

Customer Service Accessibility Policy

The Quark Group

Statement of Commitment

The Quark Group is committed to complying with the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. Our policies, practices and measures reflect the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities. We will seek to reasonably accommodate customers by removing barriers that limit, restrict or prevent individuals with disabilities from participating fully and equally within our stores. Compliance with 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 employees and management.***

The new Accessibility Standard for Customer Service under provincial legislation means greater customer service for everybody.

Accessible customer service is not necessarily about ramps or automatic door openers. It's about understanding that our customers and clients have a variety of needs.

The following topics in this policy will help you welcome and better serve everybody.

- Understand what barriers prevent accessible customer service.
- Identify the areas that require accessibility policies and practices.
- Requirements for providing accessible customer service.

1. Understand what barriers prevent accessible customer service

What are accessibility barriers?

Many people think disabilities are the barriers, but that is not the case. Barriers prevent people with disabilities from participating in everyday life. Once you understand what accessibility barriers are, it is easier to identify them. There are many types of barriers, both visible and invisible.

Accessibility barriers limit or prevent a person from being able to get information, service and goods or to enter a space or be part of an activity.

- Attitude, including stereotypes and assumptions, can be the big barrier. An example is thinking that people who cannot communicate verbally have nothing to say.
- Physical barriers prevent people from accessing your service. Examples include store aisles too narrow for a person with a walker or wheelchair, or parking lots without spaces designated for people with disabilities.
- Communication barriers prevent people from understanding information. An example is a sign that is too small or confusing.
- Technology barriers often relate to information and communication. An example is a website that cannot be used by people who are blind and use a screen reader.
- Systemic barriers are those practices or policies that prevent many customers from accessing your service.

2. Identify the areas that require accessibility practices

Develop and put into place measures and practices that will help ensure barrier-free customer service for people with disabilities, seniors, and others with challenges to mobility, communication, understanding or health concerns.

Let customers know your accessibility procedures are available for their review.

Preparing for Accessible Customer Service

Put the customer first; let the principles of independence, dignity, access and equality guide you.

Your Obligations

- Identify barriers to accessible customer service.
- Remove barriers to accessible customer service.
- Prevent the creation of barriers to accessible customer service.
- Provide equivalent customer service.

General tips on providing accessible customer service

- If you're not sure what to do, ask your customers, "How can I help?" Your customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- Avoid stereotypes and make no assumptions about what type of disability the person has. Many disabilities are not visible, and asking personal questions is not appropriate.
- Don't assume what a person can or cannot do. Take the time to get to know your customer's needs and focus on meeting those needs.
- An "active offer" is a proactive way to ensure that your information and services are available and accessible to everyone. For example, include on documents: "Alternative formats available on request." If required, your customer may request larger print, an electronic version, or having the document read out loud. Braille may be another less likely request.

3. Requirements for providing accessible customer service

To provide accessible customer service, the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service requires that you introduce measures and practices to:

- Meet the communication needs of your customers.
- Allow assistive devices.
- Welcome support persons.
- Allow people with service animals.
- Review physical barriers to access.
- Let customers know when accessible services aren't available.
- Invite your customers to provide feedback.
- Train your staff on accessible customer service.

MEET THE COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF THE CUSTOMER

There are many different types of disabilities, some visible, others invisible. Disabilities may affect mobility, balance, dexterity, vision, hearing, speech, language, learning, understanding, or mental health.

Practices And Measures:

- Ask your customers how you can best communicate with them. Every situation is different and depends on an individual's needs.
- Keep items to be used for alternate forms of communication such as a pen and paper in a convenient location.
- Offer a chair if a longer conversation is required.
- Seat yourself to engage with someone using a wheelchair.
- Offer documents in accessible formats, if requested. You can work with your customer to find the right format. For example, you may direct them to your accessible website or read something aloud.
- Be patient. People with certain disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond. A good start is to listen carefully.
- If Accessibility Feature is unavailable:
 - If one of your accessibility features becomes temporarily unavailable, immediately inform your manager of the details to 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 goods and services.
 - If requested, you will work with the customer to find other ways to provide goods and services.
 - You will also let the public know about disruptions by posting notices at your store entrances.

