message also alerts people with allergies to come up with solutions, if necessary, in advance of arrival.

4. Not sure if an animal is a service animal? Here are some tips:
 - You can ask: “Has this animal been trained to help with a disability-related need?”
 - Consider asking for documentation only when it is not obvious that the animal is providing a service.

The Manitoba Accessibility Office's "Service Animals Welcome" Decals

1. Small Service Animals Welcome Decal (PDF)
http://amalearningmb.ca/resources/10137_CSM_DIO_Service_Animal_Sticker_Accessible.pdf
2. Large Service Animals Welcome Decal (PDF)
http://amalearningmb.ca/resources/10137_CSM_DIO_Service_Animal_Stickers_11x11_Accessible.pdf

Requirement 5: Accessibility Features

Requirement five states that organizations and their employees must maintain accessibility features so they can be used as intended. Examples of accessibility features include ramps, wide aisles, accessible washrooms, power doors and elevators.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

1. Keep entryways and aisles clear of clutter.
2. Organize your space to make room for customers using assistive devices like wheelchairs or walkers.
3. Ensure indoor surfaces are clean and that outdoor spaces, including ramps, are clear of snow and ice for easy passage and safety.

Manitoba Voices: Frances Sinclair-Kaspick

Frances Sinclair-Kaspick is a member of the Peguis First Nation in Manitoba. She volunteers with the North End Women's Centre Drum Group, the Aboriginal Disabled Self-Help Group, and is a contributor to an accessibility act for First Nations people. Frances is an inspirational speaker, an actor and a writer, and recently self-published her memoir "The Mountain Within."

Video Transcript, Manitoba Voices: Frances Sinclair-Kaspick

Narrator: Accessibility is good for everyone.

Frances Sinclair-Kaspick: Accessibility means to me, a variety of different things for different types of disability. For me, my disability is physical and also, I have walking mobility concerns. And those concerns are, when I enter buildings or even when I go outside and one other big concern is winter, for me.

Narrator: Learn more about Manitoba's Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. Visit AccessibilityMB.ca

End transcript.

Requirement 6: Inform the Public About Accessibility Features

Requirement six states that organizations and their employees must inform the public when accessibility features are unavailable, why, and for how long. Organizations should provide alternative service options in the meantime.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

1. Notify customers if an accessibility feature such as an elevator or automatic door button is temporarily out of service. Post information online, display update signage and alert customers when they call.
2. Post basic information with contact information for more details. Include how long the feature is expected to be unavailable and how to access other options.

Requirement 7: Welcome Feedback

Requirement seven states that organizations and their employees must welcome feedback on the accessibility of an organization's goods and services and document the resulting actions. Organizations must share this information with members of the public, upon request.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

1. Ask customers with disabilities about their experience(s), and use the feedback to learn how to meet the accessibility needs of the people you serve.
2. Allow customers to provide feedback in various ways. For example, online feedback forms may work for some customers, but others may prefer to speak to someone.
3. Respond to customers' requests in a reasonable timeframe. For instance, confirm you have received the customers' feedback and tell them when they can expect a response.
4. Inform all employees about your organization's feedback process, and integrate accessibility feedback into a broader feedback policy.

Important Reminder

What works for one person, may not work for another. People have different communication needs, so allow customers to provide feedback in different ways.

Requirement 8: Accessibility Training

Requirement eight states that organizations must ensure employees complete accessibility training as soon as possible and when there have been updates to the organization's accessibility measures, policies or practices.

Training must address the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, as included in this online learning program, a review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the Manitoba Human Rights Code, and related organizational policies and practices.

Employees must also be trained on how to use assistive devices that are available for customer use.

What can you do to meet this requirement?

1. Require all employees, including owners, managers, and frontline staff to take customer service training, such as this online module. As a group, discuss how the training relates to the customer service practices of your organization. For help getting the discussion started, see the Accessible Customer Service Facilitator's Guide (PDF) http://amalearningmb.ca/resources/CS_FacilitatorsGuide_En.pdf (Word) http://amalearningmb.ca/resources/CS_FacilitatorsGuide_En.docx.
2. Encourage questions and feedback. Create a safe and inviting environment to share concerns about accessibility.
3. Centre the perspectives and advice of people with disabilities in your training. Personal stories that relate to accessibility in a person's own life can be valuable. Remember, nearly one in four Manitobans has a disability, and others will age into disability, so everyone is affected.
4. If you have assistive devices or other accessibility features available for customers, ensure that your employees are familiar with using them and explaining how to use the tools. For example, providing customers with clear and simple instructions on how to access the settings on a computer, or a mobility device.

