Stratford Theatre created the following Compassion Program Overview in 2023 as part of their Balancing Act Level UP! Pilot Project. This Overview is included in Stratford's internal online resource for staff and artists.

Please credit Stratford Theatre and Balancing Act
if you use, cite, or share information from this resource.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss these materials, please contact Balancing Act at balancingact@theatredirect.ca.

Stratford's Compassion Program Overview lives in their internal online resource for staff and artists working at Stratford. Links to resources are indicated, but not hyperlinked as it is an internal resource.

Stratford Festival
Compassion Program

Introduction:

The Stratford Festival has partnered with Balancing Act, a national initiative to support Artist Caregivers, in their Level UP! Program in 2022/23, to pilot strategies that are at the forefront of more inclusive and care-led workplace policies and practices.

We joined a second cohort that piloted a financial support called a Compassion Fund. These funds were accessible for contracted artists/arts workers on the Langham Directors' Workshop (DWP) 2022. In the spirit of the Level UP! Program, and based on the success of the 2022 fall pilot, the Festival expanded its efforts in 2023 to create a program for all staff and artist caregivers called the Compassion Program. This program included a second financial support pilot (Care Support Fund) specifically targeted at supporting caregivers. The Compassion Program also added several non-financial care initiatives for staff and artists working at the Festival. Some initiatives under the Compassion Program will continue to be available for the 2024 season as budget restraints allow.

Scope of the Program:

To promote the inclusion of persons with caregiving responsibilities and foster a better life/work balance.

Eligibility Requirements:

Anyone working at the Stratford Festival, who is a caregiver* is eligible to access the program; however the focus is to support equity-deserving groups within the Festival community.

*Balancing Act defines a ‘caregiver’ as individuals who care for children, aging adults, those in need of personal or primary care, and anyone who self-identifies as a caregiver. We acknowledge that care work can include blood, adopted, or chosen family, colleagues, and caring for others out of duty.

Program Supports:

Pre-existing Festival Supports:

- Private rooms for breastfeeding by request
- Five-day work week - *limited**
- No prescheduled 10-out-of-12 hour days
- Family access to the Employee Assistance Program
- Education Camps Subsidy
- Remote working and flexible hours - *limited**

Added in 2023:

- Lending cupboard
- Voluntary caregivers contact List
- Caregiving resource page in the Festival Handbook
- Care Support Fund - *not currently available**
- Opening night, on-site babysitting - *not currently available**

**limited to particular employment agreements*

“This is one of the first opportunities I've experienced in an institution where there is a tangible thing that they are doing to support the marginalized artists they are wanting to work with.” – Participant of the 2022 DWP.

Explanation:

Private Rooms for Breastfeeding
Private space in the Stratford Festival buildings is sometimes hard to find. If you are wanting to bring your child onsite to breastfeed or need a private place to pump please let your supervisor know so we can help facilitate a space for you before you need it.

Five Day Rehearsal Weeks
Introduced in the 2022 season, regular 5-day rehearsal weeks are scheduled regularly during the rehearsal and technical periods for all lines of parts. Whenever possible, the extra day off is scheduled so that it immediately precedes or is immediately followed by an Equity Day Off. The Festival has not reduced the standard number of rehearsal hours in order to accommodate this.

No Pre-Scheduled 10-out-of-12s
Also introduced in the 2022 season, 10-out-of-12 rehearsals are not pre-scheduled and to make up the time, an extra technical event was added. There are two main benefits here: 1) it spreads out the work over the normal 8-hour day; and 2) in most cases, it creates more flexibility in the schedule by allowing the Festival to add 10-out-of-12 rehearsals in the event that the production in question needs them.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
Confidential 24/7 counseling services of Lifeworks. We invite you and your family to make use of this counseling support. We have retained the services of LifeWorks, a company whose counselors are trained to listen and offer psychological support. You can receive support over the telephone or video for up to three sessions.

Financial Assistance for Summer Education Programs
Full and partial financial assistance is available for all participants who require it. Financial assistance includes support for camp fees as well as travel costs to and from Stratford, Ontario. Camps are overnight programs for young people in Grade Seven and up. A link to apply is available on the Stratford Festival website where you also register for camp. Please note financial assistance is available to staff and the public. Registration closes June 1st and resources for the 2023 season have been depleted, but there is still some available for camp sessions with space available.

Remote Working & Flexible Hours
The Stratford Festival is developing programs to help improve the life/work balance amongst all those who contribute to the success of our organization. One area of focus that was accelerated due to recent events is our Flexible Remote Work Arrangements Program. This program prioritizes both the operations of the Festival and the wellbeing of our employees.

