

## MEETING THE STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Standard is comprised of eight requirements:

- Requirement 1: Communicate in a way that best meets your customers' needs.
- Requirement 2: Accommodate the use of assistive devices.
- Requirement 3: Welcome support persons.
- Requirement 4: Allow service animals in public spaces.
- Requirement 5: Maintain accessibility features.
- Requirement 6: Inform the public when and why accessibility features are unavailable.
- Requirement 7: Welcome feedback on accessibility and respond promptly.
- Requirement 8: Complete accessibility training.

### Requirement 1: Meet Communication Needs

To assist people who are having difficulty in accessing our services, a good starting point is to ask the person how you can help. Being positive, flexible, and open to suggestions will help to create a positive experience. Often, good customer service for people with disabilities can be achieved through simple and effective solutions:

- Be respectful and considerate.
- Be patient.
- Avoid stereotypes and do not make assumptions. Some disabilities are not visible.
- Ask, "May I help you?" Give people the opportunity to tell you what they need, including how they wish to communicate.
- Speak directly to the person with a disability and maintain eye contact, not to their support person.
- Print documents in clear, easy to read fonts, with lots of colour contrast, including forms, signs, and any other print documents.

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Practices and Measures:

- To meet communication needs, when appropriate we offer to communicate in different ways, such as writing things down, reading things out loud, and taking extra time to explain things.
- We use an Access Offer sign with disability icons to let people know we can offer service in different ways. Please see exhibit ACC-E-2 for sample.
- We also:
  - Keep paper and pens available to write things down.
  - Offer a chair when longer conversations are needed.
  - Offer a quieter space when needed.
  - Sit down to engage with someone using a wheelchair.
- All our publications include the statement: “This publication is available in alternate formats on request.” We also specify how a person can request an alternate format.
- We also use signs and documents that are easy to read, including using larger fonts and colour contrast, and ensuring messages are not printed on images.
- Signs and documents are also written in plain language.

Requirement 2: Accommodate the Use of Assistive Devices

An assistive device is any technical aid, communication device or other instrument or piece of equipment that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities with their daily living. Personal assistive devices are typically devices that customers bring with them such as a wheelchair, screen reader, listening device, cane, walker, or a personal oxygen tank, etc. that might assist in hearing, seeing, communicating, moving, breathing, remembering and/or reading.

Pembina Trails can accommodate the use of assistive devices when students, parents/ caregivers, volunteers, employees, or members of the public are accessing our facilities or services. We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to ensure they can benefit from our facilities or services.

Practices and Measures:

- Not touching or moving assistive devices, including wheelchairs, without permission.
- Do not move assistive devices out of a person’s reach or vision.
- Let students, parents/caregivers, volunteers, employees, or members of the public know what assistive devices you offer. For example, computers with large monitors, magnifiers, etc.
- If you have assistive devices on site, know how to use them so that you can aid the person requiring their use. For example, how to increase the size of the font on the computer screen.

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- Being trained on the use of any assistive devices that we provide, including:
  - video captioning
  - automatic doors
  - doorbells
  - etc.
- In cases where the assistive device presents significant and unavoidable health or safety concerns, we attempt to use other measures to ensure the person with disabilities can access our facilities or services.

Requirement 3: Welcome Support Persons

A support person accompanies a person with a disability to provide services or assistance with communication, mobility, personal care, medical needs, or access. They do not have to be a paid personal support worker (PSW) but could be any family member or friend that helps a person perform daily tasks. PSW’s are trained professionals.

Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person shall be allowed to enter any Pembina Trails facilities with their support person. At no time shall a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises.

