

St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church Accessibility Policy

Background

The *Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)* was enacted in December 2015.

The Goal is to ensure that Manitobans of all abilities have full access to programmes and services offered by the organization.

The Aim is for organizations to identify, prevent, and remove barriers to participation, and to provide leadership and long term commitment to achieve significant progress by 2023 to make Manitoba more inclusive to everyone. i.e. address barriers to access. The plan must be updated every two years.

The Standards will address barriers and set out requirements in five key areas of daily living;

- Customer Service
- Information and Communication
- Training
- Employment
- Built Environment

The Standards will be introduced in phases. Phase One: Customer Service Standard (introduced Nov/2015, for compliance by Nov/2018)

ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS for CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

Purpose

The policy is intended to meet the requirements of Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Manitoba Regulation 171/2015 under the AMA, and applies to the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties, not to the goods themselves.

For the purpose of this regulation, 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 opportunities to obtain, use, or benefit from the good or service offered.

Application

This policy applies to the employees and volunteers of St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church at 3 St. Vital Road, Winnipeg, MB, who provide goods and/or services to the public or any other organization in Manitoba, and has one or more employee. The policy also applies to services offered off site by employees/volunteers of the Church.

Definitions

Accessibility: giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life and refers to the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product, or environment.

Accommodations: arrangements made to allow persons with disabilities to participate or benefit equally. The person affected must be consulted. Examples: healthy snacks at events accommodate individuals with dietary needs; flexible hours accommodate employees whose schedules are affected by homecare duties or medication.

Assistive Device: any piece of equipment, tool, or other instrument that is used to enable or improve the functional ability of a person in daily living. e.g. wheelchair, cane, hearing aid, oxygen tank.

Barrier - related to this legislation: obstacle that limit access and prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in society. Most barriers are not intentional. Barriers usually arise because the needs of people with disabilities are not considered from the beginning

Customer: an individual seeking to access St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church for goods, services, or information.

Disability: a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or activities, or to participate fully in daily living. Disabilities or the aging process may be apparent or not and may affect mobility, balance, vision, hearing, speech, or mental health.

Service Animal: an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability that relates to that person's disability (Human Rights Code). A person with a service animal has the right to enter any place where the public is allowed. In rare situations, when access to an animal may be restricted e.g. allergies of others, hygiene, and food safety, attempts should be made to accommodate the person in need with the service animal.

Support Person: an individual who accompanies a person with a disability who is seeking goods/services provided by the organization, or someone who assists the person seeking goods/services with their mobility, communication, personal care, or medical needs.

Policy

St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church is committed to serving all people. The church seeks to provide programmes and services in ways that are accessible to those with a disability, while adhering to the principles of respect, dignity, independence, integration, and opportunity for all people to engage and participate in activities.

Requirements For Providing Accessible Customer Service

- Meet the communication needs of customers
- Allow and accommodate for the use of assistive devices
- Welcome support persons
- Allow the use of service animals
- Maintain barrier-free access; e.g. clear walkways, remove tripping hazards

- Provide notice of service disruptions or unavailability of service
- Seek feedback from customers
- Provide training to staff on accessible customer service

Commitment

- St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church (StMM) is committed to complying with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service under the AMA.
- StMM is committed to striving for excellence in serving all people including those with disabilities.
- The Customer Service Policies and Practices are consistent with the principles of respect, independence, integration, dignity, and equal opportunity for all those we serve. Policies and practices of StMM that do not respect and promote these principles will be revised or removed.

Communication

Staff/Volunteers of StMM will communicate with people disabled by barriers, in ways that take into account the nature of the barrier. This may include:

- Large-sized font that is easier to read and using plain language that is easily understood.
- Paper and pen available at reception for those needing to communicate in writing
- Training to recognize barriers to communication, and suggestions for alternative methods of communication that may work better for those we are serving.

Assistive Devices

StMM recognizes that persons with disabilities may need to use their own assistive devices when accessing services provided by the church. Assistive devices will not be touched or moved without permission of the owner. (We may need to offer a different location for safe-keeping. Seek permission and be patient.)

