



NORTHERN HEALTH REGION

Accessibility Plan

2022-2024

If you have questions, require this information in an alternate format, or wish to comment on how we can further improve accessibility in the Northern Health Region, please contact:

Patient Experience

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Preamble

Under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA), all public sector organizations are required to develop and publish a plan to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. The plan will cover accessibility issues under each standard as it comes into effect, eventually covering all five standards; Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communications, Transportation, and the Design of Public Spaces.

This Northern Health Region (NHR) accessibility plan outlines the actions that the NHR has taken and will put in place to foster a healthy, respectful, and positive environment to facilitate barrier-free access to all services.

This plan is a living document that will be updated every 2 years.

Date of 2019-2021 plan approval: December 10, 2019

Date of 2021-2023 plan approval: December 15, 2020

Date of 2022-2024 plan approval: December 20, 2022

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Accessibility for Manitobans Act

The [Accessibility for Manitobans Act \(AMA\)](#) became law on December 5, 2013 with the goal of providing clear, proactive processes to identify, prevent and remove barriers to accessibility. Under this legislation, accessibility standards will be developed to address barriers to accessibility in the following areas:

- Customer Service
- Employment
- Information and Communication
- Design of Public Spaces
- Transportation

Three sets of standards have now come into effect: (1) Accessible Customer Service Standards released on November 1st, 2015; (2) the Accessible Employment Standards released on May 1, 2019; and (3) Information and Communication released May 1, 2022. The Northern Health Region continues to enhance information and communication accessibility. We continue to actively work to meet regulatory requirements in an effort to become more accessible to all.

For more information on the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and related standards please visit <http://www.accessibilitymb.ca>

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act - Definitions

The provincial accessibility act offers the following definitions that inform accessibility planning:

Access: Persons should have barrier-free access to places, events, and other functions that are generally available in the community.

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

Barrier: For a person who has a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability, a barrier is anything that interacts with that disability in a way that may hinder the person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis.

Statement of Commitment

The Northern Health Region's Accessibility Commitment is in accordance with the *Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)*, legislated in December 2013.

The Region commits to create unbiased opportunities that encourage access and participation for all patients, clients, residents, staff, students, visitors, physicians, volunteers, and the public.

We commit to provide services that respect the dignity, diversity, and independence of persons affected by barriers. We commit to improve accessibility by increasing awareness and by identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers.

The Northern Health Region's Vision, Mission and Values reflect this commitment:

Vision: Healthy People, Healthy North

Mission: The Northern Health Region is dedicated to providing quality, accessible, compassionate health services.

Values: Trust, Respect, Integrity, Compassion and Collaboration

Accessibility Plan Goal

The goal of the Northern Health Region's Accessibility Plan is to identify, prevent and remove barriers to anyone seeking care or working within the Northern Health Region (NHR). The NHR is committed to achieving significant progress by 2024 to make Northern Manitoba more inclusive for everyone and further our organization's Vision of Healthy People; Healthy North.

About the Northern Health Region

The Northern Health Region is the managing body for the publicly funded health services and programs that are available within the Northern Health Region.

- The *Regional Health Authorities Act* provides the legislated responsibility and authority to the Northern Health Region to plan, manage, deliver, monitor and evaluate health services within our Region.
- The Northern Health Region is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Minister of Health.
- The Northern Health Region spans a land area of 62% of Manitoba's land mass, with a population of only 78,000 people.

- Within the Region, there are 2 cities, 6 towns, 1 rural municipality, 1 local government district, 26 Indigenous communities, 16 Northern Affairs communities and multiple hamlets.
- The Northern Health Region operates 6 acute care sites, 4 primary care clinics, 7 long term care sites, and 15 health centres.

For detailed information on our programs and services, please visit our website at www.northernhealthregion.com or dial toll free 1-888-340-6742.

Accessibility Barrier Audit

Methodology

In 2018, the Northern Health Region (NHR) repeated an online survey for staff and public to identify barriers in accessing the NHR services. The survey was available between September and November, 2018. Email, regional radio advertisements, regional newspaper advertisements, posters, word of mouth, and social media (Facebook and Twitter) were used to promote the survey. Survey data was collected online with additional formats made available on request. The original survey was completed in 2016.

The NHR has an established patient experience process in which patients or public members may bring forward concerns or experiences with barriers to accessibility. For the period of June 30, 2020 to October 1, 2022 the region received 20 accessibility concerns. This feedback was incorporated into our plan.

Our plan has been informed by the following definitions and examples of the barriers to accessibility.

Attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers may result in people with disabilities being treated differently than people without disabilities (e.g., talking to an individual's support person assuming the individual with a disability will not be able to understand; assuming a person who has a speech impairment or speaks a different language cannot understand you; thinking a person with an intellectual or mental health disability cannot make decisions, etc.).

The following attitudinal barriers were identified in the Northern Health Region:

- Customers do not feel valued
- Insufficient communication
- Non-compassionate staff
- Systemic racism/racial profiling

Achievements to Date

- A Declaration of Patient Values which include patient's rights and responsibilities, was developed in consultation with inpatients of our three main hospitals. The declaration includes information on how patients can report a violation of their rights.
- We have increased our use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) to grow our communication and information sharing in the Region.
- The Accessibility for Manitobans Act – Customer Service Standard online learning module is mandatory for all employees to complete. Record of course completion is maintained and monitored.