ALLOW ASSISTIVE DEVICES

An assistive device is any piece of equipment persons with disabilities use to help them with daily living. Some examples include: a wheelchair, screen reader, listening device, magnifying glass or cane.

Practices And Measures:

- Review aisleways and doors at your location to ensure you are prepared to serve customers who use assistive devices such as walkers and wheelchairs.

- Offer the space and time that may be required to meet the needs of customers using assistive devices.
- You will not touch or move a customer's assistive device without permission.

WELCOME SUPPORT PERSONS

Support persons help individuals with disabilities perform daily tasks. Without support, they may be unable to safely or comfortably access your location. A support person does not have to be a paid support worker. He or she can be a family member or a friend.

Practices And Measures:

- When engaging in conversation with the customer, speak to the customer, not just the support person. The support person will provide assistance if necessary.
- When demonstrating or promoting a product, address the customer, the support person will engage as needed.
- Have an extra chair available for the support person to use.

ALLOW SERVICE ANIMALS

Service animals assist people with disabilities. A person with a service animal has the right to enter any place where the public is allowed. It may be obvious that the animal is trained to assist with a disability that is visible (the person is blind or deaf). It may be less obvious that the animal is trained to assist with other disabilities because the disability is invisible (post-traumatic stress disorder or diabetes).

Practices And Measures:

- Welcome service animals into public areas of your workplace and understand that these are working animals not to be distracted or touched.
- Consider what might cause issues at your location to serve people with service animals.
- Do not apply standard pet policies to service animals.

REVIEW YOUR PHYSICAL SPACE

Customers with disabilities need easy access to your premises. Sometimes this requires long-term planning, but there are many simple and inexpensive ways to make your location more accessible.

Practices And Measures:

- Organize the space so there is room for wheelchairs, scooters and walkers.
- If clients must wait to be served, consider seating options.
- Use auditory as well as visual queuing systems to tell customers when they will be served.
- Keep signage simple with large lettering.
- Keep pathways clear of snow and ice (where applicable).
- Identify and address any dangers on your premises. For example, is there a stand-alone display that may be knocked over?
- Keep aisle, entrance and reception areas clear of clutter.
- Bring goods to the customer when they are out of reach and not accessible.
- Alternatives to your accessibility features include:

Online shopping with delivery via Canada Post or alternative courier.

Phone orders accommodated through Head Office.

INVITE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

To learn about barriers that exist in your workplace, invite customers to give feedback on how well you provide accessible customer service. Welcome, document, and respond promptly to any feedback received on the accessibility of your goods and services in a format that meets the individual's communication needs.

Practices And Measures:

We invite feedback in the following ways:

- Direct communication to your staff or store manager.
- Contact by phone, email or customer feedback forms.
- Providing guidance and/or assistance in locating the Quark Group website at <https://www.quarkshoes.com/accessibility-policy> to view the "Accessibility Policy and Customer Feedback Form"
- All feedback is directed to the Human Resources department who determines what action should occur.
- If the feedback requires a follow up and contact information is provided, the customer is notified that the request is being reviewed and when they can expect a response.

- We respond to feedback in a way that meets the communication needs of the individual.

CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

Training is at the heart of all successful practices on Accessibility Standard for Customer Service.

Who needs to be trained?

All employees and management must participate in training to:

- Understand how to interact and communicate with people who face barriers to accessing our goods or services; understand the role of a support person and/or a service animal.
- Use any equipment or assistive devices that are available on-site (when applicable).
- Obtain an understanding of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, The Human Rights Code (Manitoba) and the Customer Service Standard.
- Participate in regular reviews of The Quark Group policies, practices and measures including this standard and all updates or changes.

Practices And Measures:

- All new staff are trained as part of their new hire orientation.
- Employees are provided with refresher training regularly, including providing notice regarding updates to policies, practices and measures.
- Training will be tracked and documentation recorded in personnel files.
- Receive feedback on the accessibility of your goods and services during weekly conference calls and regular “tool box talks” when necessary, with the supervisors.
- All staff have access to the Customer Service Accessibility Policy.