

# **Workplace Barriers and Solutions**

## **Accessibility Standard for Employment**

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# To make your workplace accessible, begin by removing barriers.

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In May 2019, the Manitoba government established the Accessibility Standard for Employment under Manitoba's accessibility law. It requires Manitoba employers to remove barriers to employment.

Some people mistakenly think of a disability as a barrier. The Accessibility for Manitobans Act defines a barrier as anything that interacts with a disability in a way that affects a person's participation in everyday life. To help create a barrier-free work environment, begin by considering how different types of barriers may affect your hiring practices and your workplace.

To remove barriers for individual employees, you must consult with them about reasonable accommodations that best meet their needs. For more information, see the [Guide to Create an Individualized Accommodation Plan Process and Policy](#).

The aim of this document is to demonstrate how simple solutions can help remove barriers and create positive outcomes. The results will benefit not only employees with disabilities, but also anyone who accesses your organization. Everyone benefits from a respectful and diverse workplace.

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**Attitudinal barriers** occur when people think and act based on false assumptions.

<b>Attitudinal barriers</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
assuming a job can only be done one way, or the way it has always been done	Welcome job applications from qualified people with disabilities. Ask them how they would do the job. Provide a period of orientation and assessment.
thinking that hiring employees with disabilities will involve costly accommodations	Review the current research. On average, workplace accommodations are low or no cost, about \$500.  Consider the benefits of having a diverse workforce.
having a limited understanding of what workplace accommodations entail, related to physical disabilities	Common accommodations include adjusting work schedules for medical appointments, mental health issues or children’s early dismissal from school.
employees considering workplace accommodations to be a form of special treatment	Ensure all employees are familiar with the laws that guide employer policies and practices around accommodations.  Address general questions without focussing on individuals.
assuming employees who have difficulty speaking also have difficulty understanding	Be patient and use clear communication that may involve the use of technology.
limiting employees with disabilities from opportunities for growth and advancement	Ensure all employees have the chance to receive training and new responsibilities.
fearing that hiring persons with disabilities eliminates normal job performance reviews	Remind employees that meeting expectations is critical to their employment and future opportunities. All employees benefit from clear job descriptions and performance reviews.

**Information and communication barriers** occur when employees with disabilities cannot easily receive, respond or understand information available to others.

<b>Information and communication</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
organizing all training in a lecture format accompanied by PowerPoint	Meet diverse learning styles and accommodation needs by providing documentation in advance, describing images, graphs, and allowing employee participation.
failing to consider the importance of workspace orientation, for example, when employees face walls, instead of each other	Reorganize workspaces to allow employees who are hard of hearing to lip read, and to promote greater staff collaboration.
relying on print files to view client's information	When possible, maintain information electronically. Use passwords to maintain security.  Provide magnification for viewing print files.
communicating in a noisy environment; for example, a construction site or hockey arena	Use text messages in place of yelling. Supervisors or coaches can use microphones connected directly to hearing aids.
relying on verbal communication to present a list of tasks to employees with learning disabilities	Write down detailed instructions and break tasks into sequential parts.  Provide instructions in American Sign Language or text to deaf employees.
displaying a printed emergency plan for staff at an office entrance	Share the emergency plan with all staff in different formats.  Ensure print materials are in an easy-to-read, large typeface.

## Physical and architectural barriers

Physical and architectural barriers make it difficult for some people to access a place or handle objects.

<b>Physical and architectural barriers</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
providing all employees with the same equipment	Ask employees what tools they need to succeed at their job. For example, an employee with low vision may require a large-screen computer monitor. Another employee with arthritis may require a larger keyboard, and someone with chronic back pain may benefit from an ergonomic chair.
structuring a job without considering diversity among employees	Organize jobs to accommodate individual needs. For example, consider whether all staff are equally capable of heavy lifting or standing.
storing files in 5-foot filing cabinets when the office manager is four feet tall	Replace tall filing cabinets with lower ones. Move frequently used files to lower shelves, and provide a stool.
asking employees with mobility issues to use a service elevator	Consult with employees to find solutions that maintain their dignity and keep them safe.  Organize work areas to allow people who cannot use stairs to work on the main floor.
leaving new deliveries, outgoing mail and garbage bins in office aisles or outdoor pathways, including ramps	Ensure ample room is available for people with mobility devices, such as walkers, wheelchairs and scooters  Keep materials in storage rooms, and out of pathways.

## Technology barriers

Barriers occur when technology or the manner in which it is used is not accessible to people with disabilities.

<b>Technological barriers</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
requiring job applicants to complete time sensitive online application forms	Offer other ways to apply, including submissions by mail and email. Include your business' contact information in the job ad.
holding meetings and training webinars online, without considering participants with disabilities	Use the accessibility options available in webinar platforms, which may include free captioning of speech, a call-in number or recording for later review.
introducing new technology through online tutorials	Ensure all employees understand new technology by following up with them individually.
mandating that all workers wear rubber gloves while working	Introduce synthetic glove alternatives (non-rubber) that will address employee and client allergies.
charting information using online graphs to summarize information or encourage competition among your company's divisions	Include image figures that summarize each graphs' findings. Allow users to increase the size of the text. Include your business's contact information, so alternate formats can be requested.
relying on alarm systems to alert staff and patrons to evacuate a building	Assign an employee to be in charge of safety and meet Manitoba requirements with the <a href="#">Workplace Emergency Toolkit</a> .  Consider employees who have experienced trauma and may freeze, employees who are Deaf and need visual cues, and employees who may have difficulty exiting the building.

## Systemic barriers

Systemic barriers are policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.

Systemic barriers	Solutions
assuming people with disabilities are not interested in a job, because no applicant has self-identified as having a disability or has requested an accommodation	State in the job ad that requests for accommodations are welcome.  Reach out to an employment agency that supports people with disabilities.
requiring job candidates to find their way to the interview in an office tower	Offer to meet applicants at the building entrance. For example, individuals with a vision impairment may need help if they are unfamiliar with the location.
refusing the request of an employee with a service animal to bring the dog to work	Meet requirements of <a href="#">Manitoba's Human Rights Code</a> and <a href="#">The Accessibility for Manitoban's Act</a> , by allowing service animals, unless there are health and safety risks.
prioritizing visible disabilities, while neglecting invisible disabilities, such as allergies	Respond to allergy sensitivities by asking employees to avoid using triggering products, such as perfume.  Address any concerns about upcoming renovations, for example, allergic reactions to glue or paint.
maintaining a fixed work schedule: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Allow work schedule flexibility as a disability accommodation when possible, including for people who need breaks during the workday, or whose sleep is affected by their disability.
expecting employees who return to work, following injuries or illness, to perform job tasks in the same ways they did prior to being injured	Have a return to work policy and create an <a href="#">Individualized Accommodation Plan</a> for employees who return to work with graduated duties.

## For more information, or to request alternate formats:

Visit **AccessibilityMB.ca** or contact:

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Legal disclaimer: This information complements the application of the regulations under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) and is not legal counsel.

January 2022, Version 2