



# St. Amant Accessibility Plan

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# St.Amant Accessibility Plan

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## 1.0 Background Information

### 1.1. Accessibility for Manitobans Act

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA), passed unanimously in 2013, has the goal of significantly increasing accessibility in Manitoba by 2023. The AMA provides a framework for the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to accessibility. It applies to all public, private and non-profit organizations in Manitoba that have more than one employee and provide a good or service. All public sector organizations are required to develop accessibility plans and to make them public.

Compliance with the AMA will be guided by five accessibility standards. The standards relate to Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communication, Transportation and Design and Construction. Public sector organizations are required to comply with the standards more quickly than private or non-profit organizations. For more information on the AMA and Accessibility Standards, please see [accessibilitymb.ca](http://accessibilitymb.ca).

As a non-profit organization, St.Amant is not required to develop an Accessibility Plan. Because accessibility is an expression of St.Amant's core values, St.Amant chose to develop one. St.Amant has also committed to meeting the Accessibility Standards according to the public sector timeline instead of the later timeline for non-profit organizations.

### 1.2 Principles of Accessibility

Section 2(2) of [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#) identifies the following four guiding principles of accessibility:

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

**1.2.2 Equality.** Persons should have barrier-free access to those things that will give them equality of opportunity and outcome;

**1.2.3 Universal design.** Access should be provided in a manner that does not establish or perpetuate differences based on a person's disability;

**1.2.4 Systemic responsibility.** The responsibility to prevent and remove barriers rests with the person or organization that is responsible for establishing or perpetuating the barrier.

### **1.3 Barriers to Accessibility**

Section 3(1) of [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#) defines a barrier as “anything that interacts with (a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory) impairment in a way that may hinder the person’s full and effective participation in society on an equal basis”. There are five categories of barriers identified by the Act.

**1.3.1 Attitudinal barriers** result when people think and act based on false assumptions. Example: a staff member talks to an individual’s support person because she or he assumes the individual with a disability will not understand.

**1.3.2 Informational and communication barriers** are created when information is offered in a form that suits some, but not all, of the population. Example: print that is too small for some people to read; a public address system that a person with hearing loss cannot hear.

**1.3.3 Technological barriers** occur when technology, or the way it is used, cannot be accessed by people with disabilities. Example: Websites that are not accessible to people who have low vision and use screen reader software.

**1.3.4 Systemic barriers** are policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded. Example: job descriptions that can exclude people based on a disability, such as requiring a driver’s license, even when the job does not require driving.

**1.3.5 Physical and architectural barriers** are physical obstacles that make it difficult for some to easily access a place. Example: a door knob that cannot be turned by a person with limited mobility or strength, or a hallway or door that is too narrow to allow a person who uses a wheelchair to pass through safely.

## 2.0 Baseline Report

### 2.1 Organizational Overview

St.Amant supports over 1600 individuals in Manitoba with developmental disabilities, autism and acquired brain injury. St.Amant offers residential, clinical, educational, and many other services. We are a not-for-profit organization that offers a wide range of programs and services for individuals and their families. We are also a member of the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba.

Our residential supports are available in River Road Place and in more than 100 community locations. They assist people with needs ranging from occasional support to 24-hour a day care to address complex medical needs.

We offer programs for pre-school and school-age children diagnosed with autism that are research-based and effectively help children improve in the areas of communication, social and daily living skills.

St.Amant School is a year-round school with expertise in person-centred education.

Over 50 clinicians from St.Amant Clinical Services support hundreds of children and adults across Manitoba to live dignified, independent lives.

We offer a personalized day program for adults as well as foster care and emergency foster care services. We also operate a community child care centre that prioritizes children of staff.

St.Amant Research Centre is dedicated to research that will improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

Our ultimate goal is to support people with developmental disabilities to make their own choices and to be included in their community.

## **2.2 St.Amant Accessibility Planning Committee**

St.Amant created an Accessibility Planning Committee to oversee the development of this Accessibility Plan. The eleven-member committee represents a range of St.Amant programs and services, as well as a member of the community who has worked in the St.Amant Research Centre and who has extensive academic and personal expertise in disability-related issues.