5. Have a plan to train new staff and volunteers about customer service. Include this online learning module as a part of your training plan for staff and volunteers. Organizations with over 50 staff must write down their training plan.

Additional Requirements

Large Employers (organizations with 50 or more employees) must write down their accessibility policies and share them with the public, upon request.

Although this is a legal requirement for large organizations, organizations of all sizes can benefit from documenting their policies as a way of ensuring employees know the expectations going forward, or know where to look for a reminder.

Visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://accessibilitymb.ca), where you will find an employer handbook, policy template and other resources to support the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

Larger public sector organizations **must make public events accessible**, including meetings, hearings and consultations. Affected organizations include the Manitoba government, universities and colleges, school divisions, Crown corporations, regional health authorities and Manitoba's 10 largest municipalities (Brandon, Dauphin, Flin Flon, Morden, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk, Steinbach, Thompson, Winkler and Winnipeg).

Section 3 Knowledge Check

Instructions

Now it is your chance to check what you have learned in this section. There are five questions in this Knowledge Check. In each question, select your response and then select Check My Answer for feedback.

Question 1

True or False: A customer informs you that he is unable to read a document you have given him. You immediately provide the customer with the same document in a larger print format. You have provided accessible customer service.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

False is the best answer.

Accessible customer service is flexible, customer-centred, and identifies, removes, and prevents barriers.

It is best to ask the customer what they need, as opposed to making assumptions about their needs. In this case, it may be that the customer needs a document printed in a much larger format than you provided, or prefers to access information from his computer. It may also be that he is colour blind and the contrast of the script to the background is the main problem.

Question 2

True or False: A support person accompanies a person with a disability to help with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or access to goods and services.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

True is the best answer.

A support person who assists an individual in carrying out activities of daily living and can be a professional “personal support worker”, a volunteer, or friend.

Question 3

True or false: You should keep your attention on the person with a disability and not the support person.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

True is the best answer.

Your attention should be on your customer, unless the customer asks the support person to explain something to you. You should still turn to your customer with your response.

Question 4

True or false: All service animals wear a vest.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

False is the best answer.

There is no standardized identification or certification of service animals in Manitoba.

Therefore, any animal that is identified as having been trained, including self-trained, to provide assistance to someone with a disability, may be a service animal. Remember that service animals must be under control at all times. If the customer is not controlling the service animal, organizations may offer a warning and eventually ask them to leave.

Question 5

True or false: You should not touch or distract a service animal.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

True is the best answer.

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.

Section 4: Creating Accessibility for Customers: Introduction

This section focuses on the practices that organizations and their employees can take to create accessibility for their customers.

The Six Practices Covered in This Section

1. Check Your Assumptions
2. Offer Assistance
3. Listen to Your Customers
4. Focus on Barriers, Not on Disabilities
5. Remove Physical Barriers
6. Remove Communication Barriers

There is a Knowledge Check at the end of this section.

Check Your Assumptions

The most important thing to know about disabilities is that you cannot assume what a person can or cannot do based on how they look.

In fact, most disabilities are invisible. For example, you cannot see that a person may have trouble hearing or remembering, or have asthma.

Caption 1: “Some disabilities look like this”

Caption 2: “Most disabilities look like this”

Caption 3: The most common disabilities among working-aged Canadians ages 25 to 64 are invisible, related to pain (14%, flexibility (8%), mental health (8%) and mobility (7%). Canadian Survey on Disabilities. 2017.

Offer Assistance

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

Offer assistance and a smile.

Your customer will appreciate the effort, even if they say “No, thank-you.”

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

Access offers are proactive ways to let people know that your goods and services are accessible to everyone.

Listen to Your Customers

Customize accessibility to suit customer preferences. Your customers are the best source of information about their own needs. What works for one person may not work for another. Ask for feedback.

