



POLICY

No. 102

Department: Administration

ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Town of Virden (Town) owned and operated municipal buildings, public facilities, parks, public works yards, recreation facilities, and other municipal properties where customer service accessibility is required.

PURPOSE:

The Town is committed to providing a barrier-free environment for all stakeholders, customers, employees, suppliers, and any individual who may enter our premises, access our information, or use any of our services. The Town will abide by the Customer Service Standard Regulation as legislated by the Province of Manitoba under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. This policy will reflect the specific workplace procedures and be used in conjunction with the Act to comply with requirements of the legislation.

DEFINITIONS

Accessible Customer Service – 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.

Public Event – Includes a public meeting, a public hearing, and a consultation process required under an enactment.

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.

Support Person – In relation to a person who is disabled by a barrier, a person who accompanies the person to support the person obtaining, using or benefitting from a good or service provided by an organization; or assist the person in addressing their communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs.

POLICY OBJECTIVES:

1. Ensure that all residents, customers, visitors, contractors, and stakeholders are provided with equitable, respectful, and barrier-free access to municipal programs, services, facilities, communications, and public events.
2. Support compliance with the requirements of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) and the Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation.
3. Establish procedures for receiving, responding to, and addressing feedback regarding accessibility and customer service barriers.
4. Promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration, equal opportunity, and inclusion in all interactions between the Municipality and members of the public.
5. Facilitate the use of assistive devices, support persons, and service animals in accordance with applicable legislation and accessibility requirements.
6. Demonstrate the Municipality's commitment to providing accessible customer service that meets the needs of all Manitobans and supports full participation in community life.

GENERAL

1. The Town is committed to providing accessible customer service that respects the dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity of all persons.
2. The Town will identify, remove, and prevent barriers that may impede access to municipal goods, services, programs, facilities, communications, or events.
3. The Town will make reasonable efforts to ensure that municipal goods and services are provided in a manner that is accessible to all members of the public.
4. Accessibility considerations will be incorporated into municipal policies, procedures, practices, and decision-making processes wherever reasonably practicable.
5. The Town will provide reasonable accommodations to persons disabled by barriers and will not charge additional fees for accommodations required to access municipal goods or services.
6. Employees, volunteers, elected officials, and contractors acting on behalf of the Town are expected to support and comply with this policy.
7. The Town will communicate with members of the public in ways that take into account their accessibility needs and will make information available in accessible formats upon request, where reasonably practicable.
8. The Town will maintain accessibility features within its facilities and services and will provide notice when accessibility features are temporarily unavailable.
9. The Town will welcome the use of assistive devices, support persons, and service animals in accordance with applicable legislation.
10. The Town will establish a process for receiving and responding to feedback regarding the accessibility of its goods and services.
11. The Town will ensure that required accessibility training is provided to employees, volunteers, and other persons who interact with the public on behalf of the municipality.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Barrier-Free Access to Goods and Services

The Town will establish and implement measures, policies, and practices to ensure every person has barrier-free access to the Town's goods and services. In creating the aforementioned, the Town will:

- a. Determine current barriers customers face when attempting to access goods or services;
- b. Address adequate means for preventing the creation of any new barriers;
- c. Seek to remove all identified barriers;
- d. Identify procedures to ensure that where barriers cannot be removed, the Town will provide alternate means for accessing goods and services;

- e. Ensure that any fees charged relating to accommodating a person who is disabled by a barrier are imposed only where the organization cannot reasonably accommodate the person;

The Town will ensure that all employment practices uphold the principles of reasonable accommodation as defined in the Human Rights Code of Manitoba and that all individuals have access to employment opportunities.

2. Communications

Where an assistive device is used to remove or reduce a barrier to accessing municipal services, the Town will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the use of that device.

When interacting with a person(s) who self-identify as being disabled and constrained by a barrier, the Town will ensure that all communications with the person(s) is completed in a manner that takes into account the person(s) disability.

3. Support Person

The Town welcomes persons with disabilities to attend municipal facilities and events with a support person. The Town will ensure that individuals with disabilities are permitted access to their support person at all times while accessing Town facilities, services, programs, or events.

The Town recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to be accompanied by a support person when seeking to access, use, or benefit from municipal services, programs, or facilities.

The Town will accommodate support persons free of charge, or where this is not possible, ensure the support person is notified ahead of time that admission will be charged and advise of the amount.

4. Service Animals

The Town recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to be accompanied by a service animal when seeking to obtain, use, or benefit from Town goods or services.

The Town will ensure that staff are aware of this policy permitting the admittance of service animals in all areas where customers are generally allowed.

5. Facilities

The Town will ensure that all facilities and accessibility features intended to provide barrier-free access to goods and services are maintained and available for their intended use. If any facility or accessibility feature becomes unavailable, the Town will provide notice outlining the reason for the disruption and, where possible, an estimated timeframe for restoration access.

The Town will also provide information regarding any alternative means of accessing its goods and services during the disruption. Notice will be provided in a manner that is appropriate to the circumstances and may include prominent posting at the affected location, on the Town's website, and through any other communication methods deemed reasonably practicable.

6. Feedback

The Town will respond in a timely manner to all feedback received regarding accessibility for the goods and services provided. Processes will detail actions that the Town will take to respond to feedback and complaints, as well as how feedback will be documented.

The Town will ensure that information regarding the feedback process is easily accessible and in alternative formats that meet the needs of the individuals requesting it. Availability of alternative formats will be publicly advertised.

7. Documentation

Documentation of the Town will be available upon request. This availability will be displayed advertised on the Town's premises and website, or by any means which is reasonably practicable.

If documentation is requested by a person who is disabled by a barrier, the Town will ensure that the documentation or information contained in it is given to the person in a manner that takes into account the barrier, and within a reasonable timeframe at no cost to the person.

8. Training

The Town will provide the required training on accessibility to all employees, management and volunteers. The training will include:

- a. How to interact and communicate with person(s) who face barriers to accessing goods and services, use assistive devices, are assisted by support person and/or service animals.
- b. How to use equipment or assistive devices that are on-site.
- c. An overview of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, the Human Rights Code (Manitoba), and the Accessible Customer Service Standard Regulation.
- d. Town organizational policies, practices, measures, including updates or changes.
- e. All training activities will be documented including when training is to be provided and a summary of the training content.

9. Public Events

If the Town holds public events, every reasonable measure will be taken to provide barrier-free access to person(s) disabled by barriers.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed periodically, or sooner if required by legislative amendments, operational changes, or identified privacy concerns.



CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Date