## **2.3 Accessibility Achievements**

The Accessibility Planning Committee identified 56 accessibility achievements at St.Amant. Those achievements are organized below, according to accessibility barrier type.

### **2.3.1 Removing Attitudinal Barriers**

St.Amant is committed to community engagement. St.Amant is an active contributor to Barrier-Free Manitoba, a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy group committed to achieving an accessible Manitoba. The St.Amant Foundation organizes the annual Free the Spirit Festival to celebrate and strengthen the awareness and understanding of disabilities in our community and to foster friendships and connection.

St.Amant services routinely collaborate with other service providers, including health care providers and community schools. Through that collaboration, there is an opportunity for all service providers to develop a common perspective on disability and to increase their capacity to provide high quality care to all Manitobans, including those who have developmental disabilities or autism.

St.Amant organizes the annual Canadian Conference for Developmental Disabilities and Autism, which features extensive professional development for staff on a wide range of topics related to community inclusion and best practices in service delivery.

St.Amant strongly supports a mindfulness-based approach to care. Training on mindfulness is available to all staff in order to support greater sensitivity to the needs and preferences of every individual.

### **2.3.2 Removing Information and Communication Barriers**

Corporate Education and Corporate Communications have improved accessibility by adding open captioning to St.Amant-produced videos, incorporating voiceovers into online learning modules, and highlighting accessibility issues on the St.Amant website and on social media.

Interpreter services are available to individuals as required.

Three St.Amant speech-language pathologists are trained as communication intermediaries in order to provide supports to individuals with communication-related disabilities during interactions with the justice system.

### **2.3.3 Removing Physical and Architectural Barriers**

All St.Amant-operated, newly-built community homes are fully accessible. Overhead lifts are available throughout 440 River Road and in many community homes. To ensure an accessibility perspective, a multidisciplinary clinical team that includes occupational therapy is involved in the planning for upcoming renovations at River Road Place.

Elevators within the building at 440 River Road have braille on buttons and auditory cues that describe elevator activity. There are wheelchair ramps throughout 440 River Road.

The St.Amant Foundation Spirit Cottage is a fully accessible home on the St.Amant campus where families can enjoy a vacation or mark special events with family members in a comfortable home-like setting.

St.Amant has also worked with the Fire Department to maintain a modified fire alarm at 440 River Road that is sensory friendly.

### **2.3.4 Removing Systemic Barriers**

St.Amant supports a highly flexible approach to service delivery; staff are

encouraged to creatively meet unique sets of needs without compromising quality.

St.Amant has worked with banks to ensure that individuals with intellectual disability can, wherever possible, open bank accounts in their own names and make financial decisions without requiring a co-signature. Individuals are also included in decision making with respect to staffing where they live.

St.Amant has engaged with the Province and the City of Winnipeg to eliminate discriminatory zoning regulations that required a minimum distance between 24-hour shift-staffed homes for individuals with developmental disabilities.

St.Amant is a scent-free environment and also attempts to minimize overhead announcements out of consideration for individuals with auditory sensory sensitivities.

St.Amant's recruitment strategy includes an emphasis on employing individuals with disabilities.

### **2.3.5 Removing Technological Barriers**

St.Amant Music Therapists use a wide range of accessible instruments to ensure that everyone who receives a music therapy intervention can fully participate.

Technology Services has worked with River Road Place staff to deploy technologies that support easier communication between individuals at River Road Place and family members who may live at a distance.

## **2.4. Accessibility Barriers at St.Amant**

The Accessibility Committee identified a total of 39 barriers that exist at St.Amant. Those barriers are summarized below according to barrier type.

### **2.4.1 Attitudinal Barriers**

A lack of knowledge about accessibility generally, and about communication devices in particular, was identified as a barrier. Another

potential barrier is a risk of complacency towards accessibility, because of the many accessibility achievements realized at St.Amant.

#### **2.4.2 Information and Communication Barriers**

Barriers include use of small font sizes and complex language on public documents, referral forms, menus, and other materials. The St.Amant website has some design elements and technical features that limit accessibility. It is not currently a standard practice at St.Amant to offer alternate formats for printed materials.

#### **2.4.3 Physical and Architectural Barriers**

While St.Amant has many ramps, several of them, including the ramp to the front entrance, are too steep for an individual in a manual wheelchair to use independently. Only one of the back doors at St.Amant has a ramp.

