ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

1. Policy Statement:

The Turtle Mountain School Division (TMSD) is committed to creating and maintaining an accessible, inclusive and non-discriminatory workplace and learning environment for all members of the TMSD community. An inclusive environment values diversity and difference and is based on mutual respect, dignity for all, independence, integration, and equal opportunity to work and learn at TMSD.

TMSD strives for excellence in serving all customers including persons disabled by barriers. Whether a person's disability is apparent or not, all individuals shall be treated with courtesy and have his or her need for accommodation respected.

The purpose of this policy is to:

a. Establish TMSD's commitment to fostering an accessible and inclusive learning and working environment.
b. To ensure that TMSD meets all legal obligations and complies with *The Manitoba Human Rights Code* and *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* and all accessibility standards.
c. To outline and define TMSD's commitment to providing a barrier-free environment for all customers to the greatest extent possible.
d. To provide adequate information and awareness to foster a supportive and inclusive teaching, learning and working environment.

TMSD shall provide reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of its customers with disabilities in a timely and proactive manner providing the accommodation does not:

- Create undue hardship;
- Alter the essential requirements of a program or course;
- Threaten the integrity of contracts of employment by significantly altering essential job requirements or responsibilities;
- Position TMSD in violation of any legislative requirement.

TMSD will ensure that a fee relating to accommodating a person who is disabled by a barrier is imposed only if TMSD cannot reasonably accommodate the person and/or if it results in an undue hardship to TMSD.

Any policies of TMSD that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for persons disabled by barriers will be modified or removed.

TMSD will establish, implement, and document a multi-year accessibility plan outlining its strategy to prevent and remove barriers at TMSD. This document will be updated every two years.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to:

- All TMSD employees including full-time, part-time, casual, and contract;
- All TMSD students including full-time and part-time;
- All TMSD Board of Trustee members;
- Volunteers and visitors to TMSD; and

- All other persons who provide goods, services or facilities on behalf of TMSD.

3. Customer Service Standards

TMSD makes every reasonable effort to ensure that its policies and practices are consistent with the principles of mutual respect, dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity by:

- Ensuring that all customers receive the same value and quality of service;
- Using alternative methods when possible to ensure that customers with disabilities have access to the same goods or services, in the same place, and in a similar manner;
- Taking into account individual needs when providing good and services; and
- Communicating in a manner that takes into account the customer's disability.

4. Maintain Barrier-Free Access

TMSD has undertaken a review to identify barriers in an effort to provide an environment that is as accessible. TMSD's Accessibility Plan outlines future efforts and strategies that TMSD is committed to including expected outcomes.

5. Notice of Temporary Disruption of Services

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption of services, TMSD will provide notice about the disruption, the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length and a description of alternative facilities or services, if available. Notices may be displayed on TMSD premises or the website or by other means that are reasonable in the circumstances.

TMSD may not be able to provide advance notice during an emergency disruption.

6. Communications

TMSD is committed to communication with persons disabled by barriers in a timely manner that takes into account the person's disability and makes reasonable efforts to have the person with the disability understand both the content and intent of its communications. All TMSD employees, students, and Board of Trustee members are expected to be mindful of the way in which they communicate and use respectful terms.

TMSD will make that availability of accessible formats and communication supports publicly known.

TMSD will take into account the person's accessibility needs when customizing individual requests.

TMSD will provide or arrange for the provision of accessible format and communication support for persons disabled by barriers upon request unless the product is deemed unconvertible. In this case, the person shall be provided with an explanation as to why the information or communication was unconvertible and a summary of the unconvertible information or communications.

TMSD is proactively removing barriers to ensure information and communication at TMSD is accessible to all stakeholders.

7. Assistive Devices

TMSD is committed to serving persons disabled by barriers who use assistive devices. Persons disabled by barriers may use their own assistive devices as required when accessing goods or services provided at TMSD.

TMSD may in some circumstances have available assistive devices that the customer can use while on TMSD premises.

In cases where the assistive device presents a safety concern or where accessibility might be an issue, other reasonable measures will be used to ensure access to the service required at TMSD. For example, an oxygen tank cannot be near an open flame. In such a case, the accommodation may involve ensuring the customer is in a location that would be considered safe for both the customer and TMSD.

8. Support Persons

TMSD allows persons disabled by barriers to enter the premises with their support person and have access to their support person at all times while on the premises *(Section 7(2)(a))*.

TMSD maintains its accessibility features so that they are available for intended use *(Section 9(1)(a))*.

Given the nature of the information that may be discussed in the presence of a support person, TMSD may require that the person disabled by barriers give his or her consent to TMSD to discuss confidential information in the presence of the support person. If the person disabled by barriers has concerns about discussing confidential information in the presence of the support person, he or she may ask the support person to leave during any discussion.

9. Service Animals

Persons disabled by barriers may bring their service animal to TMSD premise buildings.

If it is not clear that the animal is a service animal, TMSD staff may ask the following questions in a respectful and understanding manner to clarify the service animal's purpose:

a. Is the service animal assisting the person with disability?
b. What assistance has the service animal been trained to provide related to the disability?

The person disabled by barriers is responsible for the care and control of the service animal at all times. TMSD staff are permitted to ask the individual if the animal is a pet or service animal. No one should interfere with the service animal while the animal is working without seeking permission of the animal's owner.