A solution is often simple, and most customers will appreciate your attention and consideration.

Managers and supervisors can provide additional support.

Focus on Barriers, Not Disabilities

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.

Creating accessibility is about removing barriers and supporting people's participation in society.

What does this mean for you?

It means that creating accessibility starts with understanding what barriers exist in your organization that may prevent customers from accessing your goods or services.

Remove Physical Barriers

Physical barriers affect many more people than wheelchair users. Many customers and clients with invisible or visible disabilities will benefit when your space is well organized with clear signage and lots of room to move around.

Four Tips to Get You Started

Tip 1: If you are asked to help push someone using a wheelchair, do not leave the person in an awkward place, facing a wall, in crowded corridors, or in the path of opening doors.

Tip 2: Maintain indoor and outdoor surfaces, including ramps, to help prevent falls. Do not block ramps with rolling garbage bins, and make sure all surfaces are clean and free of snow.

Tip 3: Even if there are steps into your building, you can still provide accessible service by offering customers home delivery, curbside pickup, a temporary/removable ramp, or meeting in an easy access location.

Tip 4: Reflective glass and protective barriers that separate service providers from customers can cause customers to walk into hard surfaces, such as glass doors and signage, or to be confused about the source of sound or speech.

Manitoba Voices: John Wyndels

John Wyndels' career included many years as a national radio producer before joining government, where he contributed to the development of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. He is a loyal fan of the New England Patriots.

Video Transcript, Manitoba Voices: John Wyndels

Narrator: Accessibility is good for everyone.

Interviewer: So what does accessibility mean for you?

John Wyndels: It means going to the places I want to go to.

It means if I want to go to a restaurant, If I want to buy a pair of pants, whatever the case may be, It means I have the ability to go there and get what I'm looking for.

Either through a traditional front door method, or if I have to, make other arrangements.

But them being receptive to the fact that, because I'm in a wheelchair I still want whatever they're selling or giving.

Narrator: Learn more about Manitoba's Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

Visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca).

End transcript.

Remove Communication Barriers

Clear communication is essential for great customer service.

It is especially important to know how to remove barriers to communication so that everyone can participate fully in everyday life. Offering accessible formats of information is essential.

The first step to good communication is to ask, “How can I help?”

Strategies for Removing Communication Barriers

Select a topic to learn about strategies for removing specific communication barriers.

Topic 1. Removing barriers affecting hearing

If you know a customer is hard-of-hearing, or if you work in a noisy environment, you can attract their attention with a welcoming comment, or a wave.

Do not shout. If possible, move to a well-lit area away from a window or move to a quieter space. Speak slowly and clearly.

You may also ask if an alternative form of communication would be helpful. Other options include using a pen and paper, or using a cell phone to text.

Confirm whether you have been understood and offer to repeat information.

If your client is deaf, you may wish to organize professional interpretation, if necessary.

For more information about services that support accessibility, visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca) > Resources > Accessibility Services

Topic 2. Removing barriers affecting vision

Do not assume that only people with white canes have low or no vision. This is especially important, if you work in an environment with low lighting, such as a restaurant.

Identify yourself as you approach and speak directly to the customer.

If a customer requests guidance, offer your elbow or shoulder. Relax and walk at a normal pace. Advise the person about any obstacles, such as a pillar.

Ensure that everyone can access your print or electronic messages.

If a customer requests assistance with reading or instructions, speak clearly and away from other noises.

For print communications, use an easy-to-read, non-Serif font in 12-point size. Use colour contrast (black on white or blue on yellow) and lots of white space. Avoid italics and bold.

Keep a master document of printed materials, in order to produce a larger print version upon customer request.

Include a text description of images and charts. Many people who are blind use screen reader software to access print electronically.

Labels are generally too small to read. Consider having a magnifying glass readily available on site.

Include a notice and contact information on brochures and other documents that inform the public “Information is available in other formats, upon request.”

Topic 3. Removing barriers affecting spoken communication

A stroke, injury, or other disability may affect a customer’s speech. Protective barriers that separate a service provider from a customer, and wearing a personal protective mask can also muffle speech.

Find a quiet place to communicate. Do not assume that a person who is not speaking clearly is unable to understand you.