Few washrooms at St.Amant are fully accessible. The grab bars in many washrooms require review to ensure they all meet current code.

Many doors have door knobs instead of door handles. Swipe card sensors for locked doors may be placed too high to reach for an individual using a wheelchair. The width of many office doors is too narrow for many wheelchairs (especially power wheelchairs).

Accessibility barriers in the cafeteria include microwaves and counter heights that are high for individuals who use wheelchairs.

### **3.0 Accessibility Action Plan**

#### **3.1 Statement of Commitment to Accessibility**

At St.Amant, we believe that accessibility means participation for all people. We commit to achieving full accessibility in partnership with the people we support, their support networks, and our staff. We commit to meeting or exceeding our obligations under the Accessibility for Manitobans Act. St.Amant commits to sharing expertise on accessibility and to advocating for the rights for all people.

#### **3.2 Setting Accessibility Priorities**

The St.Amant Accessibility Planning Committee consulted with St.Amant

staff, family members, and others to identify accessibility priorities. St.Amant staff members, all of whom, by the nature of their work, are advocates for individuals with disabilities, were asked to identify the most important accessibility barriers to remove. Families and other stakeholders were also invited to participate in a survey exploring accessibility barriers at St.Amant and to suggest accessibility priorities. The Accessibility Planning Committee reviewed the recommendations and selected accessibility priorities based on the survey results as well as criteria that included cost, impact, and risk. The table below summarizes the Action Plan.

A series of coordinated project plans will be developed to support completion of the actions identified below. St.Amant will adhere to the Principles of Accessibility as described in [section 1.2](#) when implementing the Action Plan.

Along with the actions described below, St.Amant commits to achieving compliance with the Customer Service standard by November 1, 2017, the deadline for public sector organizations. To that end, St.Amant's earliest steps will include developing a process for receiving and acting upon feedback related to customer service and accessibility generally. That process, combined with semi-annual accessibility focus groups, should ensure that the perspectives and concerns of individuals disabled by barriers are reflected in St.Amant's accessibility initiatives.

### 3.3 Accessibility Action Plan

## St.Amant Accessibility Action Plan 2017-18

### 1.0 Attitudinal Barriers

Barrier	Action to Remove Barrier	Timeline	Program/Service responsible
1.1 Staff have a lack of knowledge about communication devices.	Consider making training on communication with people who are non-verbal a mandatory, permanent offering; provide the training in in-person or online formats.	December 31, 2017	Clinical Services, Corporate Education
1.2 Staff have a lack of knowledge about how to increase accessibility.	Adopt online training developed by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority on accessibility and the Customer Service Standard once it is completed; target completion of training by all staff.	December 31, 2017	Corporate Communication, Corporate Education

## St.Amant Accessibility Action Plan 2017-18

### 2.0 Information & Communication Barriers

Barrier	Action to Remove Barrier	Timeline	Program/Service responsible
2.1 Alternate formats for documents are not consistently available.	Conduct environmental scan to identify existing best practices for alternate formats; adopt/modify for St.Amant; develop plan for making those available on request across the organization.	December 31, 2017	Corporate Communications, Administrative Excellence Committee
2.2 Public materials, such as brochures and application forms, often have small font or complex language	Develop accessibility style guide based on existing best practices. Work with all areas to adopt those practices for new and updated materials.	December 31, 2017	Corporate Communications, Administrative Excellence Committee
2.3 St.Amant website is not fully accessible.	Identify best practices for presentation of information on a website; implement those best practices incrementally.	December 31, 2018	Corporate Communications, Technology Services

## St.Amant Accessibility Action Plan 2017-18

### 3.0 Physical & Architectural

Barrier	Action to Remove Barrier	Timeline	Program/Service responsible
3.1 Only one of two doors to the back of St.Amant has a ramp.	Explore feasibility of building a ramp at the second door.	December 31, 2018	Operations
3.2 Not all doors can open automatically.	Seek and obtain grant funding opportunities to increase number of power-operated doors at St.Amant	December 31, 2018	Operations
3.3 Locations of some card lock/swipe card sensors are not accessible (too high for a person in a wheelchair to access).	Develop standards related to minimum and maximum heights for sensor placement; ensure locations of existing sensors comply with standards.	December 31, 2017	Operations
3.4 Locations of light switches make it hard to independently turn on the lights.	Develop standards related to minimum and maximum heights for light switches; ensure location of existing switches complies with standards.	December 31, 2018	Operations
3.5 Designated accessible parking stalls are too far from building; difficult to get around vehicle in winter because of snow.	Move designated accessible parking stalls to be closer to the building.	December 31, 2017	Operations
3.6 Very few washrooms are accessible.	Conduct feasibility study on improving washroom accessibility.	December 31, 2018	Operations

