

WCB Accessibility Plan 2023-2024

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Baseline Report

About The Workers Compensation Board

The Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba (WCB) is an injury and disability insurance agency governed by a Board of Directors representing employers, workers and the public interest and funded by employers. The WCB provides benefits to injured workers and their families. We work with workers, employer, and healthcare professionals to promote safe and healthy workplaces and return workers to health and work in a safe and timely manner.

The WCB provides benefits and supports to approximately 30,000 injured workers per year, as well as assessment and related services to approximately 34,000 employers. The WCB's main location is at 333 Broadway in Winnipeg, with satellite offices in Brandon and Thompson. In addition, SAFE Work Manitoba, a division of the WCB located at 363 Broadway, provides training, consultation, information and other injury and illness prevention services to workers and employers throughout Manitoba.

Accessibility Achievements

Providing compassionate and responsive service to injured workers has always been a priority at the WCB. The WCB has undertaken several initiatives to enhance accessibility, including:

- Collaborating with workers, employers, and members of the public on a case-by-case basis to accommodate their individual needs whenever reasonably possible.
- Updating the WCB website according to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA. The WCB internal web-based portal for information (intranet) is also being improved to bring it into compliance with the international accessibility standard.
- Continuing to ensure physical accessibility around the WCB's main building at 333 Broadway and requiring that future proposals for space planning or renovations incorporate accessibility plans.
- Adopting communication guidelines to enhance accessibility and service for all by addressing language, culture, and literacy needs - including the use of plain language, simple graphics, and easy-to-read fonts.
- Continuing consultations on accessibility to better inform future accessibility enhancements.
- Appointing an Accessibility Coordinator to ensure compliance with *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* (AMA), and the regulations made under it. The coordinator is responsible for developing, implementing, and updating the WCB's Accessibility Plan to ensure that barriers to services are reduced throughout the various areas of the organization.

Accessibility Barriers

In 2016, as part of an initial effort to better understand the barriers to accessibility encountered at the WCB, the WCB conducted an internal survey of its employees. We also participated in a survey of the general public and organizations representing persons disabled by barriers. This was done in collaboration with other Crown agencies to better understand the needs of WCB stakeholders who are disabled by barriers.

Barriers identified through the 2016 consultations included:

- **Attitudinal Barriers** -- the internal employee survey revealed different levels of employee awareness regarding how to provide accessible access to goods and services, and the measures the WCB had already put in place to provide accessible customer service.
- **Information and Communication Barriers** -- some stakeholders identified difficulties or barriers with the way that WCB information was provided or presented to them. Some would have preferred information in a different format. Others were concerned about the complexity of the information provided to them. Others expressed concern over the fact that the most current information on the WCB's policies and practices appeared to be primarily available online.
- **Technological Barriers** -- concerns expressed by stakeholders were predominantly related to challenges in locating material on the WCB Internet site.
- **Systemic Barriers** -- the internal employee survey revealed that some employees were concerned about how systemic barriers (patterns of organizational behavior, or WCB policies and practices) might be affecting WCB hiring practices or requests for employee accommodation. Some stakeholders experienced the requirement to travel long distances for WCB medical examinations as a systemic barrier.
- **Physical and Architectural Barriers** -- the internal employee survey revealed that areas of the WCB premises commonly accessed by injured workers had doorknobs that were difficult to open and confusing layouts. Finding accessible transportation for clients in rural areas could be difficult. Some stakeholders experienced challenges existing their cars in the WCB parking lot due to the parking layout.

The WCB has taken steps to eliminate, reduce or ameliorate the barriers that were initially identified by employees and stakeholders in 2016. It has also taken steps to comply with the requirements of the *Customer Service Standard Regulation*, the *Accessible Employment Regulation* and the *Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation* made under the AMA. More detail of what the WCB has done to comply with these regulations has been provided in a later section of this plan.

Accessibility Barriers -- Follow Up

The WCB continues to solicit feedback from stakeholders on the progress it has made in identifying, preventing and removing barriers to accessible customer service, by including a question regarding barriers to accessible customer service on surveys sent to injured workers and employers. While these questions do not, at present, specifically solicit feedback from stakeholders regarding information, communication or technological barriers, stakeholder responses indicate that these types of barriers continue to be an issue for some injured workers.

With respect to accessible employment, ongoing consultation with new hires at the WCB is accomplished by a survey. The survey includes a question regarding whether these new employees were aware, throughout the hiring and selection process, that accommodations were available upon request.

Our most recent survey results reveal that slightly more workers, employers, and new hires have experienced accessibility barriers this year than in previous years. However, overall numbers show that most workers and employers do not experience barriers to accessibility when accessing WCB goods and services, and most new hires do not experience barriers to accessibility during the WCB's hiring and process.

