

## ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

### PURPOSE

The Policy defines:

- GLC's commitment and goals for accessibility; and
- To ensure compliance with *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*
- Define expectations of all goods and services provided by GLC follow the core principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Gracious Living Corporation is committed to ensuring equal access and participation for people with disabilities that maintains their dignity and independence. We are committed to creating an environment that meets the needs of people with disabilities by identifying and removing barriers to accessibility.

Gracious Living Corporation understands and is committed to meeting the current and ongoing accessibility requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)* and obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code respecting non-discrimination.

GLC is committed to excellence in providing goods and services to all customers including people with disabilities. Our customer service policies are consistent with the core principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

### APPLICATION

This Policy addresses accessibility needs of GLC employees, volunteers, contractors, and customers.

### DEFINITIONS

- i. **AODA** – *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and its regulations.
- ii. **Accessibility** – Giving opportunities to people of all abilities to participate fully in everyday life. It is used to describe how widely a service, product, device, or environment is available to as many people as possible.
- iii. **Assistive Device** – A technical aid, communication device, or other instruments used to maintain or improve the functional abilities of people with disabilities.

- iv. **Accessible Formats** - may include, but are not limited to, large print, recorded audio and electronic formats, braille, and other formats usable by persons with disabilities.
- v. **Disability** - The term disability, as defined by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, refers to:
  - (a) Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation, or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect, or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
  - (b) A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
  - (c) A learning disability or dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
  - (d) A mental disorder; or
  - (e) An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*.
- vi. **Service Animal** – An animal is a service animal for a person with a disability,
  - (a) if it is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his or her disability; or
  - (b) if the person provides a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.
- vii. **Support Person** – A person who accompanies a person with a disability to assist with communication, mobility, personal care, or medical needs or with access to goods or services.
- viii. **“We”, “Our” and “Staff”** means Gracious Living Corporation and its employees, volunteers, and contractors.

## **CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY**

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

- i. **Dignity** – Persons with a disability must be treated as valued customers as deserving of service as any other customers.
- ii. **Equality of Opportunity** – Persons with a disability should be given an opportunity equal to that given to others to obtain, use and benefit from our goods and services.
- iii. **Integration** – Wherever possible, persons with a disability should benefit from our goods and services in the same place and in the same or similar manner as any other customers. In circumstances where integration does not serve the needs of the person with a disability, goods and services with, to the extent possible, be provided in another way that takes into account the person’s individual needs.
- iv. **Independence** – Goods and services must be provided in a way that respects the independence of persons with a disability. To this end, we will always be willing to assist a person with a disability but will not do so without the express permission of the person.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

### **Accessible Mediums of Communication**

Gracious Living Corporation shall communicate with people with disabilities in a manner that takes the person's disability into account. This may include the following:

- In-person communications
- Email and phone correspondence
- Virtual correspondence
- Alternate accessible formats of information/documentation, upon request

We will also meet internationally recognized Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0 Level AA website requirements in accordance with Ontario's accessibility laws.

### **Assistive Devices**

Persons with a disability are permitted, where possible, to use their own Assistive Device when on our premises for the purpose of obtaining, using or benefiting from our goods and services.

If there is a physical, technological or other type of barrier that prevents the use of an Assistive Device on our premises we will first endeavour to remove that barrier. If we are not able to remove that barrier we will ask the person how he/she can be accommodated and what alternative methods of service would be more accessible to him/her. We will make best efforts to provide an alternative means of assistance to the persons with a disability.

### **Service Animals**

Persons with a disability may enter premises owned and/or operated by Gracious Living Corporation accompanied by a Service Animal, and keep the Service Animal with them, if the public has access to such premises and the Service Animal is not otherwise excluded by law.

If a service animal may be excluded, we explain to our customer why this is the case and explore alternative ways to meet the customer's needs.

