

Statement of Organizational Commitment

Sistering is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities. We are committed to treating people with disabilities in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence.

We believe in integration and equal opportunity and we are committed to meeting the needs of people with disabilities in a timely manner. We will do so by meeting accessibility requirements under *the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's accessibility laws*.

Sistering operates on principles of anti-oppression and social inclusion, and is committed to working towards social justice and the empowerment of women.

General Principles and Procedures

This Accessibility Policy describes the commitment of Sistering to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities that participate, work and learn in Sistering community. This includes participants, staff, students, volunteers, contractors of and visitors to Sistering.

Opportunities

Sistering will give people with disabilities the same opportunity to access our services and products, and allowing them to benefit from the same services, in the same place and in similar way as other people as much as possible.

Information and Communication

We will communicate with people with disabilities in ways that respectfully take into account their disability. When asked, we will provide information about our organization and its services, including public safety information, in accessible formats or with communication supports.

Service Animals

We welcome participants with disabilities and their service animals.

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. Sistering does not charge a fee for anyone to use our services.

Notice of Temporary Disruption

In the event of a planned or unexpected disruption to services or facilities for participants with disabilities, such as washroom, showers, elevators, Sistering will notify participants promptly.

A clearly posted notice will include information about the reason for the disruption, its anticipated length of time, and a description of alternative facilities or services if available. The notice will be placed at reception areas, washroom and shower doors and the elevator.

Feedback Process

Participants who wish to provide feedback on the way Sistering provides service to persons with disabilities can speak to staff or management, email or call staff or management, use the suggestion box, or attend monthly Town Hall.

All feedback will be directed to the appropriate program and/or staff.

Complaints will be addressed according to our regular complaint management procedures.

Employment

Sistering is committed to fair and accessible employment practices that attract and retain people with disabilities. In accordance with *Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulations (IASR)*, Sistering will:

- Notify employees, potential hires and the public that accommodations can be made during recruitment and hiring.
- Notify staff that supports are available for those with disabilities. We will follow the Sistering Accommodation Process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.
- Where needed, provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency.
- Review and modify if needed performance management and career development processes to take into account the accessibility needs of its employees with disabilities.

Training

Sistering will provide training to employees, volunteers and other staff members regarding accessibility. All staff will be trained. This training will be provided to staff in the initial two week orientation. Training will include:

- A copy of Sistering Accessibility Policy and the opportunity to ask questions
- An overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the service standard.
- An introduction to the Human Rights Code that relate to people with disabilities.

Documented Individual Accommodation Plans

Our process for the development of documented individual accommodation plans includes how the organization will:

- include the employee in the development of the plan
- consider the employee on an individual basis
- proceed in getting an expert's opinion on the best way to accommodate the employee
- ensure the employee's personal information will be protected
- review and update the plan
- provide the plan in a format that respects the individual's needs due to a disability

Changes to existing policies

Any policy of Sistering that does not respect and promote the dignity and independence of people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

Sistering Accessibility Policy will be reviewed by the Sistering Board every two years.

This updated policy was approved in November, 2017

This policy was last reviewed in November, 2017