- A new Public Engagement and Indigenous Experience Coordinator was successfully recruited to the Region to ensure we apply an Indigenous lens in our daily operations of patient/ family and community feedback of compliments, complaints and concerns.
- A Declaration to Eliminate all forms of Indigenous specific racism was signed by representatives from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO), Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin (KIM) and the NHR.

Planned Initiatives and Actions

- Development of an Anti-Indigenous Racism Policy and Strategy.
- Develop and implement an Indigenous Wisdom Council.
- Ongoing recruiting of Elder/ Knowledge Keeper positions for Thompson and The Pas.
- Ongoing growth and capacity of the Indigenous Health Department.

Information and Communication Barriers

Information and Communication barriers are created when information is offered in a form that suits some, but not all, of the population.

The following information and communication barriers were identified in the Northern Health Region:

- Appropriate comprehension level
- Cultural awareness and safety
- Language diversity
- Technology issues
- Visual identification

Achievements to Date

- The interpreter services policy was assessed for efficiency. The policy was reviewed and edited to include information on the WRHA provincial interpreter service. WRHA Language Access Interpreter Services are available in 31 languages and over-the-phone (provided by an external contracted provider) in over 200 languages, 24/7/365.
- Language Access services are available around the clock in-person, over-the-phone, or via MBTelehealth, a secure videoconferencing platform.
- An online learning module was created and implemented for employees to educate themselves on the WRHA Interpreter Service.
- Alternate formats are offered on all regional communication.
- Active offer signs are located in facilities throughout the Region.
- The Region's website was assessed and a new user-friendly website was developed and is now live.
- All documents are reviewed by Communications Department to ensure use of plain language and readability.
- A new Chief Indigenous Officer was successfully recruited to the Region to ensure we apply an Indigenous lens in our daily operations. Public members were a part of the selection committee.
- The Northern Health Region considers accessibility for all at public events. Planning, requesting accommodations, advertising and venue will be considered at all events using the following guides developed by our communications department:
 - Accessible events guide
 - Accessible events checklist
 - Speaker tips on accessibility

- A process has been developed and implemented to communicate temporary barriers to building, spaces or services using service point signs, entrance posters, staff communication, newspaper advertisements, radio advertisements, and website notices. These notices include length of service outage and alternate access options.
- Posting of policies related to accessibility on the public website.
- Patient Experience brochures and posters available in Cree
- Cultural Proficiency and Indigenous Cultural Safety training is mandatory for employees and includes a full day in-person classroom session followed by a land-based education session on sacred land.

Planned Initiatives and Actions

- Review and development of a concerted wayfinding initiative including consideration of universal symbol usage.
- Review and consideration of language diversity in client documents.
- Review and development of accessible communication training

Technological Barriers

Technological barriers occur when technology, or the way it is used, cannot be accessed by people with disabilities.

The following technological barriers were identified in the Northern Health Region:

- Access to technology
- Technological roadblocks to access services
- Customer buy-in for technology

- Multiple access points required for efficiency

Achievements to Date

- A new Learning Management System (Absorb) implemented in the Region.
- Implementation of telephone appointments for primary care clinics.
- Virtual appointments with primary care providers and specialists available to clients
- Telehealth appointments available to clients
- Public Health offers home visit appointments upon request from clients

Planned Initiatives and Actions

- Ongoing computer and software upgrades.
- NHR Communications Department will continue working towards ensuring the NHR website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, Level AA.

Systemic Barriers

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

The following systemic barriers were identified in the Northern Health Region:

- Appointment process issues
- Lack of customer engagement/consultation
- Customer labeling
- Human Resource process/qualifications
- Jurisdictional accountability

- Lack/limited services

Achievements to Date

- An Accessibility policy related to service animals has been written, approved and implemented.
- Development of a Provincial Health Care Advisor program has been completed. An initial group in the Region has been trialing the process in primary care.
- Ability's Management Program (AMP) (HR-06-30) implemented to establish a process to emphasize safety and prevention of work place and illness.
- Inpatients in the three main sites were surveyed to get feedback on what was important for the newly developed patient handbook. The patient handbook is provided as early in the care journey as possible and is intended to increase the patient and family's awareness of what to expect during a hospital stay, including important patient safety information. A follow up survey to measure the value of the handbook for patients.
- An established patient experience process allows multiple ways to bring a concern forward to the Northern Health Region such as in-person, by phone, by email, or a written letter. Information on how to bring a concern, complaint, or feedback to the Northern Health Region is provided publicly on the Region's website and available in all facilities through posters, patient experience brochures, and business cards that are made available throughout sites. This information is also shared with the Northern Health Region Board of

Directors and through connections and relationships with local government offices.

