

Statement of Commitment

Habitat for Humanity Heartland Ontario is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in integration and equal opportunity. We are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner and will do so by preventing and removing barriers to accessibility and meeting accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and *Accessible Canada Act, 2019*.

Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA)

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of employees, volunteers, and others who deal with the public or other third parties on behalf of HFHHO in providing services to people with disabilities in compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005 (AODA)*.

We always strive to provide our services in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. We are also committed to giving people with disabilities the same opportunities to access our services and allowing them to benefit from the same services in the same place and in a similar way as other customers. **For the purposes of this policy, customers include customers, visitors, the public, and anyone accessing our offices or services.**

Principles

We will endeavour to ensure that policies and related practices and procedures are consistent with the following four (4) core principles:

- **Dignity:** Persons with disabilities will be treated as valued clients, deserving of service as any other customer.
- **Equality of Opportunity:** Persons with disabilities will have equal opportunities to obtain, use, and benefit from our services.
- **Integration:** Wherever possible, persons with disabilities should benefit from our services in the same place and in the same or similar manner as any other customer. In circumstances where integration does not serve the needs of the person with a disability, services will, to the extent possible, be provided in another way that takes into account the person's individual needs.
- **Independence:** Services will be provided in a way that respects the independence of persons with disabilities. To this end, we will always be willing to assist a person with a disability but will not do so without the person's express permission.

Providing Service to People with Disabilities

We are committed to excellence in serving all customers, including people with disabilities. This commitment is demonstrated in the areas of:

Communication: We communicate with people with disabilities in ways that consider their needs. We train staff who communicate with customers on how to interact with and communicate with people with various types of disabilities.

Telephone Services: We train staff to communicate with customers over the telephone in clear and plain language and to speak clearly and slowly. We are committed to providing fully accessible telephone services to our customers.

Assistive Devices: We are committed to serving people with disabilities who use assistive devices to obtain, use, or benefit from our services. We ensure that our employees are trained and familiar with various assistive devices that may be used by customers with disabilities while accessing our services.

Use of Service Animals: We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal on the parts of our premises that are open to the public and other third parties. We will also ensure that all employees, volunteers, and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal. Every attempt will be made to ensure that any offsite event venues are compliant with our commitment regarding service animals.

Use of Support Persons: We are committed to welcoming people with disabilities who are accompanied by a support person. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to enter our premises or offsite event venues with their support person. At no time will a person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person be prevented from having access to their support person while on our premises.

Notice of Disruption

We provide customers with notice in the event of a planned or unexpected disruption in the facilities or services usually used by people with disabilities. This notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated duration, and a description of alternative facilities or services if available.

Responsibilities

The management of HFHHO is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service;
- Including accessibility in annual planning processes;
- Ensuring all employee attendance at required training;

- Providing notification of service disruptions;
- Providing all documentation in appropriate formats upon request by a person with a disability;
- Monitoring the progress of legislative requirements to ensure compliance;
- Communicating all policies, procedures, and practices to employees;
- Coordinating and providing Accessible Customer Service training to comply with the Customer Service Standards;
- Coordinating and maintaining training records;
- Establishing and maintaining an ongoing training program to ensure all employees are trained in providing Accessible Customer Service as part of orientation.

Employee Training

We provide training to all employees, volunteers, and others who deal with the public or other third parties on our behalf. Training is developed and delivered in various formats.

Training includes the following:

- The purposes of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the requirements of the customer service standard.
- How to interact and communicate with people 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 learn about the use of various assistive devices.
- What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty in accessing our goods and services.
- HFHHO policies, practices, and procedures relating to the customer service standard.

All employees will be trained on policies, practices, and procedures that affect the way services are provided to people with disabilities. Employees will also be trained on an ongoing basis when changes are made to these policies, practices, and procedures.

Records of the training provided, including the training protocol, the dates on which the training is provided, and the number of individuals to whom the training is provided, will be maintained per the requirements of the Act.

Feedback Process

We have a goal of meeting and exceeding customer expectations while serving customers with disabilities. Comments on our services regarding how well those expectations are being met are welcome and appreciated. A Customer Feedback Form is available from our administrative office and can be emailed, mailed, or faxed as requested. The form can also be obtained in person by arranging an appointment. All feedback will be directed to Senior leadership for review. Customers can expect to hear back within fifteen (15) business days.

Policy Modifications

We are committed to developing customer service policies that respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. All our policies and procedures will be developed or updated in such a manner as to respect and promote the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities.

Questions

This policy exists to achieve service excellence for customers with disabilities. Questions about this policy can be directed to the Director of Corporate Service at:

- By email: jhoward@Habitat4Home.ca
- By phone: (519) 455-6623 x221