If you are unsure of what was said, repeat the information to confirm, or politely ask the customer to repeat the information. Do not interrupt or finish your customer's sentences.

If possible, ask questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" response, or consider using a pen and paper, or text messages.

When communicating by phone, let the customer know that you are having difficulty with understanding. Ask if there may be another way to communicate. Do not hang up!

Topic 4. Removing barriers affecting understanding or remembering

Brain injury, learning and intellectual disabilities, dementia, and mental illness can all affect understanding and memory. A stressful, busy environment, such as a mall (especially during holidays) can have the same outcome.

Do not make assumptions about what a person may understand or remember.

Use plain, easy to understand language, and incorporate pictures with descriptions in print materials, signage, and web content.

Make written information clear and simple.

Offer precise directions. Providing one piece of information at a time may be helpful.

Invite clients to bring a support person to take notes during a meeting.

To help with wayfinding, use simple signage in key traffic areas, and ensure signage does not create a physical barrier.

If a customer appears to be anxious or in crisis, ask them to tell you the best way to help. Be confident, calm, and reassuring.

Manitoba Voices: Joanna Hawkins

Joanna Hawkins was born in Poland. She is a Fine Arts graduate from the University of Manitoba, with skills in drawing, painting, graphic design, photography and acting. Joanna works at Manitoba Possible as an Early Learning Consultant specializing in American Sign Language (ASL).

Video Transcript, Manitoba Voices: Joanna Hawkins

Narrator: Accessibility is good for everyone.

Joanna Hawkins:

Accessibility for me means accommodating any individual's needs.

I know most people determine "access" and think of it as physical access,

So access for people that use wheelchairs or mobility devices,

But they often times don't think about communications for people with hearing loss,

Or people who are deaf.

Narrator: Learn more about Manitoba's Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

Visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca).

End transcript.

Section 4 Knowledge Check

Instructions

Now it is your chance to check what you have learned in this section. There are five questions in this Knowledge Check. For each question, select your response and then select Check My Answer for feedback.

Question 1

What should you do if a person with a disability requires more time with you than others?

Please select the best answer.

Option 1 of 4: Hurry them along so that you can get to other customers.

Option 2 of 4: Ask them to sit and wait while you attend to other customers.

Option 3 of 4: Be patient and give them more time.

Option 4 of 4: Ask them to return when you are not busy.

Check My Answer Feedback

The best answer is option 3, be patient and give them more time.

People with disabilities have the right to live free from discrimination and to enjoy the same quality of service as every other person.

Question 2

True or False: A wheelchair and other assistive devices should only be touched with permission.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

True is the best answer.

Respect a wheelchair, cane and other assistive device as you would your own personal belongings. Also, rather than thinking of people as “confined” to a wheelchair, think of them as enabled to live independently. Ask first if the wheelchair user wants help.

Question 3

True or False: If your building is not accessible, you cannot provide customer service.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

False is the best answer.

Even if your building is not accessible, there are still ways to offer accessible customer service. For example, you could provide online access to your goods and services, including virtual or telephone meetings.

Question 4

True or False: Older customers are likely to be hard of hearing.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

False is the best answer.

One should not make assumptions about a person's abilities.

Question 5

True or False: Hallways should be clear of clutter like garbage, recycling boxes or standing signage.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

True is the best answer.

Clutter and even free-standing signage can create hazards for people who cannot see them or have difficulty moving around.

Section 5: Continuing Your Learning: Introduction

This is the final section of the module. We hope that you can put into practice what you have learned about Manitoba's accessibility law by meeting the requirements, and by implementing the tips to remove barriers.

Learning about accessibility is not a one time or static exercise. As you learned in Section two, The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service is one of five standards that will be implemented throughout Manitoba's public and private sectors in the years to come.

The Four Topics in This Section

1. Problem-Solving Scenarios
2. Additional Resources
3. The Final Knowledge Check
4. Contact Us

Completing this Module

By completing all five Knowledge Checks, you will receive a certificate of completion. The certificate is a PDF that you can download and print.

Problem-Solving Scenarios

One of the best ways to continue your learning is to discuss what you have learned about accessibility with your colleagues. Collaborate to identify and remove accessibility barriers in your organization.