Practices and Measures:

- Speak directly to the person requesting services and do not assume they cannot understand. Most people prefer to make their own decisions about what services they need or how a service may affect them.
- Speak directly to the person requesting services, not to the support person unless requested to do otherwise.
- If the nature of the conversation or service is private, ask whether to include the support person. Check to determine whether they prefer to discuss a decision first with the support person.
- Make space for support persons on-site and ensure the person requesting services always has access to their support person.
- Notify the support person well in advance of admission or service fees, for special events, outings, or field trips, that cannot be waived or reduced. Information about fees for support persons can be shared in the following ways:
  - Posted on websites, on social media, and/or in newsletters.
  - Posted at schools or administrative buildings entrances, reception desk, and/or in high traffic areas.
  - Included in posters, brochures, pamphlets and/or advertisements.
  - Through employees, volunteers, or management (in person, by phone or through recorded greetings).
  - Through a public address system or intercom.

Given the nature of information that may be discussed in the presence of a support person accompanying an individual with a disability, Pembina Trails School Division may require that

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the individual sign a confidentiality agreement (sample can be found under policy EHB-E-2) depending on the nature of the information that is shared.

#### Requirement 4: Allow Service Animals

Pembina Trails supports the use of certified service animals in all the areas available for public access, as long as the appropriate planning and preparation have taken place, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. Please see policy Animals on Division Premises (IMG, IMG-R) for further details regarding service animals.

Defined by the Manitoba Human Rights Code, a service animal is trained to assist a person with a disability. The work or tasks a service animal performs must be directly related to a person's physical, developmental, or psychiatric disability. Animals that provide comfort and companionship but are not trained to assist with a person's disability, are not service animals.

An animal is a service animal if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to their physical, developmental, or psychiatric disability, or if the person has a letter, note or form from a regulated health professional, care provider or service animal trainer that states that they require the animal because of a disability-related need. If you are not sure if an animal is a service animal, you can ask:

- Has this animal been trained to help with a disability-related need?

If another law prohibits service animals (for example, food preparation areas, etc.), an explanation will be provided as to why the service animal cannot enter the space and alternatives to access or services will be discussed with the person.

A certified service animal is not a pet. A certified service animal is a recognized working animal that has been trained to assist individuals who have a physical, developmental, or psychiatric disability with their daily living activities.

Service animals must wear a distinctive harness/saddlebag or vest and should always be under control. The animal should be harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless these devices interfere with the work or task that they perform, or if the individual's disability prevents them from using these devices. In those instances, the individual relying on the service animal must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other means.

#### Practices and Measures:

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet but is a working animal.
- Do not distract a service animal from its job by petting, feeding, or playing with it.
- Know how to identify a service animal by its harness or vest and by the assistance the animal is providing.
- The person requiring a service animal is responsible for the care, control, and supervision of their service animal. The Division is not expected to provide care or food for the service animal but could provide water if requested.

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- The person requiring a service animal must also inform the Division of the service animal's "bio-break" needs and ensure the removal and disposal of animal waste in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.
- If the service animal is showing signs of not being controlled (i.e., by barking, whining, wandering, etc.), or exhibits health issues (i.e., vomiting, diarrhea, tics, etc.), you can ask the handler to leave with the service animal until the plan is re-evaluated to ensure the safety of all.

Requirement 5: Maintain Accessibility Features

To ensure barrier-free access to our facilities and services, we maintain our accessibility features so they can be used as intended. Accessibility features affected by this policy include hallways, aisles, entrances, and reception areas, waiting rooms and meeting rooms, accessible washrooms, elevators, automatic doors, doorbells, ramps, etc.

Practices and Measures:

- Facilities are organized so that there is space for people with wheelchairs, electric scooters, and walkers.
- Our seating accommodates people of varying sizes and abilities.
- Our hallways, aisles, entrances, and reception areas, waiting rooms and meeting rooms are kept clear of clutter.
- Entrances are kept clear of ice and snow and treated with sand, salt, or ice melt.
- We use both audio and visual cues to inform students, parents/caregivers, volunteers, employees, and members of the public it is their turn to be served.

Requirement 6: When Accessibility Features are Unavailable

Pembina Trails will notify the public when and why an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable, how long it will be unavailable, and other ways to access our facilities or services.