A service animal may be excluded when any one of the following conditions exists:

- The service animal is disruptive and the animal's owner is not able to effectively control it;
- The service animal's presence, behavior, or actions pose an unreasonable or direct threat to property or the health or safety of others; and
- When another law specifically states that the animal must be excluded.

In the event that a service animal's access is not permitted, TMSD will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the individual and will suggest other alternatives and provide assistance.

10. Training

TMSD is committed to providing mandatory accessible customer training to:

- All current and new employees;
- All Board of Trustee members;

- All volunteers; and
- All others involved in developing and/or approving TMSD policies, practices and procedures that deal with the provision of goods and services to the public or other third parties.

TMSD training provided to staff includes instruction on what to do if a person disabled by a particular barrier is having difficulty accessing goods or services.

Training is provided on an on-going basis, as related policies, practices and procedures are updated.

Students are provided information on how to access resources and help for accessibility supports and provided copies of accessibility policies as part of their initial orientation session with TMSD.

Accessible customer service training includes:

- Review the key requirements of the Human Rights Code (Manitoba), *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act* and the Customer Service Standard Regulation, and other standards as they become law.
- An overview of TMSD's policy and Accessibility.
- Instruction on the meaning of accommodation and the importance of an inclusive workplace and learning environment.
- An overview of how to interact and communicate with persons disabled by barriers.
- Demonstration on how to use any equipment or assistive devices available at TMSD to assist persons disabled barriers.
- Instruction on how to interact with persons disabled by barriers who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or support person.

11. Public Events

TMSD will take reasonable measures when public events are held to ensure that:

- Notice of the event will be provided in a way that is accessible.
- Notice will be given stating that persons disabled by barriers can request reasonable accommodations.
- The public event will be held in a facility that is accessible to the greatest extent possible. TMSD shall evaluate the public space prior to engaging and will attempt to secure a location that has accessible parking, entrance ways, doors, and washrooms.
- Upon request, physical and communication needs will be provided to the greatest extent possible.

12. Documentation

TMSD will document all policies, practices and procedures related to accessible customer service.

TMSD will provide requested policy documentation related to accessible customer service within a reasonable time frame and at no cost to the individual *(Section 11(3)(b))*

TMSD has an Accessibility webpage which includes TMSD's Accessibility Plan and all accessibility policies.

13. Confidentiality

TMSD is committed to protecting the privacy of employees, students, Board of Trustee members, and volunteers. At the same time, TMSD requires sufficient information to reasonably evaluate and respond to a request for

accommodation. Employees, students, Board of Trustee members and volunteers are encouraged to provide information concerning their needs, and accommodations.

All personal information disclosed to TMSD shall be governed by privacy legislation and TMSD's Privacy and Access to Information Policy.

14. Administration

The Director of Human Resources, Superintendent/CEO, and school principals are jointly responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to.

15. Review:

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every three years. This policy shall remain in effect until amended or revoked of the three-year review.

16. Feedback

TMSD welcomes feedback on how we provide accessible service to all customers. Customers may reach the Superintendent/CEO at dbo@tmsd.mb.ca by filling out the form here: Accessibility Question Form. TMSD will reply to all enquiries within three business days. Customer feedback will help TMSD identify barriers and respond to concerns. Privacy will be respected and all feedback will be reviewed for possible action plans that can be taken to improve TMSD services.

TMSD will ensure that our feedback process is accessible to persons disabled by barriers by providing accessible format and communication support, on request.

TMSD documents the actions it takes in response to feedback received and ensures that documentation is available upon request in a manner suitable for persons disabled by barriers.

17. References:

Legislation:

The Manitoba Human Rights Code
The Accessibility for Manitobans Act Customer Service Standard Regulation
The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Regulations The Personal Health Information Act and Regulations

TMSD Documents:

Accessibility Accommodations and Supports for Post-Secondary Students
Accessible Employment at TMSD
Employment Equity Policy
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement
TMSD Accessibility Plan
Privacy and Access to Information Policy

18. Definitions:

Accommodation: This is the process of removing unreasonable burdens or barriers based on a physical and/or mental health disability that limits individual's access to opportunities and benefits available. This includes modifying duties. Examples may include adjusting duties and tasks, hours

of work, rules, standards, policies, and environments to ensure that it does not negatively impact an individual based on their disability. Accommodations may be temporary or permanent in nature.

Assistive Device: Is a technical aid, communication device or other instrument that is used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities. Examples of personal assistive devices may include a wheelchair, walker, hearing technology, or a personal oxygen tank.

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.

Reasonable Accommodation: An accommodation is reasonable when there is an adequate process used to decide on the type, degree and possibility of accommodation, and the effort and actions taken by the responsible party are sufficient.

Service Animal: A service animal as defined in the Manitoba Human Rights Code is an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person disabled by barriers that relates to that person's disability.

Undue Hardship: Undue hardship is defined as more than minimal hardship and must be based on actual evidence of hardship and not merely assumptions or prejudices. Various factors are considered when assessing undue hardship including financial implications, health and safety risks, legitimate operational requirements, disruption to a collective agreement, and the potential of the accommodation to negatively impact workplace morale. In addition, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission considers the nature, size and scope of a business or organization directly to what is reasonable accommodation in the circumstances.