## St.Amant Accessibility Action Plan 2017-18

### 4.0 Systemic

Barrier	Action to Remove Barrier	Timeline	Program/Service responsible
4.1 St.Amant General and program-specific policies may not reflect accessibility considerations.	Develop guidelines on accessibility considerations for the purposes of policy development and review.	December 31, 2018	Ad Hoc Committee

### 5.0 Technological

Barrier	Action to Remove Barrier	Timeline	Program/Service responsible
5.1 The job posting website and job application process are not accessible.	Explore and identify alternatives to our current job posting software that will meet organizational needs and ensure accessibility for applicants.	December 31, 2018	Technology Services, Human Resources

### 6.0 Transportation

Barrier	Action to Remove Barrier	Timeline	Program/Service responsible
6.1 Sprinter buses: Limited number of wheelchair spaces means limited opportunities for community connections.	Identify alternatives to sprinter buses that will accommodate more wheelchairs.	December 31, 2018	Operations

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## Appendix A

### Accessibility Achievements at St.Amant Organized by the Barriers They Remove

#### Attitudinal

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1. Advocacy role with Barrier Free, Disability Matters.
2. Organization of annual Canadian Conference on Developmental Disabilities and Autism (conference content promotes accessibility, physical location is accessible).
3. Clinical interventions are typically directed at increased community participation
4. and removal of barriers that lead to disability.
5. Community partnerships and community engagement to support common understanding of disability (e.g., with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, community schools, other service providers).
6. Corporate Orientation devotes a lot of time to addressing respectful communication.
7. Flexibility in developing service delivery models to meet very unique sets of needs.
8. Free the Spirit festival supports a more inclusive community.
9. Mental Health First Aid training is a permanent professional development opportunity that supports increased awareness and sensitivity to engaging with individuals who may have mental health concerns.
10. Mindfulness initiatives to encourage more awareness of individual needs.
11. Positive attitudes towards accessibility.
12. Training through staff orientations emphasize accessibility.

## **Information & Communication**

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1. Educational resources from Corporate Education: Using more videos, fewer cartoons.
2. E-learning content now has voiceovers in order to provide information in multiple formats
3. Nurse consultants who support individuals living in community homes provide training to staff on effective advocacy in a healthcare setting and engage in systems navigation.
4. St.Amant website, social media content emphasizes accessibility.
5. Started to “open caption” videos produced at St.Amant (meaning that captioning is always turned on).
6. Translation services to support individuals whose first language is not English.
7. Use of smartboards, technology in meeting rooms supports multiple modes of communication/information sharing

## **Physical & Architectural**

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1. Access to a range of bikes, standers for individuals with varying mobility needs.
2. Clinical Services available in community, in an individual's typical environment.
3. Community Residential Program new build homes are designed according to an individual's specific needs.
4. Doors to gardens open automatically.
5. Doors to front entrance open automatically.
6. Elevators have auditory announcements of floors.
7. Elevators have braille on keypads.
8. Family rooms are in development on living units.
9. Fire alarm tone: less harsh than usual.
10. First floor main hallway washroom is accessible.
11. Hoyer lifts are available in Community Residential Program or Community Services operated community homes.

12. Leisure guide program.
13. Many community homes operated by Community Residential Program or Community Services are accessible. All new homes will be accessible.
14. Occupational Therapists are proactively involved in planning renovations to a living unit at 440 River Road.
15. Overhead lifts throughout building.
16. Pool area is more accessible than many other pools.
17. Ramps throughout building (e.g. to cafeteria).
18. Some St.Amant operated vehicles are accessible; supports community outings.
19. Spirit Cottage is fully accessible.
20. The Spirit Cottage was expressly built to address accessibility barriers.