Select Something to Consider to review possible responses to each scenario.

You can use these four scenarios to help you start a conversation with your team.

Scenario 1

Ren has multiple disabilities. The person providing customer service assumes that Ren cannot communicate or make decisions herself. The service provider only speaks to Ren's support person, instead of Ren.

What is the barrier?

How can the service provider provide better customer service?

Something to Consider

The barrier in this scenario is attitudinal.

The service provider should not make assumptions about Ren or her abilities. The service provider should communicate directly with Ren.

Scenario 2

Fred uses a wheelchair and is hard of hearing. Your reception area has a high counter top. It is also quite noisy when you are providing your information to Fred. He indicates that he does not understand your answer.

What is the barrier?

How can you offer Fred better customer service?

Something to Consider

The barrier in this scenario is related to information and communication, but it may also be structural.

You can offer Fred a quiet space or to write the information down for him.

Scenario 3

Your organization has a staircase to the front door. You have received complaints from customers who are unable to use the stairs, and therefore, are unable to access your goods and services.

What is the barrier?

How might you offer accessible customer service in this situation?

Something to Consider

The barrier in this scenario 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.

Scenario 4

You offer a coupon for a price reduction on your goods or services. You inform customers that the coupon is only available online.

What is the barrier?

What can you do to ensure the price reduction is available to everyone?

Something to Consider

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.

Additional Resources

Visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](http://www.accessibilitymb.ca) for more resources to support compliance with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, including practical resources, such as handbooks, policy templates, checklists, and signs to support accessibility.

Our website also contains information about Manitoba's accessibility law, consultations, training and events.

You can help raise awareness and support from employees and the public using these tools, available at [AccessibilityMB.ca](http://www.accessibilitymb.ca).

1. Barriers and Solutions (Webpage)
<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/types-of-barriers.html>
2. "How can we help?" Counter/ wall access signage (PDF)
http://amalearningmb.ca/resources/active_offer_sign_non_gov.pdf
(explanation available)
<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/tools-resources.html>
3. Words with Dignity desk card (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/words_with_dignity.pdf
4. Words with Dignity poster (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/words_with_dignity_poster.pdf
5. "Service animals are welcome" public notices
 - a. Small-sized Service Animals Welcome (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/service_animal_posters_small.pdf
 - b. Large-sized Service Animals Welcome (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/service_animal_posters_large.pdf
6. Promotional posters with the following captions:

- a. Accessibility means opportunities to live, play and work. (PDF)
<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/opportunities.pdf>
- b. Accessibility benefits everyone. (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/benefits_everyone.pdf
- c. Accessibility means welcoming service animals. (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/welcoming_service_animals.pdf
- d. Accessibility means respectful service. (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/respectful_service.pdf
- e. Accessibility means offering information in different ways. (PDF)
http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/pdf/offering_communications.pdf

We also recommend the Ontario government's resource, Planning Events so Everyone Feels Welcome (PDF)

https://www.sparkontario.ca/sites/default/files/resource_files/accessible_events_booklet_eng.pdf . Resource provided with permission from the Queen's Printer, Ontario.

Final Knowledge Check

This Final Knowledge Check includes four questions. You must complete this Knowledge Check to obtain your certificate of completion for the module.

Question 1

Can you always tell if someone is affected by a barrier? Please explain your answer. Scroll to the text field to type your answer, then select Check My Answer.

Check My Answer Feedback

You cannot tell who is affected by a barrier by their appearance.

Disabilities can come in many different forms. Most people are familiar with a visible disability, such as a colleague who uses a wheelchair or a neighbour with a guide dog. Invisible disabilities are disabilities that are not immediately noticeable. They can include chronic pain, brain injuries, mental illness, gastro-intestinal disorders, and much more. Because they are not obvious to spot, invisible disabilities may be overlooked and misunderstood. Unfortunately, this can lead to discrimination or exclusion of those with an invisible disability.

Question 2

True or False: Organizations must provide notice if an accessible bathroom or elevator is not available.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

True is the best answer.

You need to notify the public when accessibility features are not available. If possible, it is important to let customers know in advance, rather than when they have arrived at the door, but cannot enter.

