

Accessibility Policy

1. Statement of Commitment

STEM Camp is committed to fostering an inclusive, welcoming, and equitable environment for all individuals, including people with disabilities. Our commitment extends to ensuring equal access and full participation in all programs, services, communications, and employment opportunities. We aim to support dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity in everything we do.

We recognize that accessibility is an ongoing responsibility and a shared commitment across the entire organization. STEM Camp will continue to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to participation and will meet all applicable legislative requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), its associated regulations, and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, third-party service providers, camp leadership teams, and any individual acting on behalf of STEM Camp.

2. Definitions

To ensure clarity and consistency across STEM Camp operations, the following definitions apply:

Disability

A disability may be visible or invisible, temporary or permanent, and includes:

- physical disabilities (e.g., mobility limitations, chronic illnesses, limb differences);
- sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness, low vision, deafness, hearing impairment);
- intellectual or developmental disabilities;
- learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia);
- mental health disabilities (e.g., anxiety, depression);
- mental disorders;
- cognitive disabilities affecting memory, concentration, or decision-making;
- disabilities sustained due to workplace injury under WSIB.

STEM Camp recognizes that disabilities may involve a wide range of support needs and will work collaboratively with individuals to ensure they receive appropriate accommodation.

Service Animal

A service animal is an animal trained to assist a person with a disability. An animal is considered a service animal if it is readily apparent that the animal is performing assistance tasks (e.g., wearing a vest or

harness), or if the individual presents documentation from a regulated health professional confirming the need for the animal.

Guide Dog

A dog trained and qualified to act as a guide for a visually impaired person, as defined under the Blind Persons' Rights Act.

Support Person

An individual who accompanies a person with a disability for the purpose of providing physical, emotional, communication, or interpretive support.

Assistive Device

Any tool, technology, or device that helps a person perform daily tasks—such as walkers, hearing aids, communication boards, screen readers, mobility devices, or other aids that enhance access.

Facilities

Any facility owned by STEM Camp. Camp locations rented for seasonal use are not under the organization's ownership, but accessibility support must still be provided within what is reasonably possible.

3. Organizational Commitment to Accessibility

STEM Camp recognizes that accessibility is not simply a legal obligation, but a core organizational value.

To that end, we strive to:

- incorporate accessibility into planning for all programs and services;
- assess potential barriers before implementing new systems or processes;
- integrate accessibility considerations into emergency procedures;
- ensure that all communications are available in accessible formats upon request;
- ensure our digital environment meets or exceeds WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards;
- collaborate with individuals to understand their specific accessibility needs;
- document policies and update practices regularly as legislation evolves.

4. Training Requirements

STEM Camp provides comprehensive training to all employees, volunteers, seasonal staff, contractors, and any individual representing the organization. Training is tailored to the roles and responsibilities of each staff member and includes:

- purpose and intent of the AODA;
- legal obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code;
- how to interact respectfully and effectively with people who have disabilities;
- how to recognize and respond to different types of disabilities;
- how to support individuals using assistive devices;
- appropriate interactions with service animals and support persons;
- how to use organization-provided accessibility tools or equipment;
- strategies for maintaining dignity and independence for all participants;
- procedures for responding to accessibility-related feedback or concerns;
- processes for reporting barriers or recommending improvements.

Training must be completed as soon as reasonably possible after staff join the organization, and refresher training is required whenever policies are updated or new procedures are introduced.

STEM Camp maintains detailed records of the dates of training, the topics covered, and the individuals who received training.

5. Assistive Devices

STEM Camp supports the use of personal assistive devices. This may include mobility devices, adaptive technologies, communication supports, or medical devices. Staff must be able to describe the assistive devices available on-site, such as accessible computers or robotics equipment used during camp operations.

If an assistive device presents a health or safety risk—for example, in cases where a device cannot be safely used during an active camp activity—STEM Camp will work collaboratively with the individual to determine safe, reasonable, alternative accommodations.

Staff must never touch or move an individual's assistive device without explicit permission unless there is an immediate risk to safety.

6. Communication Supports

STEM Camp communicates with individuals with disabilities in a manner that considers their needs and preferences. Upon request, the organization will provide:

- accessible formats (large print, simplified text, electronic versions, audio);
- communication supports (read-aloud assistance, plain language, step-by-step explanations);
- one-to-one communication with trained staff;
- alternative communication approaches when needed (e.g., visual supports for non-verbal individuals).

STEM Camp will work collaboratively with each individual to determine the most effective method of communication and will provide supports at no additional cost.

7. Service Animals

Service animals are welcome in all areas of STEM Camp-owned facilities accessible to the public or third parties, unless prohibited by law. Staff may ask for documentation only when it is not obvious that the animal is providing disability-related support.