- Established Human Resource processes to ensure reasonable accommodation for employees and applicants who are or may be disabled by one or more barriers in the workplace.
- A comprehensive Ability Management Program, which provides support to ill or injured employees to return to work in a safe manner through a collaborative approach.
- Development and implementation of manager training and resources to ensure awareness and understanding of reasonable accommodations.
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan for employees temporarily or permanently disabled by one or more barriers in the workplace.
- The Human Resource department has updated the application for employment, advertising, and hiring statement policy to include information on applicant accommodations.
- Development and implementation of education for Employees on People Centred Care.
- Gender Neutral employee washrooms/change rooms.
- Safe Patient Handling training is provided for all NHR employees who care for patients to ensure safe patient handling regardless of the patient's mobility.
- Ongoing review of the Region's policies and procedures to ensure plain language and an accessibility lens is considered.
- Employees are regularly invited to confidentially notify Human Resources regarding accessibility needs during an emergency.

Individualized emergency response plans are developed to ensure staff safety during an emergency.

Planned Initiatives and Actions

- Review and work to implement Medeo technology into primary care clinics regionally.

Physical and Architectural Barriers

Physical and Architectural barriers are physical obstacles that make it difficult for some to easily access a facility.

The following physical and architectural barriers were identified in the Northern Health Region:

- Difficult navigation in and around facilities
- Doorways, Elevators
- TGH Emergency Department waiting room washrooms are not wheel chair accessible
- Parking
- Lack of patient lifts when needed
- Ramps and inaccessible areas
- Lack of bariatric chairs

Achievements to Date

- Workplace Safety & Health Committees conduct quarterly safety inspections with the goal of identifying and addressing barriers to ensure all areas in our facilities are accessible. The completed reports are returned to the recording secretary of the WS&H Committee. Any outstanding item from the safety tour is tracked by the safety tour team.

- **Thompson General Hospital**

- Sidewalks have sloped or flush curbs
- Well-lit public areas
- All public doors have an automatic feature, doorways have 36-48" openings, wide hallways, directional signage, entries are ramped
- Public elevators have braille, visual, and audio floor indication
- Accessible parking, mothers with child parking
- Security on site

- **Flin Flon General Hospital**

- Sloped sidewalks at entrances and drop off points, access ramps, good lighting at all entrances, adequate parking lighting
- Automatic public entrance doors with 36 inches minimum opening
- Staxi rental wheelchairs available at main entrance
- Braille visual and audio floor indication in main public elevator, braille and visual floor indication in all public elevators, visual floor indication in service elevators
- Signage throughout facility
- Designated accessible parking located closest to main entrance
- Flin Flon Emergency Department Redevelopment has been completed and clear signage installed for entrances and parking.
- Large curbs in the new Flin Flon General Hospital parking lot have been painted with high visibility paint.
- Gender neutral washroom facilities

- **St Anthony's General Hospital The Pas**
 - Sloped access entrance with drop off point for accessible vehicles
 - Designated accessible parking, well-lit emergency public parking
 - Automatic public entrance door openers, doorways are 36"
 - Staxi rental wheelchairs are available in the main lobby and primary care clinic
 - Security on site
 - Automatic door for dialysis unit
 - Braille, visual and audible floor indication in public elevators
- **Lynn Lake Hospital**
 - New entrance doors with automatic opener
 - Improved ramp, designated parking
 - Wide hallways with 36" interior doors
 - Wayfinding indicators on the floor
- **Leaf Rapids Health Center**
 - Health Center located within the Town Center and accessible by lift from the main area for those unable to manage stairs
 - Emergency Room entrance at sidewalk level
 - Reception/security staff 24 hours a day
- **Snow Lake Health Center**
 - Slopped sidewalks, good lighting at entrances and parking lot, automatic public doors, doors are 36" or wider
 - One large and one medium wheelchair available for ER transport
 - Designated accessible parking

- Buzzer system with appropriate signage and cameras at entrances
- **Wabowden Health Center**
 - One level building with barrier free access to all rooms
 - Accessible designated parking
 - Public accessible WIFI
 - Skype utilization, MB Telehealth, and home visit options to ease mobility barriers.
- **Iford, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei and Cormorant**
 - One level building with ramp access
 - Accessible washroom and clinic room
 - Skype utilization and home visit options to ease mobility barriers
- **Sherridon Health Center**
 - Skype utilization and home visit options to ease mobility barriers
- **Gillam Hospital**
 - Flat entranceway, automatic public doors, most doorways are 43 inches, wide hallways
 - Designated handicap parking.

Planned Initiatives and Actions

- Ongoing assessment of patient and employee accessible parking.
- Implementation of an active design checklist when planning new capital projects to ensure barrier free development.

Review and Monitoring Process

Accessibility achievements are evaluated and tracked by sites and programs. Barriers continue to be monitored through client and employee feedback, and work plans are adjusted as goals are achieved and new ones identified.

Communication of Our Accessibility Plan

The Northern Health Region will communicate accessibility initiatives through a variety of strategies, including:

- Publication and availability in alternate formats, upon request.
- Ongoing updates on the Northern Health Region webpage.
- Ongoing updates and resources for staff posted on the Northern Health Region Intranet.

For questions, comments or to request an alternate format, contact Patient Experience at 1-888-340-6742 or email patientexperience@nrha.ca.