## **Systemic**

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1. Autism Programs has developed a summer camp for preschool-aged children with autism that is accessible to children with a range of sensory and other needs.
2. Bank accounts: Individuals supported by Community Residential Program now have bank accounts in their own names; do not require co-signatures.
3. Community Residential Program involves individuals in choosing their own support staff.
4. River Road Childcare Centre is accessible to children of all abilities.
5. Deliberate strategy of building capacity in other organizations for supporting individuals with disabilities.
6. FM Café - Opportunity for socialization, enjoyment of live music for individuals with disabilities that is accessible from a sensory and communication perspective.
7. Individuals with developmental disabilities who had previously worked for a stipend now being paid minimum wage.
8. Minimal overhead announcements (auditory sensory considerations).
9. Established partnerships to hire individuals with developmental disabilities.
10. School accessibility: range of teaching styles, classroom configurations.
11. St.Amant has a service animal policy as required under the Customer Service standard of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act

12. St.Amant has engaged with the city and province to remove discriminatory zoning bylaws for 24-hour shift-staffed community homes.
13. St.Amant is a scent-free environment.

## **Technological**

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1. Clinical music therapy services offered with a wide range of accessible instruments.
2. Technology Services has facilitated connections with families to make it easier to stay in contact with loved ones living within River Road Place.
3. Technology Services has supported residents in River Road Place to use their own computers, iPads.

## **Appendix B**

### **Accessibility Barriers at St.Amant Organized According to Barrier Type**

#### **Attitudinal**

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1. Lack of knowledge about communication devices.
2. Lack of knowledge about how to be more accessible.
3. Noise levels: The front reception area can be noisy. This can disturb or upset those who live at 440 River Road and individuals with sensory sensitivities.
4. Perception that there is a lack of funding for accessibility purposes.
5. Risk of complacency because of the many accessibility achievements to date.

#### **Information & Communication**

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1. American Sign Language interpreters are not readily available.
2. Font size for Cafeteria menu is small.
3. No process for providing documents in alternate formats.
4. Public facing materials have font that is too small, complex language.
5. Referral forms are paper only.
6. Website is not fully accessible.

## **Accessibility Barriers at St.Amant Organized According to Barrier Type**

### **Physical & Architectural**

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1. Access to spirit cottage: pathway not paved, very steep, no railings.
2. Basement access: Doors may open or be accessible in one direction only.
3. Door knobs instead of handles, push button-operated doors.
4. Grab bars in bathrooms not up to code.
5. Grading of ramps including to ABC doors.
6. Limited number of bathrooms large enough for an individual who requires support for personal care, including changing.
7. Microwaves in cafeteria hard to reach, operate from a wheelchair.
8. Office door widths too narrow for wheelchairs.
9. Some rooms have tracking but no lifts.
10. Grading, leveling, placement of ramp to front door means it is not accessible to all people who use wheelchairs.
11. Only one door to the back of St.Amant has a ramp.
12. Changing facilities in school are not accessible.
13. Not all doors can open automatically.
14. Locations of some swipe card sensors are not accessible (too high for a person in a wheelchair to access)
15. 4th floor bathrooms near classroom are poorly configured for accessibility.
16. Sprinter buses: Limited number of wheelchair spaces means limited opportunities for community connections.
17. Spirit cottage pool: No lift is available for people who require support with pool entry.
18. Poor lighting in some areas; location of light switches make it hard to independently turn on the lights.
19. Cafeteria: counter heights too high for individuals in wheelchairs.
20. Handicap parking locations: too far from building - difficulty getting around vehicle in winter because of snow.

## **Accessibility Barriers at St.Amant Organized According to Barrier Type**

### **Systemic**

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1. City bylaws preventing use of sensory pool.
2. Not currently making active offer to make accommodations in meetings.
3. Waitlists for services in many areas.
4. St.Amant general- and program-specific policies may not reflect accessibility considerations.

### **Transportation**

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1. Sprinter buses: Rear-loading system for wheelchairs and placement of wheelchair ties can restrict use of the bus to a single wheelchair in some cases.
2. Sprinter buses: steep grade of steps can be a challenge for people who are ambulant but who have balance or mobility difficulties.