



Accessible Customer Service Policy

Purpose

The *Accessibility for Manitobans Act* (AMA) became law in December 2013. This legislation provides a proactive process to remove barriers affecting persons with disabilities. It is also noted that the Government of Canada passed the *Accessible Canada Act* (Bill C-81) on November 27, 2018 “to enhance the full and equal participation of all persons, especially persons with disabilities, in society.”

HEB Manitoba is committed to complying with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service under The *Accessibility for Manitobans Act*. HEB Manitoba policies and procedures reflect the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff.

Policy

Barriers prevent persons with disabilities from participating in everyday life. Accessibility barriers limit or prevent people from being able to obtain information, service and goods, or to enter a space or be part of an activity. If a barrier to accessing HEB Manitoba services cannot be removed, we seek to provide alternate ways to access our services.

Any current or future policy or practice not respecting and promoting the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities will be reviewed, modified or removed.

Guidelines

To provide accessible customer service HEB Manitoba will comply with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. We comply with the following requirements as identified below:

1. Meeting the communication needs of visitors through the following communications practices:

- We offer to communicate in different ways, such as writing things down, reading things out loud, and taking extra time to explain things.
- We keep paper and pens available to write things down, offer a chair when longer conversations are needed, offer a quieter space and sit down to engage with someone using a wheelchair.
- All 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.
- We note at our reception areas that we can offer service in different ways to meet our visitors’ needs.

2. Accommodating the use of assistive devices when visitors are accessing our services or facilities:

- We do not touch or move assistive devices without permission.

3. Welcoming support persons in our offices:

- We address the visitor, not the support person, unless the visitor asks us to do otherwise.
- We make space for support persons on-site and ensure the visitor always has access to their support persons.

4. Allowing service animals on our premises:

- We treat a service animal as a working animal and do not distract it by interacting with it unless the visitor gives us permission to do so.
- We 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 ask about the disability.
- We expect the visitor 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 (such as barking, whining or wandering), we may provide a warning to the visitor to control the animal.
- If the service animal continues to misbehave, we may ask the visitor to leave.

5. Maintaining accessibility features and informing when an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable:

To ensure barrier-free access to HEB Manitoba services and facilities, we maintain our accessibility features so they can be used as intended:

- We organize our space so that there is room for people with wheelchairs, electric scooters and walkers.
- Our access doors can be operated by automatic door openers or through other means where automatic doors are not available.
- Our seating accommodates persons of various sizes and abilities.
- We keep hallways, aisles, entrance and reception areas, waiting rooms, and meeting rooms clear of clutter.
- We offer to take our services to the customer when our premises are not accessible.
- We offer services by telephone or MB Telehealth.
- We offer services at our members' work locations.
- Our accessibility features include: wide aisles, open reception areas, waiting and meeting rooms, automatic doors, designated parking, doorbells and intercoms.

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 services. Information will be posted on our website or at the reception desk.

- If one of our accessibility features becomes temporarily unavailable, we prepare and post a notice 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 services.
- If requested, we work with the visitor to find other ways to provide services.
- We let the public know about disruptions in the following ways:
 - Posted on website.
 - Posted at reception desks.

6. Responding promptly to feedback:

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

- We invite feedback in person, by phone, or by email.
- All feedback is directed to Committee Coordinator, Office of the CEO, who triages the information and facilitates a response.
- If the feedback requires us to follow up, we notify the individual that we are reviewing their request and when they can expect a response.
- We let the individual know what action we will take, if any, to address their feedback.
- We respond to feedback in a way that meets the communication needs of the individual.

7. Providing the required training on accessible customer service to all staff:

We are trained on:

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

In addition, HEB Manitoba will:

- Train new employees within three months after hiring.
- Provide refresher training when there are updates to policies, practices and measures.
- Maintain records of who has taken training and when.
- Address feedback on the accessibility of our services in regular staff meetings.

8. Keeping a written record of our accessibility and training policies:

We keep a written record of our accessibility and training policies. Our written documents include a summary of our training material and state when training is offered.

We let the public know that our written policies are available on request. We provide our policies within a reasonable timeframe, at no cost, and in a format that meets the needs of the individual.

Definitions

Accessibility Barriers

Accessibility barriers include attitude, physical barriers, communication and technology barriers.

Disabilities

There are many types of disabilities, visible and invisible. Disabilities may affect mobility, balance, dexterity, vision, hearing, speech, language, learning, understanding, or mental health.

Service Animal

A service animal means any animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability including emotional support.

Support Person

A support person is someone either hired or chosen to help a person with a disability. A support person can be a personal support worker, a volunteer, a family member, or a friend of the person with the disability. Support persons may provide one or more types of assistance, such as:

- Guiding a person with vision loss,
- Interpreting for a person with a language barrier,
- Assisting with personal care, or
- Providing support for other medical needs.

Visitor

For this policy, a visitor includes members, employers, unions and others who access HEB Manitoba services.

Appendices

Language is Powerful handout