



## **Stella's Place Accessible Customer Service Policy (long form)**

Stella's Place is committed to diversity, inclusion and accessibility in everything that we do. Everyone in our organization will strive to provide accessible and equitable customer service in all customer interactions (in person, by phone and email, online and in social media spaces) to each and every person who wishes to find out about what we do at Stella's Place, access our services, partner with us in providing service, support us in our mission, or do business with us.

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards, Stella's Place and its employees will make every effort to provide people with disabilities the opportunity to access the same information and services, in the same place and in a similar way as all other customers.

### **In providing customer service, Stella's Place will ensure that:**

- Everyone will be treated with courtesy, made to feel welcome, and have their need for disability-related accommodation respected.
- Information, goods and services for persons with disabilities will be provided in a way that supports their independence while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy.
- Information, goods and services will be provided to persons with disabilities with the same attention to quality and timeliness that are provided to others.
- Information, goods and services provided to persons with disabilities will be integrated with regular communication and services whenever

possible.

- When integrated service is not possible, alternate access to information or services will be provided to a person with a disability in a way that allows equal opportunity to obtain and benefit from information or services provided by Stella's Place.

**Stella's Place will uphold the following principles of accessible customer service:**

**1. Communication and Notice of Availability of Documents**

Stella's Place staff will communicate to people with disabilities in ways that take into account their needs. This Accessible Customer Service Policy and any other public document or information produced by Stella's Place will be made available in an alternative accessible format or with communication support upon request (e.g., email, large print, written notes, reading printed information out loud, screen reader ready formats).

Accessible formats and communication supports will be used to convey the same message as the original document, but with a different presentation in order to ensure that everyone has equal access to information.

We will consult with the person making the request to determine what method of communication works best for them. We will provide the accessible format or communication support in a timely manner and at no additional cost.

**2. Assistive Devices**

People with disabilities may use their own personal assistive devices when accessing our services or facilities. Examples of assistive devices include but are not limited to mobility aids, communication boards, breathing aids, and hearing devices.

In cases where the assistive device presents a significant health or safety concern or where use of the assistive device is hindered by a physical or technological barrier that we can not remove, alternative measures will be offered to ensure access to information and services. For example, alternative meeting spaces that accommodate the assistive device or

arranging an online meeting instead of an in-person meeting may be offered.

### **3. Service Animals**

People with a disability accompanied by a service animal are welcome to enter Stella's Place or other contracted off-site facilities with the service animal, unless prohibited by another law. Generally, service animals other than guide dogs are not allowed in areas where food is served, handled, prepared, stored, or sold. Guide dogs are allowed where food is served, sold, or offered for sale, but not in areas where food is handled, prepared or stored, such as a kitchen.

A service animal is any animal trained to assist a person with a disability. When we cannot easily identify that an animal is a service animal, our staff may ask the person to provide documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

It is the responsibility of the person with the service animal to:

- keep control of the animal at all times,
- ensure that the animal is not a threat to public safety, and to
- keep the animal's immunizations up to date.

In the event that another Stella's Place customer's health or safety is seriously affected by the presence of a service animal, alternative arrangements may need to be negotiated.

In cases where a service animal is not allowed to enter Stella's Place, another facility, or a specific area of Stella's Place or another facility, we will explain why this is the case and discuss appropriate accommodation with the person requesting services, such as an alternate meeting space, an online meeting, or delivery of information or service at an alternate time.

While Stella's Place recognizes that service animals are generally well trained and well behaved, a service animal may be removed from the premises for any of the following reasons:

- disruptive or aggressive behaviour, such as growling, excessive barking, biting or other signs of threatening behaviour,
- causing damage to a person or property,
- poor health, including a contagious illness.

#### 4. Support Persons

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on our premises. The IASR defines “support person” as a person that accompanies someone with a disability in order to help with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs or with access to goods, services or facilities. No special qualifications or certifications are required to be a support person, and the person with a disability does not need to show documentation from a medical professional to demonstrate the need for a support person

If confidential information needs to be shared, written consent will be obtained first from the person being offered information or services at Stella’s Place, prior to any conversation made with the support person present.

