



Policy Type: Human Resources	Number: HR - 2
Policy Name: Accessibility	Approved: December 20, 2024

1. Purpose

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba is committed to upholding the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)* which is intended to remove barriers to accessibility for persons with disabilities. This includes providing equal access to goods, and services, and treating persons with disabilities with dignity and respect, and in a way that takes their disability into account.

2. Definitions

The following definitions have been taken directly from the AMA:

“Accessible customer service” is provided when all persons who are reasonably expected to seek to obtain, use or benefit from a good or service have the same opportunity to obtain, use or benefit from the good or service.

“Barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba will provide customer service in a manner that removes barriers for people with disabilities according to the following key principles of the AMA:

1. **Access:** Persons should have barrier-free access to places, events and other functions that are generally available in the community;
2. **Equality:** Persons should have barrier-free access to those things that will give them equality of opportunity and outcome;
3. **Universal design:** Access should be provided in a manner that does not establish or perpetuate differences based on a person's disability;
4. **Systemic responsibility:** The responsibility to prevent and remove barriers rests with the person or organization that is responsible for establishing or perpetuating the barrier.

3. Removing Communication Barriers

Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba is committed to removing communication barriers for our customers. We will communicate with our customers in a way that takes their disability into account. For example, we will communicate in writing rather than verbally. If a customer requires a quieter place to have a conversation, we will accommodate them.

We will make it clear to our customers that information about our services is available in different formats, upon request.

4. Maintaining Accessibility

Our organization will always do its best to remove physical barriers that prevent our customers from accessing our goods and services. For example, we will:

- Keep aisle ways and doorways clear of obstacles or ice and snow
- Provide accessible washroom facilities
- Offer online services as needed
- Ensure the font on pamphlets or communications is large enough for those with vision difficulties to read

5. Assistive Devices

We welcome assistive devices to help remove barriers for persons with disabilities. Persons who use an assistive device will be permitted to use their own device to access the goods and services of Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba. Employees are not to interfere with a customer's assistive device without consent from the customer. For example, ask the client if you have permission to touch their screen reader or move their wheelchair.

If Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba provides any assistive devices, they will be provided free of charge.

6. Support Persons

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a support person Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba will ensure that both persons are permitted to enter the premises together and that the person with a disability is not prevented from having access to the support person while on the premises.

When a support person is present, employees are to remember that the support person is an aide for the customer. The customer is the person who shall be communicated with and consulted. In the event any sensitive information is to be discussed, the employee must gain the permission of the client or customer to have that discussion in the presence of the support worker.

Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba will ensure that support workers will not be charged for accessing the goods or services in their role as support person.

7. Service Animals, Service Dogs or Guide Dogs

If a person with a disability is accompanied by a guide dog or other service animal, Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba shall ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with them, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. Employees are not to interfere with the support animal at any time.

8. Notice of Temporary Disruption

If there is a temporary disruption in any of our services or facilities either in whole or in part, Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba will provide notice of the disruption to the public via as many channels as possible, in accessible formats, where available. We will physically post notices where the disruption is taking place as well as through any other channels that are appropriate such as email, phone, text, social media, or on our website.

Notice of the disruption will include the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration and a description of alternative facilities or services, if any, that are available.

9. Process for Receiving Feedback

Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba will create an accessible process for accepting feedback about the way in which it provides goods and services to persons with disabilities. For example, we will make the information about the feedback process readily available to the public on-site, on the web page or in alternate formats upon request. Employees will be available to receive feedback by phone, in person, or online.

When a complaint is received about the manner in which we provide goods, services or facilities to persons with disabilities, Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba will let the person who submitted the feedback know about the actions the organization will take to resolve the issue.

Feedback can be sent to:

- Varina Sidley
- Office Manager
- varinas@ircom.ca

10. Public Events

When we are offering a public event, we will announce it in a manner that is accessible, using different formats and channels. We will choose an event venue that is accessible as well.

11. Training

Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba will provide training to all employees and volunteers to teach them about the accessible customer service policies and practices we have in place including how to:

- Ensure communication with a person disabled by a barrier is done in a way that removes the barrier. For example, use easy-to-read fonts and plain language.
- Work with customers with assistive devices to remove or reduce barriers.
- Welcome support persons and service animals and understand the rules to follow when working with a customer who is accompanied by either.
- Create barrier-free access to goods and services, so all clients can benefit from our goods or services such as removing boxes or other obstructions from hallways.
- Inform the public when there are temporary barriers to buildings, spaces or services. For example, if the elevator is out of order, employees must notify
- Properly receive and respond to feedback from clients regarding our accessibility features, including what action will be taken to respond to complaints.
- Ensure employees receive training on how to serve people disabled by barriers. Include everyone who participates in, or is responsible for, the implementation of policies and practices.

This training will be provided within one month of a new employee or volunteer's start date, or as soon as possible thereafter. We will maintain records of training completion for every employee.

12. The Human Rights Code of Manitoba

The Accessibility Standard for Customer Service requires that training includes the rights and responsibilities covered by *The Human Rights Code* (Manitoba). *The Code* overrides any other law, unless that law specifically says otherwise.

The definition of discrimination in *The Code* includes the failure to reasonably accommodate the needs of individuals or groups such as those with mental and physical disabilities.

Reasonable accommodation means adjusting a rule, or even a physical space, allowing for changes to the way things are usually done. Organizations should have a policy in place to help determine if the accommodation is reasonable. If it is not possible for the provider to grant an accommodation request in full, or in part, they must show that it would cause undue hardship.