If service animals must be excluded due to legal restrictions:

1. STEM Camp will explain the reason for exclusion.
2. STEM Camp will provide alternative arrangements to ensure access to services.

Service animals must always remain under the ongoing care and control of their handler.

8. Support Persons

Individuals with disabilities who require the assistance of a support person are permitted to have that person accompany them at all times while on any premises owned or operated by STEM Camp.

A support person may provide a wide range of assistance, including physical support, behavioural support, personal care, communication assistance, emotional support, or safety supervision.

Because of the nature of STEM Camp's summer camp environment—including the responsibility for the supervision of large groups of children, the specialized nature of certain support needs, and the staffing structure that relies on seasonal counsellors—STEM Camp is not able to provide support persons for campers who require one-to-one or individualized support. Providing such support would constitute undue hardship under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) due to:

- safety concerns arising from the complexity of individual support needs;
- staffing and training limitations within a large-scale camp environment;
- the requirement for specialized, continuous, or individualized care;
- the necessity of maintaining appropriate supervision ratios for all campers.

Therefore, any camper who requires a support person to participate safely, meaningfully, or effectively in camp activities must have that support person supplied by their family or guardian.

STEM Camp will work collaboratively with families to help prepare for a support person's participation, including reviewing camp expectations, outlining daily routines, and offering opportunities for pre-camp communication.

If a support person is required for health or safety reasons as determined by STEM Camp leadership, families will be informed as early as possible, and any applicable admission fees for the support person will be waived.

At all times, the presence of a support person must follow STEM Camp safety procedures, confidentiality requirements, and any location-specific guidelines. Support persons are not considered camp participants and must remain focused solely on supporting the individual they accompany.

9. Notice of Temporary Service Disruptions

If a planned or unexpected disruption affects access to goods, services, or facilities used by people with disabilities, STEM Camp will provide notice as soon as reasonably possible.

The notice will include:

- the reason for the disruption;
- expected duration;
- any available alternative services or facilities;
- contact information for assistance.

Notices may be posted on the STEM Camp website, at physical camp locations, or communicated through email or phone.

Examples of disruptions include:

- elevator outages;
- accessible washrooms out of service;
- technology or equipment failure affecting communication supports;
- sudden facility closures or schedule changes impacting accessibility.

10. Feedback and Complaints Process

STEM Camp values feedback as an essential tool for improving accessibility. Individuals may provide feedback or file a complaint through phone, email, social media, feedback forms, in person, through support persons or advocates.

Feedback may relate to barriers, communication challenges, staff interactions, physical accessibility issues, or any other accessibility concern.

All feedback will be forwarded to camp management for review. Responses will be provided in a timely manner and in an accessible format upon request.

Confidentiality is maintained whenever possible.

11. Availability of Documents in Accessible Formats

Upon request, STEM Camp will provide accessibility policies, emergency information, training records, and public-facing documents in an accessible format. The format will be selected collaboratively with the individual and provided at no additional cost to the point of undue hardship.

If a document cannot be converted into an accessible format, STEM Camp will explain the reasons and provide a summary of the information.

Accessible format notices will appear on the website and in public communications.

12. Information and Communications Standard Compliance

STEM Camp will ensure:

- public safety information is accessible;
- all digital content meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards;
- all communications include plain language options as needed;
- alternate communication channels are available during disruptions.

STEM Camp continuously reviews communications to ensure accessibility improvements remain ongoing.

13. Employment Standards: Accessible Employment Practices

STEM Camp is committed to inclusive, accessible hiring and employment practices.

During Hiring

- Job postings include statements about availability of accommodations.
- Applicants selected for interviews are informed that accommodations are available upon request.
- STEM Camp consults with applicants to identify appropriate accommodations during assessments and interviews.

During Employment

STEM Camp:

- informs all employees about accessibility supports during onboarding;
- provides updates when accessibility-related policies change;
- offers accessible formats for job-related information;
- collaborates with employees to develop individualized accommodation plans;
- creates individualized workplace emergency response plans;
- assists employees returning to work following disability-related leave;

- ensures that performance management, career development, and redeployment all consider accessibility needs.

14. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

STEM Camp will:

- regularly review and update accessibility policies;
- gather ongoing feedback from staff, campers, families, and community members;
- encourage staff to report accessibility concerns without fear of reprisal;
- integrate accessibility considerations into all future planning, program design, and documentation.

Accessibility is a shared responsibility; therefore, every member of our organization is expected to contribute to identifying, minimizing, and preventing barriers.

15. Related Policies and Legislation

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- Ontario Regulation 429/07 – Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)
- Ontario Human Rights Code

Effective Date and Review

Board Approval Date: December 9, 2025

Last Modified: October 4, 2023

Review Schedule: Every 3 years