If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a Service Animal, Gracious Living Corporation may ask the person with a disability for documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

A service animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

A regulated health professional is defined as a member of one of the following colleges:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario

- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

## **Support Persons**

A person with a disability who is accompanied by a support person will be allowed to have that person accompany them on premises owned and/or operated by Gracious Living Corporation.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

We notify employees, job applicants and the public that accommodations can be made during recruitment and hiring. We notify job applicants when they are individually selected to participate in an assessment or selection process that accommodations are available upon request. We consult with the applicants and provide or arrange for suitable accommodation.

We notify successful applicants of policies for accommodating employees with disabilities when making offers of employment. Upon hiring, we notify employees that supports are available for those with disabilities as soon as practicable after they begin their employment.

We provide updated information to employees whenever there is a change to existing policies on the provision of job accommodation that reflect an employee's accessibility needs due to a disability.

We will consult with employees when arranging for the provision of suitable accommodation in a manner that considers the accessibility needs due to disability. We will consult with the person making the request in determining the suitability of an accessible format or communication supports specifically for:

- a) Information that is needed to perform the employee's job; and
- b) Information that is generally available to employees in the workplace

Where needed, we will also provide customized emergency information to help an employee with a disability during an emergency. With the employees consent, we will provide workplace emergency information to a designated person who is providing assistance to that employee during an emergency.

We will provide the information as soon as practicable after we become aware of the need for accommodation due to the employee's disability.

We will review the individualized workplace emergency response information:

- a) When the employee moves to a different location in the organization
- b) When the employee's overall accommodations needs or plans are reviewed; and
- c) When the employer reviews its general emergency response policies

We have a written process to develop individual accommodation plans for employees.

We have a written process for employees who have been absent from work due to a disability and require disability related accommodations to return to work.

### **NOTICE OF TEMPORARY DISRUPTIONS**

Gracious Living will notify customers if there is a planned or unexpected disruption of a facility or service persons with a disability use to access our goods and services. The notice will be posted at the entrance of the applicable premises and on the home page of the Gracious Living Corporation website.

The notice will include the following information:

- i. That the service is unavailable.
- ii. The anticipated duration of the disruption
- iii. The reason for the disruption
- iv. Alternative facilities or services, if available.

### **TRAINING AND RECORDS**

Gracious Living Corporation is committed to training all GLC employees in accessible customer service, other Ontario's accessibility standards and aspects of the Ontario Human Rights Code that relate to persons with disabilities.

In addition, we will provide training to all persons who provide goods and services on behalf of the organization as well as to those persons charged with developing this Policy and related procedures and practices.

Training includes:

- i. purpose of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 and the requirements of the Customer Service Standards
- ii. A review of the policy
- iii. How to interact and communicate with persons with various types of disabilities
- iv. How to interact with persons with a disability who use an Assistive Device or require the assistance of a Service Animal or Support Person
- v. How to use equipment or devices made available on our premises to assist persons with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from our goods and services
- vi. What to do if a person with a disability is having difficulty accessing our organization's good, services or facilities

Training will be provided as soon as practicable after being hired and provide training in respect of any changes to the policies.

Training Records shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Act and will include the dates on which the training was provided and the number of individuals to whom the training was provided.

## **FEEDBACK PROCESS**

Gracious Living Corporation welcomes and appreciates feedback regarding this Policy and its implementation. Feedback can be provided in the following ways:

- i. In person at Gracious Living Corporation.
- ii. By telephone at: (905) 264-5660
- iii. In writing to: 7200 Martin Grove Road, Woodbridge, ON, L4L 9J3
- iv. Electronically to: [hr@graciousliving.com](mailto:hr@graciousliving.com)

Gracious Living Corporation has a feedback protocol to enable it to receive and respond to comments, including complaints. Gracious Living Corporation feedback protocol is available upon request.

## **CHANGES TO EXISTING POLICIES**

Any GLC policies that do not respect and promote the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity for people with disabilities will be modified or removed.

This document is publicly available on the Gracious Living Corporation website. Accessible formats are available upon request.