Question 3

True or False: If a customer has difficulty communicating, or is unsteady when walking, it is best to assume that they do not want assistance.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

False is the best answer.

It is important not to make assumptions about why a person is having difficulty speaking or is slurring words. A stroke, injury, disability, or a recent trip to the dentist may all affect your customer's speech. Also, do not assume that a person who is unable to speak clearly is unable to understand. Always give customers the opportunity to tell you what they need, including how they wish to communicate.

Question 4

True or False: If a customer is having trouble speaking with you, it is best to ask the customer if they have a disability, so that you can determine how to help them.

Option 1 of 2: True

Option 2 of 2: False

Check My Answer Feedback

False is the best answer.

If you are unsure of your customer's needs, start by asking, "How can I help?" Remember to focus on removing the barriers for your customers, not determining their disability.

Congratulations!

Congratulations on completing this module. We hope this module has inspired you to become an accessible customer service champion in your organization.

Certificate of Completion



HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE
ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE MODULE
UNDER THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR MANITOBANS ACT

Date: _____



Contact Us

If you found this information helpful, or if you have questions or concerns, please let us know.

We welcome your advice on how to improve our training and resources.

We are here to help.

Manitoba Accessibility Office (MAO)

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 www.AccessibilityMB.ca, to learn more.

Subscribe to our newsletter Accessibility News

(<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/newsletter.html>).

Join the #AccessibleMB conversation on Twitter and Facebook.

Glossary

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.

Access Offer

This is a proactive way for people to know that your goods and services are accessible to everyone. For example, in the resource section of accessibilitymb.ca, you will find signage for reception areas that asks visitors: “How can I help?” In documents, the offer may look a little different, such as: “Alternative formats are available on request.” Be sure to add contact information so people know where to make the request.

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)

The AMA is provincial legislation that was introduced to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. The AMA calls for accessibility standards that act as regulations. The law will result in improved accessibility for all Manitobans, regardless of their abilities.

Accessible (or Alternate) Format

This is a format of information that facilitates effective communication by or with a person who is disabled by a barrier. Examples of accessible or alternate formats include:

- large print
- recorded audio
- electronic formats
- braille

Barriers

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. For more information on different types of barriers, please visit [accessibility barriers](http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/types-of-barriers.html) (<http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/types-of-barriers.html>).

Disability (People with Disabilities)

A disability is a condition that limits a person's daily activities. People with disabilities may have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their participation on an equal basis with others. A disability, aging, an injury and other life events may temporarily or permanently affect:

- mobility
- dexterity (use of hands)
- vision
- hearing
- communication
- understanding
- mental health

Large Employer

A large employer is one that employs at least 50 people. This includes seasonal employers who employ at least 50 people to do work that is expected to continue for at least 90 days.

Private Sector

The private sector includes businesses and organizations, such as:

- stores and shops
- restaurants
- hotels
- bars
- conference centres
- charities
- places of worship
- non-profit organizations

Public Sector

The public sector includes organizations connected to the government, including:

- Crown corporations
- regional health authorities
- school divisions
- post-secondary institutions
- municipalities
- government agencies, boards and commissions

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 (<http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/v1/education->

resources/resources/fact-sheet-pages/fact-sheet-service-animals.html), please visit the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

Sign Language Interpreter

A sign language interpreter is a person who translates from English to American Sign Language, using gestures and physical expressions (sign language). Interpreter services are critical to ensure accurate communication between individuals who are Deaf and hearing people who do not use sign language.

Support Person

In relation to a person who is disabled by a barrier, a support person is someone who accompanies that person to:

- support the person obtaining, using or benefiting from a good or service provided by an organization
- assist the person in addressing his or her communication, mobility, personal care or medical needs

Undue Hardship

Sometimes, an accommodation becomes so difficult it becomes unreasonable, or an undue hardship. However, it is more than minimal hardship and it must be based on actual evidence of hardship and not merely assumptions about how hard it would be to accommodate a person's special needs. For more information on undue hardship, please visit the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

Universal Design

Universal design refers to making things safer, easier and more convenient for everyone. It involves a broad range of design concepts – including design of products, spaces and environments – to provide access in a way that respects all abilities.