Flexible work is an arrangement where employees work a full day but they can vary their working hours to meet personal or family needs. Flex time is usually arranged in advance between the employee and their supervisor and a set range of start and finish times are established.

For example, the employee may choose to start between 7:30 and 9:30 AM, and finish between 3:30 and 5:30 PM. This arrangement establishes that core hours are between 9:30 AM and 3:30 PM when all employees will be at work. Employees may wish to maintain their start/finish times so that a routine is established and co-workers can become accustomed to each others' schedules.

Remote working is the concept of working at an Alternate Worksite while the employee is still maintaining the same job performance as would be expected while working onsite at the Festival's place of business. The Festival may approve a remote work arrangement for a temporary term to a maximum of one year. The Festival may also approve a partial remote work arrangement in which an employee works partially from an Alternate Worksite and partially from the Festival's place of business. Flexible remote working arrangements are not appropriate for all positions, for more details and eligibility considerations, please see HR Policy #3-11 Flexible Remote Work.

Lending Cupboard
For visiting staff and artists - sometimes you aren't able to bring as many things as you would like when traveling for work and an extra toy or use of a temporary stroller could help. Please inquire with Company Management to see if there is something in our lending cupboard that would make your time in town easier. *Visit the Lending Cupboard online.
*All items for loan should be signed out, the Stratford Festival is not responsible for any injury or damages incurred from use of items borrowed.

Voluntary Caregivers' Contact List
Please contact Company Management if you would like to join the voluntary parent contact list. This list is available to any parents and caregivers working at the Festival to help foster a sense of community. Connections forged could be to arrange playdates, receive hand me downs, local advice etc.

Internal online resource: Here is a link to the Caregiving Resource page.

Opening Night Onsite Childcare (2023 Pilot program)
Introducing Movie Nights! Can't come to opening night because you don't have a sitter or you're working? No problem! The Festival will be providing subsidized onsite childcare during 1-2 opening performances in the 2023 season (subject to demand, for current Staff and Artists only). This service is available on a first come first serve basis with limited spots available, reservations required. Your child can watch a movie and play in two

rooms at the Normal School while being supervised by qualified sitters from SummerHill Club.

The Summerhill Club Inc. is a babysitting agency based out of Toronto with the mission of connecting families to trustworthy, engaged, and highly experienced babysitters.

This service will be available from 6:15pm to 11:45pm, supporting caregivers to partake in opening night festivities. All children should bring their own snack, water bottle, pillow and blanket. This program is open for registration now!

Spamalot Opening - May 31st 6:15pm to 11:45pm (Movie at 8:00pm) - Registration Closed.

Care Support Fund (2023 Pilot)

Anyone working at the Festival in the 2023 season is eligible to access this fund for support; however the focus of the program is to support equity-deserving groups with caregiving responsibilities within the Festival community. Applications are assessed based on their individual level of need, however; please note that funds will be distributed equitably within the overall program budget, and an application does not guarantee funding. We are asking applicants to do a self-assessment of their level of need.

There are two opportunities throughout the year to apply for this fund. Applications are per household per period and applicants must work a minimum of seven days in the calendar year to qualify for funding. Those applying for funding may be eligible for up to $675 (child care), or up to $788 (adult/elder care) per period. Applications are open now until November 30th, or until funds are depleted, and can include eligible costs incurred starting January 1st, 2023.

Application Deadlines:

- June 30th 2023, 1st period (January to June, 2023)
- November 30th, 2023, 2nd period (July to November, 2023)

We want these funds to be as barrier-free as possible. Receipts are required, in order for funding received to not be considered as taxable income or subject to HST. For this pilot the dates on your receipts need to match the period you are applying for. For example: If you purchased a week of summer camp or a new walker in March your expense could be reimbursed under the first deadline.

As a participant in this pilot, you will be required to fill out a confidential follow-up survey at a later date. Your feedback will be shared with Balancing Act, along with the Festival's experience implementing this project, to strengthen future initiatives by both organizations. Information shared may include what types of supports were requested, the average amount requested, and accessibility to and distribution of funds. We will not share any names or other identifying information.

All requests for funding are confidential and will be reviewed only by Hilary Nichol (Company Manager) and Meineka Kulasinghe (EDI Manager). Receipts and invoices will be processed by members of the finance team. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Hilary or Meineka at hnichol@stratfordfestival.ca or mkulasinghe@stratfordfestival.ca.

Applicants will be notified whether or not their application is approved within 2 weeks of the above dates. Once an individual has been approved they will move to a lower priority for the remaining period, below individuals who have yet to receive money. If you miss a deadline, we still encourage you to apply. Funds will be distributed on a case-by-case basis throughout the season.