In the first two quarters of 2022, 84% of injured workers indicated that they experienced no barriers when accessing WCB Services. Of the 16% of injured workers who said they had experienced a barrier, many of the issues raised were with service delivery generally, not accessible customer service. Some of the concerns raised did, however, relate to accessible customer service, with the most common concern being difficulties experienced in navigating and locating information on the WCB's website. Others expressed concern about the complexity of the information sent to them by mail or available on the WCB's website. Some injured workers also expressed concern with accessing the WCB's services during the pandemic when in person service was not available.

In 2021, 88% of employers indicated that they had experienced no barriers when accessing WCB goods and services.

The WCB's new hire survey, which it has been asking new employees to complete since May of 2021, indicated that in 2022, 87% of new employees were aware that accommodations were available during the hiring and selection process, upon request.

The WCB continues to consult with staff and stakeholders through surveys and other mechanisms to identify barriers to accessible customer service and accessible employment that persist.

Accessibility Plan

Statement of Commitment

The Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for all stakeholders, regardless of their abilities. We believe in inclusion and diversity and are committed to treating people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

The WCB is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to accessibility and meeting the requirements of the AMA and its associated Standards.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

The WCB will continue to incorporate accessibility measures into its policies, procedures, training, communications, and physical environment. The attached Multi-Year Accessibility Plan identifies and updates the actions taken in that regard, including anticipated outcomes and status of the initiatives. The current plan continues to monitor the WCB's progress in meeting its obligations under the *Customer Service Standard Regulations and Accessible Employment Standard Regulation*.

The plan also outlines some of the preliminary steps the WCB is taking to comply with the *Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation*. The WCB is required to comply with the requirements of this regulation by May 1, 2024.

The new standard requires the WCB to:

- develop and implement a policy detailing our accessible communication practices;
- provide training to nearly all staff on how to:
 - identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessible information and communication;
 - provide accessible information and communication, including through a communication support or alternate format (eg. captioning, plain language, sign language, braille, large print and recorded text); and
 - train staff on how to provide accessible communications and provide a review of *The Human Rights Code*, *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* and the new *Accessible Information and Communication Standard*.
- provide web content and web applications that conform with WCAG 2.1 Level AA; and
- develop and implement a feedback mechanism which is suitable to persons disabled by barriers.

1. Awareness

(a) Policy

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Develop an Accessible Customer Service Policy	Establish a clear message and overarching direction about WCB's commitment to accessibility.	Completed.
Develop a Statement of Commitment		Completed.
Develop an Accessible Employment Policy	Establish clear messages and initiatives to facilitate accessible employment	Completed.
Develop an Accessible Information and Communication Policy	Establish clear messages and overarching direction regarding the steps the WCB will take to communicate and disseminate information in an accessible manner.	Preliminary work is being done to ensure that this policy is in place by May 1, 2024, the date that requirements of the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation</i> become applicable to the WCB.

(b) Plan

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Develop and make public a multi-year Accessibility Plan.		Completed.
Update the Accessibility Plan every two years.	Identify actions that will continue to make the WCB more accessible.	Completed for 2023/24. The next plan update in 2025/26 will address the specific steps the WCB has taken to comply with the <i>Accessible</i>

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
		<i>Information and Communication Standard Regulation.</i>

(c) Internal Coordination

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Assign an Accessibility Coordinator to manage accessibility requirements and initiatives across departments.	Consult with representatives across departments to review, remove and prevent barriers and enhance employee awareness.	Ongoing.

(d) Training

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Design training for all new and existing employees on the AMA, <i>The Human Rights Code</i> , and the Accessible Customer Service Standard.	Create awareness and educate employees on the AMA, <i>The Human Rights Code</i> , and the Accessible Customer Service Standard.	Completed. All Staff trained through a series of e-modules. Training is required of new staff.
Provide training to HR staff, supervisors, managers, leaders, and policy staff on the AMA, <i>The Human Rights Code</i> and the Accessible Employment Standard.	Assist employees with identifying barriers to accessibility and solutions to resolve, remove or prevent barriers.	Completed. Targeted staff trained through an e-module. New leaders and targeted staff are continuing to receive training when hired.
Establish timelines for employees to complete accessibility training and track course completions.	Make sure training is implemented in a comprehensive and timely manner.	Employees are given two weeks to complete each module and progress is tracked.

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Provide ongoing awareness about accessibility issues to employees by regular channels such as internal newsletters, blogs and intranet postings.		Ongoing.
Design training for all new and existing employees on the review of the AMA, <i>The Human Rights Code</i> , and the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard</i> .	Create awareness and educate employees on the AMA, <i>The Human Rights Code</i> , and the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard</i> .	Preliminary work is being done to ensure that training is both developed and delivered by May 1, 2024, the date that requirements of the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation</i> become applicable to the WCB.
Design training for all new and existing employees on how to: identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessible information and communication; and provide accessible information and communication, including through a communication support or alternate format	Create awareness and educate employees on how to: identify, prevent, and remove barriers to accessible information and communication; and provide accessible information and communication, including through a communication support or alternate format	Preliminary work is being done to ensure that training is both developed and delivered by May 1, 2024, the date that requirements of the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation</i> become applicable to the WCB.

