

Section Title: Board and Corporate Administration - Board Administration
Subject: Accessible Customer Service
Effective Date: November 1, 2018

POLICY PURPOSE

The Workers Compensation Board ("WCB") recognizes that individuals with disabilities can face barriers that hinder their ability to access the goods and services the WCB provides. The WCB is committed to identifying, removing and preventing these barriers so that all individuals who seek to access WCB goods and services can do so in a manner that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the steps the WCB will take to identify, remove and prevent barriers that inhibit people with disabilities from accessing WCB goods and services. This policy is designed to comply with the WCB's obligations under the *Customer Service Standard Regulation* made under *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* ("AMA").

POLICY

A. Definitions

When interpreting this policy, the following definitions apply:

Accessible Customer Service - means ensuring that all persons who are reasonably expected to obtain, use or benefit from a good or service have the same opportunity to obtain, use or benefit from that good or service.

Barrier - for a person who has a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability, a barrier is anything that interacts with that disability in a way that may hinder the person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis.

Service Animal-means an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person's disability.

B. Obligations

Providing accessible customer service involves identifying barriers that exist, working to remove them, and seeking to prevent new barriers from being created. It also involves ensuring that access to goods and services is reasonably provided by alternate means if a barrier cannot be removed.

The *Customer Service Standard Regulation* directs organizations to focus on the following key areas when providing accessible customer service: communications, assistive devices, support persons, service animals, the physical environment, public events, mechanisms for feedback and response, and staff awareness and training.

The WCB will take the following steps to ensure our practices and procedures are consistent with the principles of barrier-free access to goods and services:

1. **Communications** - The WCB will make all reasonable efforts to communicate with people who self-identify as being impeded by a barrier in a manner that takes into account their impediment. It will:
 - a. Produce public information in ways that enhance accessibility;
 - b. Notify the public that the information is available in alternate formats;
 - c. Provide alternate formats on request and in a timely manner; and
 - d. Update websites and online information to enhance accessibility.
2. **Assistive Devices** - The WCB will reasonably accommodate individuals who use assistive devices to remove or reduce barriers in accessing WCB services.
3. **Support Persons** - The WCB recognizes that persons disabled by barriers may rely on support persons. The WCB will make reasonable efforts to ensure that a person who is disabled by a barrier may be accompanied by a support person when seeking access to the WCB's goods and services;
4. **Service Animals** -The WCB supports and welcomes the use of service animals on WCB premises and during the provision of WCB services off-site. The WCB will ensure that:
 - a. WCB employees are trained to ask appropriate questions when it is not clear than an animal is a service animal; and
 - b. WCB employees do not interfere with service animals without seeking permission from their owners.

Service animals must be under the care and control of their owners at all times.

5. **Physical Environment** - The WCB will ensure accessible features of the built environment, such as accessible washrooms, ramps and elevators, are available for use and that reasonable notice is given when there is a disruption of accessible services, including an estimated timeframe for resolution of the disruption.
6. **Public Events** - To provide accessible public events and meetings, the WCB will:
 - a. Hold events in accessible spaces;
 - b. Reasonably meet the communication needs of persons with disabilities on request;
 - c. Publicize events in a manner accessible to people with disabilities;
 - d. Communicate that disability supports may be provided on request; and
 - e. Waive additional fees for support persons.
7. **Feedback and Response** -- the WCB will establish a system that allows it to receive and respond to feedback from the public about accessible customer service. The WCB will ensure that:
 - a. Feedback is accepted by both phone and email;
 - b. Response to the feedback is provided in a timely manner;

- c. Response to the feedback is accessible to the individual who submitted it; and
 - d. Actions taken in response to the feedback are documented and available upon request.
- 8. Staff Awareness and Training** -- Training will be provided to all new and existing WCB employees on an ongoing basis to improve interaction and communication with persons with disabilities. The training will include a review of the AMA and the *Customer Service Standard Regulation*. It will focus on:
- a. The types of barriers individuals may face and the variety of ways that assistance may be provided to overcome those barriers;
 - b. How to interact and communicate with persons disabled by barriers;
 - c. How to interact with persons who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person; and
 - d. What to do if a person disabled by barriers is having difficulty accessing goods or services.
- 9. Alternate Means** -- In the event that an existing barrier preventing individuals with disabilities from accessing WCB goods and services cannot reasonably be removed, the WCB will make reasonable efforts to provide these individuals with access to the goods or services by alternate means.

To provide feedback about accessible customer service please contact the WCB at 204-954-4321 ext. 4323 or WCBAccessibility@wcb.mb.ca.

REFERENCES:

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, CCSM c.A1.7
Customer Service Standard Regulation, Man Reg 171/2015

HISTORY:

1. Policy created on October 25, 2018 by Board Order No. 32/18 effective November 1, 2018.