

# **Victoria Lifeline Accessibility Standard for Customer Service Policy**



## **Mission Statement: Empowering Independence & Saving Lives**

### **Introduction:**

Since 1988, Victoria Lifeline has helped people lead safe and independent lives across the province. The goal of our medical alert service from the outset was to build a healthier community, which meant supporting the independence and well-being of seniors and people living with disabilities.

We are deeply 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.

The following **eight 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, volunteers, student interns and management.

### **1: Meet communication needs.**

#### **Policy Statement:**

We meet the communication needs of our clients and their caregivers. We will consider how the individual's disability may affect the way they express themselves, receive or process communication and, where possible, ask what form of communication works best.

#### **Practices and Measures:**

To meet communication needs, when appropriate we will offer to communicate in different ways, such as writing things down, reading things out loud, and taking extra time to explain things.

We will also:

- keep paper and pens available to write things down.
- offer a chair when longer conversations are needed.
- offer a quieter, private space like the client service or boardroom to reduce background noise.

- sit down to engage with someone using a wheelchair.
- offer an in-person, in-home consultation where possible.
- offer for those who cannot communicate to us via telephone that they may communicate through email at: [info@victorialifeline.ca](mailto:info@victorialifeline.ca)
- use signs and documents that are easy to read, including using larger fonts and colour contrast, and ensuring messages are not printed on images.
- ensure client facing materials are written in plain language.
- Ensure our website is in compliance with the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 Level AA).

## **2: Accommodate the use of assistive devices**

Definition: Assistive Devices; an external device to assist someone in performing tasks such as a communication aid, cognition aids, personal mobility and/or medical aids (i.e. canes, crutches, wheelchairs, scooters, personal oxygen tank, or hearing aids).

### **Policy Statement:**

We accommodate the use of assistive devices when clients and/or their caregivers are accessing service information by visiting the Victoria Lifeline office at 1-756 Pembina Highway, R3M 2M7 or during installation/service appointments.

### **Practices and Measures:**

- Victoria Lifeline is committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use and benefit from our service. We will ensure that our staff in Winnipeg are familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our services.
- We will consider the assistive device as an extension of the person's personal space: and won't touch, lean on or move the device without permission.

## **3: Welcome support persons**

Definition: Support Person; anyone who accompanies a person with a disability in order to help them with communication, personal/medical care needs or to help them access the Victoria Lifeline service.

## Policy Statement

Support persons are welcome at the Victoria Lifeline office and at installation/service appointments. In situations where confidential information might be discussed in the presence of a support person, consent will be obtained from the person with the disability, prior to any conversation occurring.

- We will address the client/caregiver, not the support person, unless requested by the client/caregiver to do otherwise.
- We will make space for support persons at the office and will ensure clients/caregivers have access to their support persons at all times.

## 4: Allow service animals.

Definition: Service animals; any animal individually trained to support a person with a disability.

### Policy Statement:

We allow service animals at the Victoria Lifeline office and at installation/service appointments.

### 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.
- know how to identify a service animal by its harness or vest and by the assistance the animal is providing.
- 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.

## **5: Maintain accessibility features.**

### **Policy Statement:**

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

### **Practices and Measures:**

- We organize our office space so that there is room for people with wheelchairs, electric scooters and walkers.
- Our seating accommodates people of varying sizes and abilities.
- We keep hallways, aisles, entrance and reception areas, and meeting rooms clear of clutter.
- We keep our entrance area clear of ice and snow.
- We place standing signs out of the way to avoid tripping hazards.
- If a client seeking information cannot come to our office, we offer a no obligation in-home consultation and will come to the client
- Our accessibility features include well-lit and clear hallways, aisles, entrance ways and meeting rooms. Our washrooms are accessible, and we have automatic front entrance doors.

## **6. Welcome and respond promptly to feedback.**

### **Policy Statements:**

We welcome and respond promptly to feedback we receive on the accessibility of our service.

We will 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 in the following ways:

Please visit the Victoria Lifeline office or contact us by phone 204-956-6777 / 1-888-722-5222, email [info@victorialifeline.ca](mailto:info@victorialifeline.ca), or the website. <https://www.victorialifeline.ca/contact/contact-us>

- All feedback is directed to the Communications Manager, who determines what action, if any, should occur.
- If the feedback requires us to follow-up, the client is notified that the request is being reviewed and when they can expect a response.
- We let the client 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.

## **7: Provide the required training to employees, volunteers and management.**

### **Policy Statements:**

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

- How to interact and communicate with people who face barriers to accessing goods 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.

### **Practices and Measures:**

- We train new employees, volunteers and management within six months after hiring.
- We provide refresher training when updates to policies, practices and measures are made.
- Departmental managers will record who has taken training and when.
- If any employee receives feedback on the accessibility of our service, please report it to the Communications Manager immediately for follow up.