2. Communications

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Ensure WCB websites are accessible by complying with web accessibility development standards.	<p>All WCB websites are accessible.</p> <p>Upgrading of the SAFE Work Manitoba web content continues and currently is 85% complete.</p> <p>The WCB is currently examining what further work will be required to meet the WCAG 2.1AA, the standard specified in the new <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation</i>.</p>	<p>The WCB web content meets the WCAG 2.0AA standards.</p>
Assist customers who self-identify as being disabled by barriers and recognize and support customers who use assistive devices, support persons or service animals.	Customers receive timely access to information, goods, or services in a manner that enhances their dignity, independence, and participation in the workers compensation system.	Staff continue to assist injured workers who face barriers and training is ongoing.
Ensure employees are familiar with supports available to make information more accessible.	Employees are aware of accessible formats and communication supports.	Employees will continue to be made aware of new tools and supports as they become available.
Develop procedures to produce public information in ways that enhance accessibility and notify the public that information is available in alternate formats.	Information is provided in alternate formats in a timely manner.	Completed.

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Ensure that prospective employees are informed, during the recruitment and selection process, that accommodations are available during the hiring process upon request.	Prospective employees are informed of this through the WCB website, as well as all job postings.	Completed.
Ensure that prospective employees are informed, at the time they are offered employment, of the WCB's policies and practices for accessible employment	The WCB informs prospective employees, in their letter of offer that the WCB is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to employees with disabilities. They are also given a copy of the WCB's Accessible Employment Policy	Completed.

3. The Physical Environment

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Establish a process for addressing structural barriers that are identified or arise when it is reasonable to do so	Maintain and improve physical access for the public to WCB buildings. Improve physical access for employees.	Completed
Establish a process of notification and signage when accessible features of buildings are not available.		Completed
Incorporate considerations of barrier free design principles to enhance accessibility for future space plans and renovations.		Completed. The WCB is including accessibility principles in ongoing renovations, such as automatic doors and lower counters.

4. Public Events

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Develop processes, resources and/or checklists for employees to ensure reasonable accessibility to public events.	WCB led public events are accessible to all Manitobans. WCB employee events are accessible to all employees.	Event plans are vetted to ensure they are reasonably accessible.
Hold events in accessible spaces, meet the communication needs of persons disabled by barriers on request, publicize events in an accessible manner and waive additional fees for support persons.		Processes for ensuring accessible events have been established. The promotion of such events meets accessibility requirements. The WCB will accommodate requests for support whenever reasonably possible.

5. Feedback and Response

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Establish a system to receive and respond to feedback from the public about accessible customer service, ensuring that feedback is acknowledged in a timely manner.	Communication channels have been established and feedback provided is evaluated and addressed.	Public feedback email (wcbaccessibility@wcb.mb.ca) Or phone 204-954-4321 ext 4323 Dedicated staff receive feedback, ensure timely responses and track requests.

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
Track and monitor requests from members of the public.		Tracking mechanism is in place.
Ensure employees with disabilities who request accommodation are provided with reasonable accommodation, and the opportunity to discuss ongoing challenges and the adequacy of their accommodation.	WCB Human Resources works directly with employees with disabilities to assist them with Individualized Accommodation Plans. These plans are periodically reviewed.	Completed.
Ensure that employees who require assistance in the event of emergency are provided with Workplace Emergency Response Plans.	WCB Human Resources works with employees requiring assistance to create a Workplace Emergency Response Plan, which is periodically reviewed.	Completed.
Ensure WCB Performance Management Process takes into account the fact that employees may be disabled by barriers and that accommodations may not fully address those barriers.	Performance management training for leaders emphasizes that leaders must not tie the need for accommodation to job performance, must take an employee's individualized accommodation plan into account, and must take steps to ensure performance management is free from discriminatory conduct.	Completed.

6. Accessible Information and Communication Standard

Initiative/Action	Expected Outcomes	Current Status
<p><i>The Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation</i> has been analyzed to identify requirements for the purpose of forthcoming implementation. The Accessibility Coordinator will coordinate cross-department initiatives.</p>	<p>Representation from various areas of the WCB aligns effectively with the content of the new standard.</p>	<p>Work is being done to ensure that the WCB complies by May 1, 2024, the date that requirements of the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation</i> become applicable to the WCB.</p>
<p>Appoint a project manager for the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard Regulation</i>.</p>	<p>Provide support to the Accessibility Coordinator in managing the specific implementation of the Standard.</p>	<p>Project managers have been working to identify which departments within the WCB will have a role in implementing the requirements of the <i>Accessible Information and Communication Standard</i>, and the necessary steps for implementation.</p>