

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

A comprehensive guide focusing on the importance of understanding disability, addressing barriers and suggestions for improving accessibility for Manitobans in key areas of daily living

THE LAW: THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR MANITOBBANS ACT

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) became law in December 2013. This landmark legislation provides a process to remove barriers affecting people with disabilities and many other citizens. The Manitoba government is committed to achieving significant accessibility progress by 2023.

The AMA affects all Manitobans - people who confront barriers every day, as well as those in a position to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. To develop accessibility standards, the Manitoba government is working with representatives from the disability community, as well as the public and private sectors

The 5 Key Areas of Manitoba's Accessibility Standards

1. *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.
2. *The Accessibility Standard for Employment* addresses practices related to employee recruitment, hiring, and retention.
3. *The Accessibility Standard for Information and Communications* addresses barriers to accessing and providing information. This includes information provided in print, in person, on websites, or in other formats.
4. *The Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces* focuses on access to areas outside the jurisdiction of The Manitoba Building Code. This includes sidewalks, pathways, parks, and other aspects of the environment that we design and construct.
5. *The Accessibility Standard for Transportation* applies to public transportation to address barriers Manitobans might encounter while getting to work or school, shopping, socializing and other aspects of daily life.

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DISABILITY: CONSIDER A BROAD RANGE OF ABILITIES

Nearly every Manitoban either has a disability, knows someone with a disability, or will have a disability in the coming years. According to the Royal Bank of Canada, people with disabilities have an estimated annual spending power of about \$25 billion across Canada. People with disabilities also represent a large pool of untapped employment potential. When we make Manitoba accessible to people with disabilities everyone benefits.



BE AWARE OF BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY

When you think about making your organization accessible, it is important to be aware of both visible and invisible barriers. **Architectural or structural barriers** may result from the design of a building, such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout. **Information and communications barriers** can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low color contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that is not clear or plain can all cause difficulty. **Technology, or lack of it**, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers. **Systemic barriers** can occur through policies and procedures. These are any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities. Example: denying access to a person with a service animal. **Attitude** is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. Some people don't know how to communicate with those who have visible or invisible disabilities. They may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering help. Others might ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether.

IF YOU ARE A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION:

- Start from within your organization by training your employees on Accessible Customer Service.
- Create processes to accommodate people with disabilities at your organization and train your staff on it.
- Make your print and digital documents available in accessible and alternate formats.
- Try to use closed captions, open captions or transcripts in all online organizational meetings, sessions or video content that is being shared on social media.
- Make your business cards Braille embossed so that people who have vision problems can access your organization
- Hold awareness sessions in community by yourself and build partnerships with other organizations on the topic
- Small nonprofits can use basic accessibility signage (for example: keep the entrance clear) at their office and bigger ones can take measures accordingly (for example automated doors, ramps etc.) to promote accessibility
- Upgrade your website to an accessible one
- Develop accessible hiring practices, write inclusive job postings and conduct accessible interviews. Create clear protocols for responding to requests for accommodations
- Build diversity by hiring a person with disabilities. They have insights on how to serve customers with disabilities, higher productivity and higher retention rates
- Offer comprehensive benefit packages and remote work options



IF YOU ARE A COMMUNITY CENTER:

- Consider allocating a separate parking space for people with disabilities
- Make your entrance and hallways accessible for people with assistive devices
- Hold awareness sessions/workshops to make community more aware of the concept of disability and importance of accessibility
- Try to make your restrooms accessible with sufficient space, privacy and appropriate equipment
- Develop resources regarding benefits, services and programs available and make them readily available

IF YOU ARE AN ETHNIC STORE:

- Make sure your entrance doors are wide enough for assistive devices like wheelchair to come in
- Always treat customers with disabilities with respect, courtesy, and dignity. Listen to them and respond accordingly. Don't impose your assumptions.
- Stay calm and professional when dealing with unfamiliar situations
- Your entrance and aisles should be wide enough and clear of any empty boxes or cartons
- When creating emergency evacuation plans, be sure to include customers with disabilities.
- Before you deny a request that is disability-related, take the time to think about alternative solutions. Remember, improving access can increase revenue for your business.
- Talk to people who live with a variety of disabilities. Ask for advice about how your business can improve and help them

For more information, please contact;

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