Participants who will require their support person to be present during counseling or registered group sessions at Stella’s Place are asked to discuss this accommodation with staff during the intake session so that we can best provide for their needs and address confidentiality and privacy issues in advance.

Stella’s Place **may require** a person with a disability to be accompanied by a support person where it is necessary to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability or the health or safety of others at Stella’s Place. This decision would be made by Stella’s Place in consultation with the person with a disability to:

- understand their needs,
- consider health or safety reasons based on the available evidence, and
- determine if there is any other reasonable way to protect the health or safety of the person with a disability and/or the health and safety of others at Stella’s Place.

If there is a fee or admission charge for any Stella's Place sponsored event or service, the fee or charge will be waived for support persons. If there is a fee or admission charge for a third-party event or service that is offered at Stella's Place, the support person may attend but is responsible for paying the fee or charge.

## **5. Notice of Temporary Disruptions in Services**

In the event that normally accessible facilities or services, (e.g., an accessible washroom, video transcripts) are temporarily unavailable, Stella's Place will notify participants, customers, and the public promptly. If the disruption is anticipated, a reasonable amount of advance notice will be given. If the disruption is unexpected, notice will be given as soon as possible. The notice will provide:

1. The name of the service, facility or event affected
2. The location of the service, facility or event being disrupted
3. The reason for the disruption
4. Anticipated length of time for the disruption
5. Alternative service locations, if available
6. Alternative service methods, if available
7. Hours of alternative service availability
8. Contact information

Notice of disrupted service will be made publicly available by a variety of methods, depending on the circumstances, and may include posting on our website and social media channels and/or at the Stella's Place site or location where the service, facility or event is normally offered. In addition, notice may be given by phone or email to registered participants or to others with scheduled appointments if appropriate.

## **6. Staff Training**

In keeping with our commitment to provide excellent services to all clients including persons with disabilities, Stella's Place will train all employees so that they understand the Accessible Customer Service Regulation and the general purpose and requirements of the AODA. Managers are responsible to ensure that all employees on their team receive the mandatory AODA training.

Stella's place will provide accessible customer service training to:

- all managers, employees, students, and volunteers;
- anyone responsible for and involved in developing our policies;
- other agents or individuals who provide information, goods, services, or facilities to customers on our behalf, including payroll agents or contracted facilitators.

AODA and Accessible Customer Service Training will be provided as a regular component of our orientation and onboarding process within the first two (2) months of employment and every three (3) years thereafter. Staff will also be trained when changes are made to our accessibility policies or procedures. The training will include an overview of the purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) and employees will be given accessible customer service tips which will provide guidance on:

- How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities.
- How to interact with people with disabilities who use an assistive device or require the assistance of a service animal or a support person.
- How to use any Stella's Place equipment, services or devices that the organization may acquire that would assist people with disabilities to be able to better access our information, facilities, and services.
- What to do if a person with a particular type of disability is having difficulty accessing our information, services or facilities.
- What to do in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities.

Stella's Place will keep accurate records of all accessibility training received by employees.

## **7. Feedback Process**

Stella's Place welcomes feedback about how our customer service approaches are meeting the needs of people living with various types of disabilities. All comments and complaints will help us identify what barriers to service exist and what changes we should pursue to make Stella's Place more accessible to people with disabilities.

Anyone who wishes to provide written feedback can fill out the Accessible Customer Service Feedback Form, in person or online. Feedback using this form can be given anonymously. If a response is requested, Stella's Place will respond within ten (10) business days. All feedback will be kept in confidence and will only be used to improve customer service.

General feedback about accessibility may be provided any time by phone, fax or email to:

### **Stella's Place Accessibility Officer**

18 Camden Street,

Toronto ON,

M5V 1V1

**Fax:** 844-321-8486

**Email:** [accessibility@stellasplace.ca](mailto:accessibility@stellasplace.ca)

**Phone:** 416-461-2345

## **8. Modifications to Stella's Place Policies**

Any Stella's Place policy that does not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Stella's Place Accessible Customer Service Policy

Charitable Number 817186935RR0001

Form last updated: May 15, 2018