



Acorn Family Place Accessibility Policy

Acorn Family Place is committed to being a welcoming and inclusive place for our community members of all abilities. Our policies, practices and measures reflect the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities. This includes complying with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act.

The following policy statements, organizational practices and measures are intended to meet the requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

This policy applies to all Acorn Family Place employees, volunteers, and students.

1: Strive for accessibility for all

Policy Statement:

We recognize the need for accessibility for all.

Practices and Measures:

- Acorn Family Place recognizes that everyone has different abilities and needs, and that some disabilities are not visible.
- We take a strengths-based approach, with appreciation for the whole person.
- We strive to meet the needs of Acorn Family Place participants, whatever they are.
- We recognize that Acorn Family Place participants may face multiple barriers in society, due to oppressive systems and attitudes, and we strive to avoid replicating those barriers, whenever possible, within our space and services offered.
- If a barrier to accessing our programs or services cannot be removed, we seek to provide alternate ways to access the programs or services.

2: Meet communication needs.

Policy Statement:

We meet the communication needs of our participants.

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 also:
 - keep paper and pens available to write things down
 - offer a chair when longer conversations are needed
 - offer a quieter space to have important conversations
 - sit down to engage with someone using a wheelchair
 - ask others, or use technology, to assist in language translation, when possible
- We use signs and documents that are easy to read, and/or will make a larger-print version available upon request.
- We use plain, accessible language in our programs and workshops, on signs and in public-facing written materials.
- We write signs, documents and other public-facing written materials in plain language.
- We make an effort to make our online materials accessible, such as ensuring documents are readable by screen reading technology.

3: Accommodate the use of assistive devices.

Policy Statement:

We accommodate the use of assistive devices when participants are accessing our programs, services or facilities.

Practices and Measures:

- We make an effort to provide clear pathways throughout our centre for participants using assistive devices to access various program areas.
- We do not touch or move another person's assistive devices without permission.
- Access to our facility is accessible with an elevator.



- We offer to hold open any doors that are not automatic for those who may not be able to open the doors themselves.
- Assistive devices and software can be used with our community computers.
- 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 programs and services.

4: Welcome support persons.

Policy Statement:

We welcome support persons to accompany participants in accessing all of our programs and services.

Practices and Measures:

- We recognize that a participant may prefer to have a support person present for a variety of reasons.
- We address the participant, not the support person, unless requested by the participant to do otherwise.
- We make space for support persons on-site and ensure participants have access to their support persons at all times.
- If we offer any programs with an admission fee, that fee will be waived for support persons.

5: Allow service animals.

Policy Statement:

We allow service animals on our premises, wherever the public is welcomed.

Practices and Measures:

- We:
 - treat a service animal as a working animal
 - do not distract a service animal from its job by petting, feeding or playing with it, unless given permission by the person with the service animal to do so
- If we have concerns, we may ask if the animal has been trained to help a person with a disability-related need.

- We do not inquire about the disability.
- We expect the person who is handling the service animal to maintain control of the animal physically or through voice, signal or other means.
- If the service animal is showing signs of not being controlled (i.e., by barking, whining or wandering), we may provide a warning to the handler to control the animal.
- If the service animal continues to misbehave, we may ask the handler to leave.
- We may make reasonable requests to restrict where service animals go within our centre, such as where food safety is concerned.
- We look for ways to accommodate other participants who may be impacted by the service animal (e.g. because of fears or allergies), for example, by offering separate areas to sit and warning participants when an animal is entering the space.
- Our staff will work with participants, including children, to ensure that they understand how to be safe and respectful around service animals.

6: Maintain accessibility features.

Policy Statement:

To ensure barrier-free access to our facilities, we maintain our accessibility features so they can be used as intended.

Practices and Measures:

- We make an effort to keep hallways, aisles, drop-in area, and meeting rooms clear of clutter that could impede movement. As much as possible, we organize our space so that there is room for people using wheelchairs, electric scooters and walkers.
- Our seating accommodates people of varying sizes and abilities.
- When we become aware of physical barriers to our facility that are beyond our control, we will notify the property owner and work with them to find solutions to reduce or eliminate those barriers.
- Alternatives to our accessibility features include: meeting with participants at alternate locations, such as at people's homes or at a public place.
- Our accessibility features affected by this policy include: hallways, drop-in area, meeting rooms, accessible washrooms, elevators, automatic doors, and buzzer.

7. Let the public know when and why an accessibility feature is unavailable.

Policy Statement:

Date of first approval: November 19, 2018

Date last updated: November 29, 2022

We let the public know on our website, over the phone and by email, about the accessibility features of our facility.

We let the public know when and why an accessibility feature is temporarily unavailable, how long it will be unavailable, and other ways to access our programs and services.

Practices and Measures:

- If one of our accessibility features becomes temporarily unavailable, we prepare and post a notice and/or announcement 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 programs and services (e.g., by using an alternate entrance).
- If requested, we work with the participant to find other ways to provide programs and services.
- We let the public know about disruptions in the following ways:
 - posted on our website, on facebook, and/or in newsletter
 - posted at our entrance, and/or in high traffic areas
 - through employees and volunteers (in person, by email or phone when communicating with participants who might experience a barrier)

8. Welcome and respond promptly to feedback.

Policy Statements:

We welcome and respond promptly to feedback we receive on the accessibility of our programs and services. We seek out feedback on the accessibility of our facility, programs and services as part of our regular monitoring and evaluation practices.

When we hear concerns or feedback, we respond with empathy, we honour people's experiences, and we take their concerns seriously. We document the actions we take to respond to the feedback we receive, and that information is available on request in a format that meets the individual's communication needs.

Practices and Measures:

- We invite feedback directly to any employee, in person, by phone or email.
- Feedback will either be addressed by the employee who receives it, or passed on to the Executive Director, who determines what action, if any, should occur.

- If the feedback requires us to follow-up, the participant is notified that the request is being reviewed and when they can expect a response.
- We let the participant know what action we will take to address their feedback, if any.
- We respond to feedback in a way that meets the communication needs of the individual.

9: Provide the required training to employees, volunteers and management.

Policy Statements:

We provide the required training on accessible customer service to employees, volunteers and students. We are trained on:

- The broad range of abilities that people experience, including disabilities which may not be visible.
- How to interact and communicate with people who face barriers to accessing programs and services, use assistive devices, are assisted by a support person and/or are assisted by a service animal.
- An overview of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, The Human Rights Code (Manitoba), and the Customer Service Standard.
- Our organizational policies, practices and measures, including updates or changes.
- Use of inclusive language.

Practices and Measures:

- We train new employees, volunteers and students within one month after hiring.
- We review and update policies and provide refresher training periodically, as the need arises.
- The Executive Director will record who has taken training and when.
- Feedback on the accessibility of our programs and services is addressed in regular staff meetings.

10. Keep a written record of accessibility and training policies

Policy Statements:

We keep a written record of our accessibility and training policies. Our written documents include a summary of our training material and when training is offered.



Practices and Measures:

- We let the public know that our accessibility and training policies are available by request, by email or in person, through any full-time employee.
- We provide our policies within a reasonable timeframe, at no cost, and in a format that meets the needs of the individual.
- We review this policy periodically and update it in response to current circumstances and needs identified.