Practices and Measures:

- If one of our accessibility features becomes temporarily unavailable, a notice and/or announcement will be prepared and posted about the disruption, the reason for the disruption, how long it will last, and whether there are other ways we can provide access to our facilities or services (for example, by using an alternate entrance).
- If requested, we will work with students, parents/caregivers, volunteers, employees, and members of the public to find other ways we can provide access to our facilities and services (for example, by using an alternate entrance).
- The Division will let the public know about disruptions in the following ways:
  - Posted on Website, on social media, and/or in newsletters.

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- Posted at the school or administration office entrance, reception desk and/or in high traffic areas.
- Included in posters, brochures, pamphlets and/or advertisements.
- Through employees, volunteers, or management (in person, by phone or through recorded greetings).
- Through a public address system or intercom.

Requirement 7: Welcome Feedback

Pembina Trails offers all individuals an opportunity to give feedback to either help identify and remove barriers or to comment on initiatives and services provided. We will track all feedback and take any actions necessary to remove or minimize a barrier.

Practices and Measures:

- Inform students, parents/caregivers, volunteers, employees, and members of the public about our feedback process and how they can provide feedback by either contacting us in person or by phone, e-mail or in writing. Allow feedback to be provided in various ways.
- Take note of any feedback that is received in person and share it with your administrator or supervisor.
- All feedback can be directed to the Accessibility Coordinator, Lorraine Farmer, Chief Human Resources Officer, who determines what action, if any, should occur.
- If the feedback involves a request for follow-up, notify the person about the anticipated waiting period before someone will call them back to discuss what action may be required, if any.
- We respond to feedback in a way that meets the communication needs of the individual.

Requirement 8: Provide Training

In order to promote building an inclusive and accessible environment to best serve all of our students, parents/caregivers, volunteers, employees, and members of the public, Pembina Trails employees shall be trained on:

- The purpose of accessibility legislation such as the *Accessibility of Manitobans Act*, Accessibility Standard for Customer Service, and the Manitoba Human Rights Code.
- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact and communicate with people who face barriers to accessing our facilities or services, who use assistive devices, or are assisted by a support person and/or assisted by a service animal.
- How to use any equipment or assistive devices that are available on-site.
- Pembina Trails policies, practices, and procedures, including updates or changes.

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Practices and Measures:

- The Accessibility for Manitobans Act online learning portal – Accessible Customer Service will be used to train all employees of the Division. This training will be mandatory for all new and existing employees. This training for all new employees must be completed within the first thirty (30) days after hiring.
- All employees will be notified if there are any changes to policies, practices, or procedures governing the accessibility to our facilities or services.
- We will assess the need to update or provide refresher training on an ongoing basis.
- We will let the public know that our written policies are available on request, and in a format that meets the needs of the individual.
- We will train staff to be familiar with any equipment or assistive devices that may be available at our facilities, which may assist with the provision of our services to persons with disabilities.
- All certificates of completion for the Accessible Customer Service module must be forwarded to the Human Resources department who will record who has taken the training and when.

Additional Requirement: We Make our Public Events Accessible

We make every effort to ensure that any public events are accessible in four areas:

1. Announcing events in a manner that is accessible.
2. Holding events in accessible meeting places.
3. Meeting participant needs.
4. Informing the public that relevant disability accommodations can be made on request.

Practices and Measures:

- We let the public know that our public events are accessible and that they can request accessibility accommodations in the following ways:
  - Posted on Website, on social media, and/or in newsletters.
  - Posted at the school or administration office entrance, reception desk and/or in high traffic areas.
  - Included in posters, brochures, pamphlets and/or advertisements.
  - Through employees, volunteers, or management (in person, by phone or through recorded greetings).
  - Through a public address system or intercom.

This information is available in alternate formats on request. Please contact the Accessibility Coordinator, Lorraine Farmer, Chief Human Resources Officer by email at [lfarmer@pembinatrails.ca](mailto:lfarmer@pembinatrails.ca).

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