Support Persons

A person with a disability may be accompanied by a support person. StMM will ensure that both persons are allowed to enter the premises together and that the customer is not prevented from having access to the support person e.g. being seated together.

Speak directly to the customer (not the support person) to find out their need, being sensitive to an individual's right to privacy and confidentiality. Obtain consent from the customer prior to sharing/discussing any personal information.

If an admission fee is required for an event hosted by StMM, the ad or notice will state if charges apply to a support person. The administration of StMM will determine if the support person is exempt from paying the fee.

Service Animals

A customer with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal will be allowed access to areas open to the public unless otherwise excluded by law. e.g. food preparation areas.

“No pet” policies do not apply to service animals.

Staff/Volunteer may ask a customer who presents with an animal, if it is a Certified Service Animal.

Examples of work or tasks provided by service animals include:

- Guiding a person with vision loss or impairment.
- Alerting a person who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder during an anxiety attack.
- Reminding a person to take their medication.

The customer is responsible for the care and control of the service animal. Staff/volunteers should not touch, impede or interfere with the service animal as it is not a pet.

If there is a health and safety concern, e.g. allergy or great fear of animal, the church will make reasonable efforts to meet the needs of the individuals affected. An assessment of the situation will be made by staff and senior volunteers to accommodate all parties, favouring the person who would have the greatest loss. An appeal for understanding would be made.

Maintain Barrier-Free Access

The church will maintain barrier-free access by:

- Keeping hallways and waiting/meeting rooms clear of clutter.
- Keeping entrance ways cleared of snow and ice
- Ensuring that the placement of standing signage is not a tripping hazard
- Provide an area for mobility devices in the waiting area
- Provide and maintaining a ramped entrance
- Provide and maintain the elevator

Notice of Disruptions in Service

Service disruptions may occur due to reasons that may or may not be within the control or knowledge of the church. In the event of a temporary disruption to facilities, services, or usual procedures offered by the church, an effort will be made to advise participants in advance. If the disruption is unplanned or unknown, an effort will be made to notify the participants as soon as is reasonably possible.

Notifications will include:

- The service or activity that is disrupted or unavailable and the reason for the disruption
- The anticipated duration of the disruption (if known)
- A description of alternative services or options

When disruptions occur, the church will inform its customers by:

- posting notices in conspicuous places including at the point of disruption, at the main entrance and the nearest accessible entrance to the service disruption and/or on the church website
- contacting customers who have appointments/invitations, and informing those who are making appointments

Feedback Process

The church will provide customers with the opportunity to provide feedback on the service provided to those with disabilities. Information on the process will be available on the church web site, www.stmarymagdalenewpg.org as well as posted on the church bulletin board. The notice will include the contact information for those wishing to provide feedback in person, in writing, or by phone. Feedback Forms will be available upon request.

Submitting Feedback:

Feedback can be submitted to the church office Ph. 204-253-0555 or e-mail stmary@mymts.net. Office hours are Tuesday through Thursday 12:00 – 4:00 (excluding July and August).

Customers who provide feedback will receive an acknowledgement, along with the outcome of their concern, complaint, or positive comment that was submitted. An attempt will be made to respond within two weeks.

Training

Training will be provided for:

- All employees and volunteers of StMM who encounter the public or other organizations
- Members of Vestry, and others who represent the leadership of the church and who may be involved in the development of Policies of StMM.

Training will include:

- A review of the background and purpose of the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act*
- A review of the requirements of the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Manitoba Regulation 171/2015*
- Instructions on how to interact and communicate with people of varying abilities.
- Instructions on effective and respectful communication with people less able and who require the use of an assistive device, the assistance of a support person or service animal.
- Instructions on how to use the equipment or devices on-site or otherwise provided, to help people access the goods and services provided.
- Instructions on what to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our goods, services, or facilities.
- A review of the policies/procedures of StMM related to customer service
Staff will be informed and/or trained when changes are made to the policy.

Training is provided to new employees of StMM and volunteers who represent the leadership of the church during orientation soon after the duties have been assigned. On-going training is provided subsequent to any changes in legislation, procedures, and/or practices.

Documentation of training will include:

- A summary of the content of the training
- The time(s) when training will occur
- A record of the dates training was provided and the people who attended the sessions